

Conflict Update # 26

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Conflict Assessment

Russian forces bisected Mariupol from the city center to the coast on April 10 - isolating the remaining Ukrainian defenders in the southwestern port and eastern Azovstal Steel Plant.

Pentagon concerned about potential Russian use of riot control agents in Ukraine, official says - The Pentagon cannot confirm reports that Russian forces have used what may be a chemical weapon in Mariupol, Ukraine, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement Monday, but officials remain concerned about the potential Russian use of riot control agents. The Pentagon is aware of the reports and will monitor the situation closely, Kirby said.

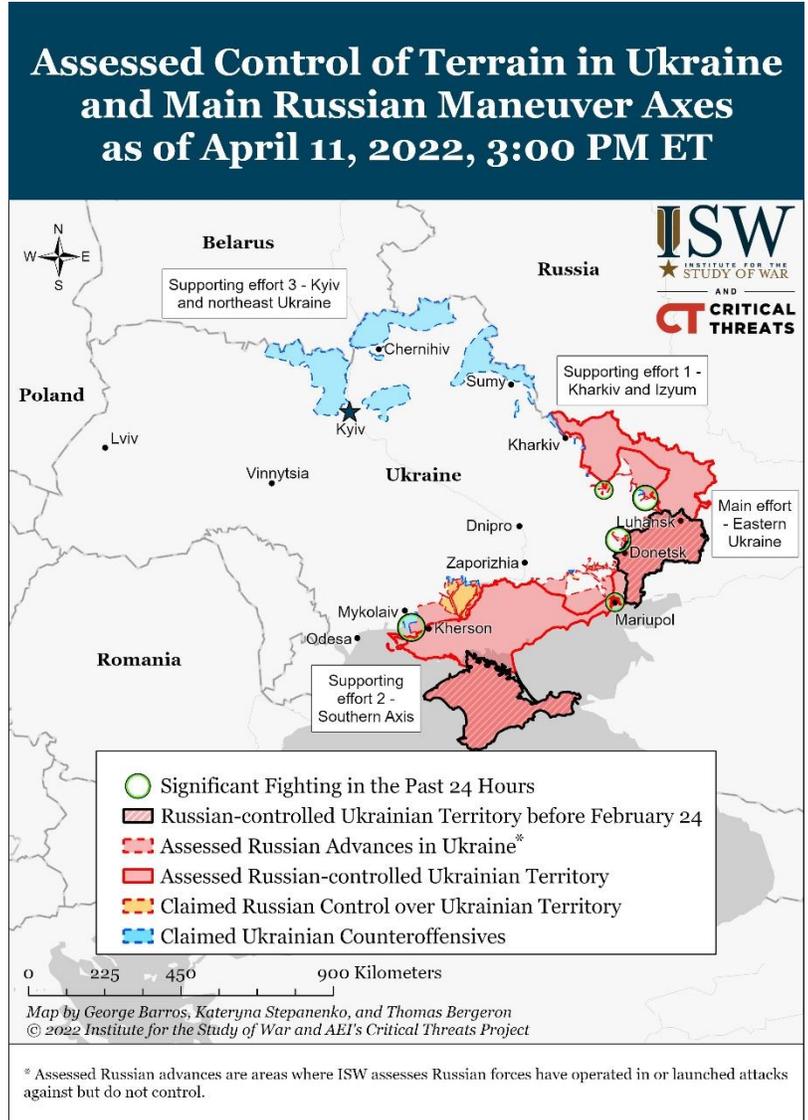
Russian forces again made little to no progress in frontal assaults in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts but continue to cohere further reinforcements.

Russian forces are implementing increasingly draconian measures to conscript previously ineligible personnel. The Ukrainian Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Russia is now conscripting previously ineligible categories of people, including those with childhood disabilities and workers in protected industries

Maxar Technologies satellite imagery captured hundreds of Russian vehicles in Kharkiv Oblast redeploying to support Russian operations near Izyum.

Ukrainian counterattacks may threaten Kherson city in the coming days or weeks.

The Russian Defense Ministry is reportedly offering cash bonuses to incentivize forces withdrawn from northeastern Ukraine to reenter combat operations. Radio Svoboda published images of a document on April 10 that it reported was issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense on April 2 offering specific bonuses for Russian troops in Ukraine.



Battle for Donbas will be very different from the assault on Kyiv - The battle for the Donbas will be very different from the advance on Kyiv. Russian units at the beginning of the war were not ready or supplied for heavy fighting. Now the Russians appreciate what they are up against and with only two axes to support can concentrate their supplies. Russian air defences have good coverage over the Donbas and they will likely be able to bring significant air power to bear. Combined with their advantage in artillery, and the fact that the fighting will be in the countryside rather than into urban centres, Ukrainian troops will need to maneuver to survive.

60 elite Russian paratroopers refused to fight in the invasion of Ukraine, report says - Up to 60 Russian paratroopers from one unit in Pskov province refused to fight in Ukraine, according to independent Russian newspaper Pskovskaya Gubernia.

The troops were fired, and some were threatened with criminal prosecution for desertion or failure to comply with an order, the paper wrote on its Telegram channel.

Russian assaults in east repulsed - Ukrainian troops have repulsed several Russian assaults in the country's east, the focus of a new offensive by the invading forces, British intelligence said today, while President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week will be crucial to the course of the war.

Russia Falls Below 85% Combat Effectiveness as Ukraine War Grinds On - Russian forces in and around Ukraine have degraded to as little as 80% effective, the Pentagon assessed on Friday, as they enter the seventh week of their unprovoked invasion of the former Soviet state.

Russian Navy Fires on Turkish-Owned Bulker Near Mariupol - Russian state media claimed that the Russian military has attacked another civilian vessel near Ukrainian waters. The incident is at least the seventh Russian attack on merchant shipping reported since the start of the invasion in February.

In a statement carried by Russian state-owned outlet TASS, Russian Defense Ministry claimed that a patrol vessel of the Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet opened fire on and damaged the bulk carrier Apache in the Sea of Azov.

Many Kyrgyz Fighting Alongside Russians In Ukraine - A 25-year-old native of the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, Sardarbek Mamatillaev received Russian citizenship just a few months ago. Mamatillaev says he recently received a summons from the local military office in Russia and suspects he may be sent to Ukraine to fight alongside Russian forces after receiving a not-so-vague threat. "I was told I must report to the military office, otherwise my Russian citizenship could be canceled," Mamatillaev told Cabar.asia.

The number of Kyrgyz and other Central Asians fighting in Ukraine -- as soldiers or contractors -- is unknown.

Russian redeployments not working - The Russian battalion tactical groups that have retreated from Kyiv's suburbs to Belarus and Russia's Kursk and Belgorod regions are reportedly too defeated and demoralized to be immediately redeployed to the Donbas warzone; multiple news accounts tell of the soldiers' refusal to return to combat duties (Current Time, April 9). Ukrainian Armed Forces, to the contrary, can move reinforcements to the crucial battlegrounds, and Moscow is worried about expanded deliveries of heavy weapons to those defending forces from NATO (Nezavisimaya Gazeta).

Russian EW Systems - To support this assault, the Russian forces may employ one of their newest electronic warfare (EW) systems—the Silok-M1—in order to try to counter Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles.

Russia has been using EW systems in Ukraine since igniting the "separatist" war in eastern Donbas eight years ago. But after the new, full-scale phase in the war, many of the newest Russian EW stations were destroyed or even captured by the AFU.

Perhaps the most important gain for Ukraine and the biggest loss for Russia when it comes to the latter's deployed EW systems was a captured element of the Krasukha-4 complex, which is a broadband multifunctional jamming station used to counter both ground-based and airborne radars as well as airborne early-warning and control system (AWACS) planes. Moreover, it reportedly has the range to disrupt low-Earth-orbit satellites and can cause permanent damage to targeted radio-electronic devices. Part of this EW complex was captured by the Ukraine. All of this seized equipment more than likely was transferred to Ukraine's Western allies for further research and reverse engineering.

Ukrainians wrap up training in US - Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Sunday thanked a small number of Ukrainian troops who were departing the United States after training to operate patrol boats and kamikaze drones, the latter among the latest military technology sent to fight Russian invaders, the Pentagon announced. The Ukrainian contingent, whose size the Pentagon has not disclosed, took part in a long-standing training mission that began Feb. 24, the day Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces invaded Ukraine.

The mission was extended to include training on Switchblade drones, which stay aloft long enough for operators to locate enemy positions or armored vehicles and then crash into them and explode.

Russia Loses Ninth Senior Field Military Commander, Bespalov - Top Russian military officer, Colonel Alexander Bespalov, a tank commander has been killed in Ukraine, the ninth senior field officer to be lost in the battle. Bespalov's death comes after Ukraine announced it had "eliminated" Colonel Denis Kurilo, commander of the 200th motorized rifle brigade, in fierce fighting outside the country's second city Kharkiv.

Bespalov was commander of the 59th Tank Guards Tank Regiment, Russia's 74.RU news website reports.

Trying to Re-write history

Is Putin trying to re-write or re-define history by claiming that Ukraine doesn't exist?

This is not unprecedented, and history may indicate that he is indeed trying to re-write the future of Ukraine and its people. Nationality is created from history, and he is attempting to change Ukrainian history. Consider how Britain came into being after its early history was erased.

Beade, a Tyneside monk in 731AD wrote an ecclesiastical history which still forms the basis of modern English history.

He never left the monastery in Tyneside where he was brought up, and like most historians, had his own axe to grind.

According to his writings, the origins of Christianity in England lie in 6th century Rome where Pope Gregory the Great spotted some fair-haired slaves. Upon being told that they were Angles from Britain, he famously replied that to him they looked like angels.

Beade says Pope Gregory immediately sent Saint Augustine to Britain "to convert these heathen creatures to Christianity." To make Augustine's mission more significant than it actually was, he created an "English" profile of a country populated by heathen unbelievers, whom he called "Anglo-Saxons," and described their conversion as a glorious achievement.

In so doing, he created the myth that the church was a fresh start in Britain and the newly-converted Anglo-Saxon English were "proper Christians" and unconnected to the murky Celtic Christianity of native Britain.

In so doing, he erased native English history.

In fact, Christianity in Britain was established in the late Roman period, well before the arrival of Augustine who, when arriving, found an established English Christianity with bishops, traditions and structure.

Thus converted English history is that the Anglo-Saxons brought with them paganism and that Augustine brought with him to Canterbury true Christianity. This is an important distinction as it sets in tone the future perception of English origins.

The arriving missionaries with Augustine were dumbfounded by finding an established Christian hierarchy in place already. So, this fact was blanked out of history.

Beade invented a new race of people, and the Anglo-Saxons came to be known as the English. He had an agenda to present Anglo-Saxons as a coherent body of people who inherit southern Britain. Rather like the Children of Israel who inherited the Holy Land.

He projected that they inherited the land and culture because the previous Britons were unfit to live there. That they were merely a "token people." He had particular reasons to rewrite history, one of them being to create a sense of the English and in doing so, gave them a sense of origin.

England didn't exist as a single political entity before roughly the 9th or 10th century. Before that there were largely much smaller territorially-based groupings.

Beade, in writing that ecclesiastical history, created that sense.

There was no Anglo-Saxon invasion. There is zero archeological evidence to support any such invasion, absolutely no evidence at all. British history is based upon an imaginary path.

Victorian English introduced the notion of England being descended from noble Teutonic stock via the Anglo-Saxon "invasion," as distinct as being descended from irrational, undisciplined Celtic people. They themselves were of course Teutonic in origin.

In murals in the Houses of Parliament in England, King Arthur has been depicted to fit the Anglo-Saxon virtue of the Victorian age, conflating different aspects of British history.

Simultaneously as the history of the English was being written by Anglo-Saxon historians, Celtic historians were the doing the same for the Welsh, Irish and Scottish and in direct opposition to each other. Very direct manipulation of historical and archeological sources and fact.

All to create a sense of origin and history. This happened all across Europe where the past is all about identity.

Is this what Putin is trying to accomplish, albeit perhaps ignorantly? But reports continually present him as an ardent student of history.

It has happened before.

Financial

War will shrink Ukraine's economy by 45% and Russia's by 11% this year, World Bank predicts. Russia's invasion has destroyed infrastructure across Ukraine and led to severe shortages of water, food, heating, and energy, the international financial institution said on Sunday in a new report.

It estimated that the damage to infrastructure was likely to be well above \$100 billion, or about two-thirds of Ukrainian gross domestic product in 2019. Half of Ukrainian businesses have shut, while the other half are operating well below capacity, it said.

The World Bank said Ukrainian GDP will likely shrink by 45.1% in 2022. However, it said the forecast was highly uncertain, and could be higher if the war drags on for longer, or lower if the conflict ends soon.

S&P downgrade indicates Russia headed for historic default - The credit ratings agency Standard & Poor's has downgraded its assessment of Russia's ability to repay foreign debt, signaling rising prospects that Moscow will soon default on external loans for the first time in more than a century.

NATO

NATO plans permanent military presence at border with Russia – NATO countries have planned for a permanent military presence on the alliance's eastern border in an effort to contain future Russian military actions, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg says.

In an interview with The Telegraph newspaper, Stoltenberg said NATO was "in the midst of a very fundamental transformation" that will reflect "the long-term consequences" of Russian President Vladimir Putin's actions.

"What we see now is a new reality, a new normal for European security. Therefore, we have now asked our military commanders to provide options for what we call a reset, a longer-term adaptation of NATO," Stoltenberg said.

This is precisely the opposite of what Putin ostensibly set out to prevent.

Russian pre-Ukraine balance "off balance" - Russia has deployed most of its combat-capable army units to the Ukrainian theater; and in the long war scenario, this concentration will inevitably nullify all the advantages it used to have in the military balance with NATO in Central Eastern Europe.

Finland, Sweden - set to join NATO as soon as summer, The Times reports. Russia has made a "massive strategic blunder" as Finland and Sweden look poised to join NATO as early as the summer, The Times reported on Monday, citing officials.

UK prime minister - Boris Johnson has pledged to send 120 armored vehicles to Ukraine and offered a further £100 million worth of UK military assistance, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry and so-called "suicide drones", which loiter over the battlefield before attacking their target.

US will supply Ukraine with 'the weapons it needs' against Russia - National security adviser Jake Sullivan says the US was 'working around the clock to deliver our own weapons... and organizing and coordinating the delivery of weapons from many other countries'

Sweden's ruling party launches debate on NATO membership - The Social Democrat Party says it will review its long-standing policy of military non-alignment in light of the Ukraine war.

Tens of thousands killed in besieged Mariupol - If confirmed, the horrific toll would be by far the largest number of dead so far reported in one place in Ukraine.

Widening of Conflict

Russia warns of 'direct military confrontation' with US – Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Antonov earlier told Newsweek the West is provoking Russia. "We warn that such actions are dangerous," the envoy said. "They can lead the U.S. and the Russian Federation onto the path of direct military confrontation."

China supplying Serbia with missiles - China has made several flights of semi-secret delivery of missiles to Serbia in the past few days.

Russian ally Serbia took the delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-system in a veiled operation this weekend, amid Western concerns that an arms buildup in the Balkans at the time of the war in Ukraine could threaten the fragile peace in the region.

Media and military experts said Sunday that six Chinese Air Force Y-20 transport planes landed at Belgrade's civilian airport early Saturday, reportedly carrying HQ-22 surface-to-air missile systems for the Serbian military. The Chinese cargo planes with military markings were pictured at Belgrade's Nikola Tesla airport. Serbia's defense ministry did not immediately respond to AP's request for comment.



Sanctions

Russians Flock To Central Asia To Open Sanctions-Busting Bank Accounts - Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought a mini-boom in custom for banks in Kazakhstan. Russians and Belarusians are traveling to the Central Asian country to circumvent financial sanctions imposed because of the war.

Citizens of those two countries locked out of the global banking system have opened nearly 12,000 accounts in Kazakh banks since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, Kazakhstan's financial regulator said on April 8. That represents an 8 percent rise on the number of bank accounts they previously held in Kazakhstan.

Russians and Belarusians have opened 11,940 bank accounts since February 24, bringing the total to 162,000, according to data from the Agency for Regulation and Development of the Financial Market quoted by Vlast.kz.

Russian TV host, a daughter of Putin's mentor, said to get Israeli citizenship - Israel has admitted large numbers of Russians as citizens, claiming they could show Jewish ancestry.

With eyes on 'Londongrad,' UK seeks to overhaul ties to Russian oligarchs - Over 1,000 individuals and businesses with Kremlin ties have been sanctioned. The war in Ukraine has thrown London's role as a hub for Russian money into sharp focus, spurring a response unseen after previous Russian actions, including the poisonings of Russian defectors Sergei Skripal in 2018 and Alexander Litvinenko in 2006, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Georgian war of 2008.

US Treasury Outlines Plans To Deprive Moscow's "War Machine" - The United States is ramping up sanctions against Russia to deprive Moscow's "war machine" of money and components needed to sustain its invasion of Ukraine, but curbing a main source of funding, Russian energy exports, will take time, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo told Reuters.

US curbs Russian access to foreign fertilizers and valves - The United States on Friday broadened its export curbs against Russia and Belarus, restricting access to imports of items such as fertilizer and pipe valves as it seeks to ratchet up pressure on Moscow and Minsk following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

President Joe Biden's administration also restricted flights of American-made aircraft that are owned, controlled or leased by Belarusians from flying into Belarus "as part of the US government's response to Belarus's actions in support of Russia's aggressive conduct in Ukraine".

Impacts

China-Russia Entente – China's embrace of Russia during the Ukraine invasion puzzles many China hands, who typically credit Chinese foreign policy as a blend of rationalism and nationalist assertion, not surprising for an ascendant power with a strong cultural identity and an insular leadership class. In other words, much of what China appears to be doing might make sense from the Chinese perspective, but some policies seem to fall short.

Goals where initial appeal of China's support of Russia can be seen;

- **Tripping up the U.S.** China is likely to welcome the opportunity of raising the cost to the U.S. of international leadership. It does not want to deal with a world defined by a confident U.S. at the head of an international coalition.
- **Pushing back against western-led spheres of influence.** China would prefer a world in which every leading power has some sort of sphere of influence over its immediate neighbors. To deny Russia that privilege would be to deny China the same.
- **Keeping a trouble-maker in the game.** There is limited evidence that China has any love for Putin, but there is respect for his ability to engage in disputes as he chooses. The fact that Putin has run full-blown disinformation campaigns across the U.S. and Europe and, in general, made life more difficult for the West is an attribute likely to be admired by Beijing.
- **Sentiment and legacy relations.** Don't underestimate the role of history. To ignore the importance of relations with Russia would be, to some extent, for China to ignore an important element of its own 20th century history. And foreign ministries do not adjust quickly in any event.
- **Economic impact.** The price shock on oil and grains work to China's disadvantage, as does the unified Western response to sanctions. China should not welcome the emergence of a working international economic coalition of which it is not a part.
- **Dissipation of goodwill.** China's reputation in Europe and North America has deteriorated considerably in recent years, but no one in the West was seeking a rupture.
- **Domestic messaging.** China is managing domestic news with a heavier hand than what would be required to maintain domestic support.

The looming catastrophe of the global food shortage - The Russian invasion and the sanctions on Moscow that followed have dramatically reduced the production of crops and fertilizer in Russia and Ukraine, driving vulnerable areas in the Middle East and Africa to the brink of famine. The two large countries are both major producers of wheat, corn, and barley, while Russia and Belarus produce much of the world's fertilizer. Prices of those goods had already been trending upward due to global inflation and shortages caused by COVID-19, as well as the rise in gas prices that increased the cost of shipping. Now the war has made virtually every component of the global supply chain far more expensive. Supermarket prices are expected to rise by as much as 20 percent, while at least 44 million people are at risk of famine. For them, the war is "a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe," said David Beasley, executive director of the U.N.'s World Food Program. "We never would have dreamed anything like this would be possible."

Will Russia Splinter Over War in Ukraine? - Russia is entering a period of political turmoil that is likely to include renewed demands for independence by its constituent republics in a replay of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

History may repeat itself. Russia is failing in its attempt to occupy Ukraine. In the process, Russia is suffering grave losses in military capability, economic strength, and international standing. It is now clear that Russia is not a great power in the same league as the United States and China. And it is entering a period of political turmoil that is likely to include renewed demands for independence by its constituent republics in a replay of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Vladimir Putin's Russo-Ukrainian War has been an overreach and it will force Russia to recognize its limitations and diminished status. It will likely face renewed demands for independence from constituent republics and territories.

Ukraine, Fighting Russia With Drones, Is Rewriting the Rules of War - The same quadcopters you can buy at Amazon are on the front lines of the battle for Ukraine. Ukrainian nonprofit Come Back Alive has collected ammunition, rifle stands and radios to help the country's soldiers fight Russia's invasion. In the past week, it also delivered items more commonly used to pep up YouTube videos than fight a war: 24 DJI Mavic 3 drones.

From commercial quadcopters to fixed-wing military models, drones have proved important to Ukraine, giving its outgunned defense better chances against the huge Russian military. Early in the war, a civilian drone team called Aerorozvidka worked with military units to help Ukraine stall a convoy of armored vehicles headed toward Kyiv, the country's capital. During a nighttime ambush, the unmanned aircraft dropped small explosives on the lead vehicles, which along with mines caused a pileup. The team also helped Ukraine repel Russia's initial attempt to seize the airport near Kyiv.

Rarely have drones played the role they're taking on in the asymmetric war between Ukraine's low budget forces and Russia's gargantuan military. Miniaturization has improved the cost, flight time and range of commercial drones, while Ukrainians have used military drones successfully against Russian armored vehicles that can cost millions of dollars. Drones are rewriting the rules of war.

One Ukrainian company, UA Dynamics, makes the low-profile surveillance drone called Punisher that can carry a 4-pound bomb. The US Defense Department is shipping more than 100 smaller military drones called Switchblades and Pumas from US manufacturer AeroVironment.

Ukrainians are using about 1,000 drones in the war effort, the military officer estimated. Many are mere "toys," he said, "but we have what we have."

Containment

Soldiers from 14 nations to take part in Indonesian-US war games - The annual military exercises between Indonesian and US armies will include more than a dozen countries this year, officials said Sunday, as tensions with China continue to spike in the region.

The "Garuda Shield" joint training will see militaries from 14 countries — including Britain, Australia and Japan — participate in ground drills and beach-landing exercises from August 1-14 in Indonesia's South Sumatra archipelago and the East of Borneo island, the Indonesian Army said.

Austria's leader says his face-to-face meeting with Putin was 'not a friendly visit' - Austria's Chancellor Karl Nehammer said he raised alleged Russian atrocities in Ukraine during a "tough" and unfriendly meeting Monday with Vladimir Putin -- the first Western sit-down with the Russian President since he launched his invasion in February.

Warsaw hands over Russian 'spy nest' to Ukrainians - The Polish capital has seized an abandoned Russian diplomatic compound after decades of legal dispute. Authorities say the site, which some Poles say was used for spying, will be handed over to the Ukrainian community.

France expels 6 suspected Russian agents after uncovering "clandestine plot" - France has declared six Russian agents persona non grata after its domestic security agency uncovered a "clandestine operation" being conducted by Russian intelligence services, the France's Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs announced.

Estonia Suspends Visas, Work Permits & Business Visas For Russians And Belarusians - "We cannot talk about normal resumption of relations, especially if Russia is in serious violation of international law," Foreign Affairs Undersecretary said.

West Boots Out Hundreds of Russian Diplomats in Wake of Ukraine Invasion and War Crimes - At least 394 officials at Russia's diplomatic missions have been expelled by Western countries since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in late February, according to a Foreign Policy analysis of statements and data released by dozens of ministries of foreign affairs across Europe and North America. Western governments have accused many of the Russian diplomats they ordered to leave of being spies operating under diplomatic cover.

F-35 And Stealth B-2 Bombers Are Training Together - The U.S. Air Force is trying to see whether the F-35 Lightning II and the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber can successfully operate together in simulated contested skies during a multi-aircraft training exercise that includes night flying. The Air Force is currently conducting Exercise Agile Tiger at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri for the bomber wing there to better integrate the B-2 Spirit with the F-35 and other aircraft.

