

Conflict Update # 354

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Conflict Assessment

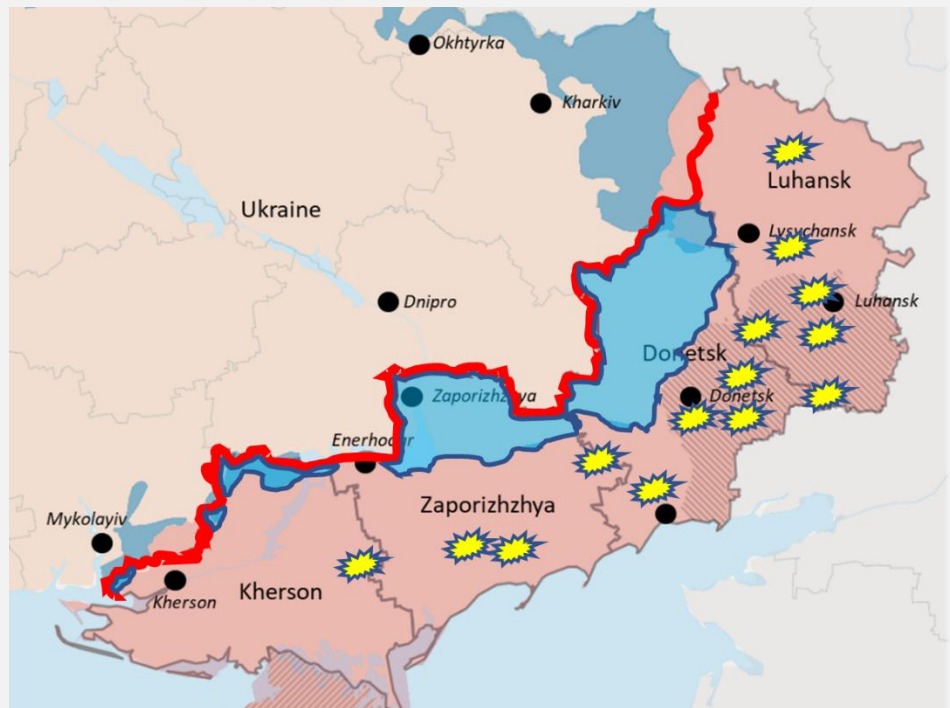
Russian losses – 137,780 (900) soldiers killed, 3,280 (+13) enemy tanks, 6,488 (+14) armored combat vehicles, 2,287 (+17) artillery systems, 465 (+2) MLRS systems, 234 (+0) air defense systems, 296 (+1) warplanes, 286 (+0) helicopters, 2,007 (+10) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 857 (+0) cruise missiles, 18 (+0) warships/cutters, 5,148 (+14) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 239 fuel bowsers (+0) and 215 (+1) units of equipment.

Key Takeaways

Ukraine strikes multiple Russian supply lines and depots – Ukraine continues to strike deep behind Russian front lines and is destroying and damaging enemy supply lines, mustering points and depots. They track inbound arms and armor consignments and volley with HIMARS barrages of missile fire, extremely accurately and destructively.

Referring to the map alongside, one can see the scale and extent of a single day's artillery and missile assaults against Russian positions – shown as .

These attacks are over and above what is reflected in our header article, and are aimed at disrupting enemy replenishment capability, depriving Russian front line troops and battalions of ammunition, fuel, food and replacement troops.



Intelligent offensive actions – Ukraine is excelling in intelligent assault strikes, knowing full well that Russia is gearing to mount multiples offensives ahead of Kyiv receiving advanced western weaponry and resupply.

They are striking Russian fuel depots, replenishment points, rail junctions and troop assembly points among others, and all behind Russian front lines, severely disrupting and delaying Kremlin plans – and all during the inclement winter weather months – while Russia is forced to advance its offensive plans. The Kremlin needs each and every one of these assets in order to mount any offensive(s).

Ukraine is acutely identifying, singling out and targeting Russian sites and keeping them on the defensive, all the while preparing for its own and looming offensive(s). Very clever.

Sniper fire – Via frequent reporting it is becoming increasingly clear that Ukraine has deployed deadly sniper nests across all battlefield fronts. Some time ago we reported on a single sniper taking out an entire platoon of Russian soldiers.

Reading the interview article further below in today's Update, this is further reinforced by two captured Wagner soldiers who report that sniper fire took out entire troop assemblies.

Often unreported in detail, the effectiveness of Ukrainian sniper assaults more than often gets included in daily Russian attrition statistics. But they are lethal and extremely effective in that invading soldiers defending their lines cannot track the source of the assault and see fellow members being cut down one after another.

The other characteristic becoming ever-clearer is that a number of these snipers are women, trained in single arm fire and sniping techniques.

Sniper fire in and of itself is enormously effective in demoralizing troops on the ground as they always think they are next and spend more time in survival mode than attack.

The real rewarding factor of a successful sniper assault is that they identify command posts and take out leaders on the battlefield. Although Russian battalions are known to be relatively leaderless once they enter the affray, not enjoying the ground forward command and control features of NATO and US forces.

In eastern Ukraine, snipers watch and wait.

"I'm not afraid of Russians," says "Voron", a sniper with the State Border Guard of Ukraine in the eastern Donbas region.

"But don't tell my mum I'm here," he adds, laughing. The 29-year-old soldier's mother probably guessed, as her son has been in the military for 12 years -- and that he has wanted to be a sniper since childhood.

In action films, snipers are typically portrayed as ruthless, silent lone wolves, lying in wait to pick off prey with clinical efficiency. But "Voron" -- whose Ukrainian call sign means "Raven" in English -- describes a different reality.

"Usually the kit I have doesn't always fit into one car," he says from behind a thermal balaclava ski mask to keep out the biting cold and protect his identity.

To carry out his tasks, Voron needs much more than his AXMC, a rifle that can hit targets up to **1.5 kilometres (nearly one mile)** away.

"It's shovels just for building up your position, ammunition of course, your covering group and spotter... usually five or six people, four at a minimum."

Snipers have been playing their part.

They can conduct reconnaissance missions on targets up to three kilometres away or shoot small groups of enemy fighters from hidden positions.

Their first task is to meticulously monitor for any changes in the area.

"Brushwood that wasn't there the night before... might be an enemy sniper if it's a rural area," he explains.

"In more urban areas, you're looking for any changes in the windows and the roofs and something that is not how it should be... everything is a threat."

Looking into telescopic sights for long hours can be stressful, Voron says, but nothing is as difficult as withstanding the frost for hours on end.

Snipers can lie hidden for up to two days in one position.

Even when temperatures recently reached around minus 12 degrees Celsius (10 degrees Fahrenheit), covering the ground in snow and freezing everything, the men have to hold on.

"It's damn cold," he says with a laugh. "Hard work."

But the preparation and the wait, as painful as they may be, are the strength of the snipers.

"There's a joke in the military that if you tell the infantry and a sniper they have eight hours to cut down a tree, the infantry spends eight hours cutting down the tree," he says.

"The sniper spends seven hours sharpening the axe, then cuts it down with one blow."

Russia facing 'difficult choice' as troop numbers dwindle: UK - Russia is facing a "difficult choice" about whether to carry out a further mobilization of its forces as the country continues to lose troops in its invasion of Ukraine, according to the UK MoD.

It issued its latest intelligence update on the war in Ukraine on Twitter yesterday morning, reporting most of Russia's reservists had already been called up.

The MOD noted that Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner Group, a private mercenary organization that fights alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, had said on February 9 that "Wagner had halted its prisoner recruitment scheme."

"Data from the Russian Federal Penal Service had already suggested a drop-off in the rate of prisoner recruitment since December 2022," the ministry went on. "News of the harsh realities of Wagner service in Ukraine has probably filtered through to inmates and reduced the number of volunteers."

Putin's soldiers are dying faster than Russian analysts can count - Mediazona, an independent Russian media outlet that is tallying the number of killed Russian soldiers in Ukraine, recently stated that the number of reports of fatalities among Putin's troops has begun to increase.

"Over the past two to three weeks, we've noticed the number of reports [of killed soldiers] has begun to rise," Mediazona data journalist Maxim Litavrin told The Moscow Times.

The Russian media outlet's staff has been overwhelmed with counting Russian soldier deaths to the extent that Litavrin recently called for volunteers to join the team to work on the "casualty count project."

"Now there is a very large flow that we do not have time to parse. The topic is sensitive, and we are looking for either acquaintances or those who have already volunteered somewhere," Litavrin tweeted February 6.

Reasons for Russia's jump in deadly losses outlined by U.K. Intelligence - Russia's increasing casualty numbers in Ukraine are likely due to a "range of factors" related to Moscow's war effort, according to the British defense ministry.

Writing in its daily intelligence update, the government department said the "uptick in Russian casualties" reported in recent weeks is probably down to a "**lack of trained personnel, coordination, and resources across the front.**"

Today UGS reported around 900 Russian soldiers had been killed since the last count, published yesterday where the figure 1,140 for the previous 24-hour period, the General Staff said. (**Comment** - As reported in our daily reports and as reflected in our Update graph below).

This is the highest daily death toll for Russians reported in a single day by Ukraine's armed forces, overtaking the previous record of 1,030 troops on Tuesday.

Russian losses since the start of Moscow's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, now stand at 137,780.

It added that Ukraine's forces are also suffering a "high attrition rate" as the first anniversary of the war's outbreak approaches. This comes as Ukrainian officials warned that Russian forces are preparing to launch a new, major offensive in eastern Ukraine as early as within the next week.



On February 6, Luhansk's regional governor, Serhiy Haidai, warned on Telegram that the "enemy offensive can begin at any time after February 15" in the eastern region. Three days later, Haidai suggested the Russian offensive had begun in Luhansk, adding the following day that Russian forces were planning on heading to the Donetsk city of Lyman.

The disparity between the limited but significant Russian advances in the Bakhmut area and the lack of meaningful advances elsewhere in Ukraine may support milblogger and Ukrainian observations that Russian forces are unable to secure rapid advances through traditional mechanized maneuver warfare.

Russian military command is deploying its most elite units to the Bakhmut area in smaller formations using urban infiltration tactics, according to the limited footage of Russian tactics in the area that ISW has observed. These tactics seem to be resulting in significant tactical Russian advances in the Bakhmut area that could lead to operational gains if Ukrainian forces choose to withdraw from Bakhmut.

Russian offensive operations elsewhere in Donetsk Oblast and along the Svatove-Kreminna line have resulted in marginal advances without operational significance thus far. ISW has observed limited footage of Russian tactics in areas separate from the Bakhmut effort that suggests that Russian forces are engaging in more traditional mechanized maneuver warfare tactics with regular, not elite, motorized rifle, naval infantry, and tank elements.

All the formations so far observed were rendered combat-ineffective in earlier phases of the war and have very likely been reconstituted with mobilized personnel. The Kremlin military appears to have been unable to prepare its

mobilized personnel to conduct effective mechanized offensive operations in the short period of time since their call-ups, as ISW forecasted.

The lack of adequate vehicles, ammunition, and other materiel is likely contributing to the ineffectiveness of Russian mechanized maneuver tactics thus far. The Russian military is unlikely to be able to scale its approach from the Bakhmut area to the wider theater because the tactics it is using in Bakhmut are more suited to dense urban environments and because Russian forces lack the number of elite formations needed to conduct a larger offensive in eastern Ukraine in the same fashion. ISW's assessment regarding the prospects for future Russian mechanized offensive operations is offered with low confidence due to the limited available footage depicting Russian military tactics across the entire front line.

Comment – The primary rationale and reason for western-supplied MBTs (Main Battle Tanks) and APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers) is to enable Ukrainian troops to advance across significant (battle field) distances without its soldiers needing to traverse long marathon-type expanses on foot.

Ukraine is gearing up for its next offensive(s), but only once securely set with the means of maintaining a sustainable offensive(s) in conjunction with both a dependable supply chain and acceptable weather conditions.

But Ukraine is forcing Russia to move **now**, irrespective of and despite inclement weather and lack of battle preparedness – because it is keenly aware of the looming influx of MBTs, APCs and a plethora of other advanced military equipment and supplies, huge quantities of ammunition and missiles, and further supplies of guided weaponry such as HIMARS to Ukraine.

Yet Ukraine is simultaneously continuing, even now during winter and muddy conditions, to devastate and destroy Russian supply chain nodes, army reserves and replenishment sites and routes as shown above, further degrading Russia's plan or ability to mount any sustained attack or attacks across independent fronts.

Despite Russia having a considerable numerical advantage in tanks, armored equipment and a huge 4:1 lead in its number of troops, it has not shown any ability to make meaningful headway in any terrain.

Marginal gains in and around Bakhmut and Soledar have been primarily successful due to them throwing thousands of Russian conscripts into battle and engaging in door-to-door tactics.

These do not work in large-scale cross terrain battle offensives. Door-to-door tactics are geared to urban warfare and not open terrain advancement and maneuvering. Throwing thousands of untrained soldiers into a close-combat environment is not the same as throwing them across great expanses of territory – without armored support and afoot.

How is the Kremlin going to re-supply, feed and support them?

Kyiv is continually striking Russian supply routes, rail junctions and assembly points, forcing the Kremlin to relocate supplies ever further back from front lines, elongating distances between storage and requirement. Now commanders need to add additional trucks and personnel to travel these longer distances, all the while exposing them to Ukrainian detection and attack.

The moment they start moving trucks and vehicles to resupply the Ukrainians bombard them with accurate HIMARS and other weaponry.

Ukraine receives 20,000 applications for 'Stormtrooper' fighting force - Ukraine has unveiled an initiative to create a fighting force that can help in liberating occupied territories. Those who apply for the "Offensive Guard" assault brigades among the country's National Guard will be called stormtroopers.

The National Guard of Ukraine stated Saturday that they've already received more than 20,000 applications to become part of the fighting force.

Ukrinform reported that NSU spokesman Ruslan Muzychuk announced Saturday during a national telethon that interest in joining the Guard has grown by the thousands.

"In general, there are already more than 20,000 applications. We have three main sources of applications," Muzychuk said. "We receive the largest number through www.storm.mvs.gov.ua, where the online survey works. More than 14,000 questionnaires were received through this channel, more than 7,500 of them are applications for joining the National Guard units. "TsNAPy" also work, "hot lines," of course, work is carried out through the picking centers."

Muzychuk said the next step is to ciph through the applications and determine which potential fighters will best fit its assault brigades. Any candidates selected during the process must go through a medical examination, psychological testing and a thorough review of documents.

"All these stages of selection are necessary, since we are forming assault brigades. Highly motivated candidates must get there, they must also meet other requirements for the formation of such units," Muzychuk said.

These troops called stormtroopers by the Ukrainian National Guard will be given several federal perks should they make it through the liberation of Luhansk, Donetsk and Crimea from Russian occupiers.

Russia loses 13 tanks, 14 armored vehicles and an aircraft in a day: Kyiv - Russia lost more than a dozen tanks and armored vehicles in Ukraine within the last 24 hours, according to an update published by Ukraine's armed forces.

Ukraine's General Staff reported on Sunday that Moscow's forces had lost 13 tanks, 14 armored vehicles and a Russian aircraft since its previous update on Saturday. It said Ukraine's forces had shot down a Russian Su-25 aircraft, a single-seat, twin engine Soviet-era plane.

The General Staff reported that 900 Russian soldiers had been killed during the same time frame, but that couldn't be independently verified.

On Friday, the British defense ministry said Russian forces had "abandoned" armored vehicles near the Donetsk town of Vuhledar, which has seen heavy fighting in recent weeks.

After relaunching an offensive around the western edge of Vuhledar late last month, the "inexperienced units" sent by Russia's military command "likely suffered particularly heavy casualties," the defense ministry said.

"Russian troops likely fled and abandoned at least 30 mostly intact armored vehicles in a single incident after a failed assault," the government department wrote on Twitter.

On February 10, Russian ultra-nationalist "milblogger" Igor Girkin wrote on Telegram that "more than 30 units of armored vehicles were lost" in attacks on Vuhledar.

Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council and former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday that Russia was going to up its tank production after Western countries committed further military aid to Kyiv.

Ukraine's top military commander says the country's forces are holding their defences along the front line in the eastern region of Donetsk, including the besieged town of Bakhmut, with the fiercest battles for the cities of Vuhledar and Maryinka.

The head of Russia's Wagner Group said it could take two years for Moscow to control all of the two eastern Ukrainian regions whose capture it has stated as a key goal of the war.

Galina Danilchenko, the Russia-installed mayor of the Ukrainian city Melitopol in the southeastern Zaporizhia region, said one civilian died and two people were injured in overnight shelling by Ukrainian forces.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov discussed “priorities,” including air defence and artillery, for upcoming meetings of Kyiv’s allies in Brussels, both sides said.

'Just to survive': Wagner fighters recount the horrors of battle in eastern Ukraine - Two former fighters of the Russian private military company Wagner have told CNN of their horrific experiences on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine, and how anyone who faltered was immediately shot by their own commanders.

The two fighters were captured by Ukrainian forces late last year. CNN is not disclosing their identities for their own safety. Both are married with children and were recruited while in prison. One was serving a 20-year sentence for manslaughter.

For security reasons, the Ukrainians kept a presence in the room where the interview took place. CNN told the fighters that they could end the interview at any time they wished. But they spoke in detail for more than an hour.

The two told of hideous losses in “first wave” assaults reminiscent of World War I charges.

“There were 90 of us. Sixty died in that first assault, killed by mortar fire. A handful remained wounded,” said one, recalling his first assault near the village of Bilohorivka. “If one group is unsuccessful, another is sent right away. If the second one is unsuccessful, they send another group.”

The other fighter was involved in an assault lasting five days, through a forest near the city of Lysychansk on the Luhansk-Donetsk border in eastern Ukraine.

“The first steps into the forest were difficult because of all the landmines spread out. Out of 10 guys, seven were killed immediately,” he said.

“You can’t help the wounded. The Ukrainians were firing heavily on us, so even if their wounds were minor, you’ve got to keep going, otherwise you’re the one getting hit by the fire.

“You are at it for five days, people dying right next to me, praying to God, begging for water. You think that you can put down your weapon and nothing else will happen. And then the fight starts again 10 minutes later, and [the Ukrainians] keep coming after you. There is no feeling attached to it. Just wave after wave.”

“Four hundred [Wagner fighters] were brought there, and then more and more, all the time.”

The prisoner said a self-preservation instinct had kicked in for him, but others froze. “Some stop right there in the forest and drop their weapons. But to drop your weapons is to come under sniper fire and die.”

There was no evacuation of the wounded, he added. “If you’re wounded, you roll away on your own at first, any way you can, somewhere neutral where there’s no fire, and if there’s no one around, you administer first aid to yourself,” he said.

Casualties piled up by the dozen, the men said. “When the casualties arrive, you get orders to load them, and you don’t really think who’s dead and who’s wounded,” one of the fighters said.

Throughout their several weeks on the front lines, the two men said they had only one instinct.

“Just to survive. I just had the desire to survive, no matter what the cost,” said one.

They became numb to the casualties and the killing of the Ukrainian soldiers they faced. “You’d think you’d feel something [after killing someone], but no, you just keep going.”

The alternative to walking through minefields towards Ukrainian artillery was just as lethal, according to the men's accounts.

"We couldn't retreat without orders because if we don't comply with the order, we will be killed," said one of the prisoners.

"One man stayed at a position, he was really scared, it was his first assault. We received an order to run forward. But the man hid under a tree and refused. This was reported to the command and that was it. He was taken 50 meters away from the base. He was digging his own grave and then was shot."

The other fighter reported a similar situation: "Our commander was told that if anyone gets cold feet, he would have to be eliminated. And if we failed to eliminate him, we would be eliminated for failing to eliminate him."

The promise of freedom

The two described how they were recruited by Wagner. Late last year, the group's chief, Yevgeny Prigozhin, arrived by helicopter at the prisons where they were held, offering six-month contracts in return for being pardoned.

One of the men still had 10 years of jail time ahead after a manslaughter conviction.

"I weighed that six months was better than the 10 or 11 years I could still spend in prison... I just wanted a fresh start in life," he said.

At the time, Prigozhin's recruitment campaign in Russia's prisons was in full swing. It's estimated by Western intelligence officials and prison advocacy groups that between 40,000 and 50,000 men were recruited.

On Thursday, Prigozhin said the prison recruitment drive was over but gave no reason.

"Only a handful in my unit came for money, most came because they had long sentences," said one of the fighters. "But there were also some who had only 12 days of their sentence remaining, and they went anyway."

"They lined everyone up in the yard and Prigozhin started recruiting people," he said. "[Prigozhin] said he had the authority from higher-up bodies to take anyone from the prison, regardless of the crimes or the prison term. The ideal candidates are murderers, robbers."

The selection process was so rudimentary that older prisoners only had to show they could march a few yards, one of the prisoners said. "They took almost everyone."

Soon after Prigozhin's visits, hundreds of prisoners were taken by bus and plane to a training ground in the Rostov region of Russia, according to the two men. There was a strict ban on drugs and alcohol, one of the prisoners said. Some of the commanders said they had fought for Wagner in Africa and Syria.

The training was brief and basic – handling guns for the terrible assaults they would soon be ordered to carry out. The men said it was clear they were being prepared for missions they'd not signed up for.

Now they are bitter about the deceptions in Prigozhin's sales pitch.

"He did not mention anything about danger," one said. "He talked about expunging all convictions, we would serve six months, all convictions would be expunged, an advance payment of 240,000 roubles (around \$3,300) and also that our task was to hold the defense on the second line."

"We thought we'd be fighting Poles and various mercenaries. Germans. We didn't think anyone was left in the Ukrainian army there. We thought they'd left the country," said one.

“So it became clear they were just spinning lies to get us to enter into battle with the Ukrainians. No one really thought that the AFU [Armed Forces of Ukraine] would actually fight for their own country, for their loved ones. We only learned this after going in there.”

It was almost a relief to be captured, the prisoners said.

One said he and a wounded comrade were the only survivors in his group, caught “between two Ukrainian mortars and a sniper.”

“The command ordered me to dig in at my position, so I dug in at my position, awaiting evacuation. They sent one group of 10, and the sniper eliminated all 10,” he recalled.

“Then the command told us on the walkie-talkie: Get out any way you can, you’re on your own.”

It was then, he said, that Ukrainian soldiers “came up and fired a shot next to my foot, said ‘hands up,’ and that was it.”

The mighty Russian military is dying in Ukraine – The war in Ukraine continues to take a large toll on the Russian military. In the past week alone, the Russian forces have lost close to 5,000 men in what has been the deadliest week of the war in Ukraine. (**Comment** – This report, albeit in today’s headlines, is actually what we have previously reported).

On the 353rd day of the war, the two sides are looking for a breakthrough, with the heaviest fighting taking place in the Donbas around Bakhmut and Vuhledar.

Overall numbers Ukraine is claiming as killed or injured are corroborated by U.S. and Western intelligence estimates.

The heavy casualties that the Russian military is taking are bound to catch up sooner or later.

The Kremlin has created a reserve force of around 150,000 troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense has been maintaining that force as a strategic reserve.

Since October, it has been training and equipping that force for future large-scale offensive operations.

But the casualties the Russian units have been taking on the ground might force the Kremlin to hijack its plan and deploy some of these troops to plug gaps on the frontlines.

Overall, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense claimed that as of Saturday, Ukrainian forces have killed approximately 136,880 Russian troops (and wounded approximately thrice that number)(**Comment** – These numbers and those reflected below are as of a day ago, for the latest numbers see above in our header).

Destroyed equipment includes 295 fighter, attack, bomber, and transport jets, 286 attack and transport helicopters, 3,267 tanks, 2,270 artillery pieces, 6,474 armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles, 463 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), 18 boats and cutters, 5,134 vehicles and fuel tanks, 234 anti-aircraft batteries, 1,997 tactical unmanned aerial systems, 214 special equipment platforms, such as bridging vehicles, and four mobile Iskander ballistic missile systems, and 857 cruise missiles shot down by the Ukrainian air defenses.

Russia “too depleted for big offensive on war anniversary” – A senior military intelligence official said Russia does not have military resources to launch a major offensive tied to the one-year anniversary of the start of the war.

Andriy Chernyak, a representative of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian MoD, made the assertion about Putin’s military suffering from a major lack of weapons in a story published Friday in the Kyiv Post.

Chernyak’s position that a large offensive will not occur in the coming days runs counter to another recent public assessment from a prominent Ukrainian official. Last weekend, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said Russia

will likely use the symbolism of the one-year anniversary of the invasion to begin another massive attack. Reznikov indicated the offensive would begin on or near the February 24 anniversary.

Chernyak allowed that Russia was likely planning some form of assault in the coming weeks and that Putin's troops are "trying to find weaknesses" in Ukraine's defense.

"However, according to our information, Russian command does not have enough resources for large-scale offensive actions," Chernyak said, according to the Kyiv Post. "Russia is facing a lack of precision weapons, and despite that, it will continue to use missile terror against civilians in Ukraine."

He also said that Putin's military has already used more than 80 percent of its precision-guided missiles, which Russia has not been able to replace.

Antarctic

China building a satellite base at Antarctica, stirring embers of Monroe Doctrine - China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC) had been selected to build a new ground station in Antarctica to serve China's National Satellite Ocean Application Service (NSOAS).

Such news, reported February 2, might have ordinarily set off alarm bells in Washington, but the Americans were too busy watching the large Chinese spy balloon drift above North America.

Since 2002, China has launched eight ocean observation satellites into orbit for various purposes including oceanographic analysis, resource exploitation, the study of coastal ecology and disaster monitoring. A ninth is scheduled to be launched this year. The new Antarctica ground station will facilitate the transmission of data from these satellites.

Containment

Meet the M1A2 SEPV4 Abrams: This might be the best tank ever - President Biden announced Ukraine will receive 31 American-made M1A2 Abrams tanks to support its defensive efforts against Russia in a significant policy reversal. The President explained that this delivery would "enhance Ukraine's capacity to defend its territory and achieve its strategic objectives."

The decision to send over the M1A2 variant of the MBT (main battle tank) was made partly due to the lack of "excess" Abrams of the outdated M1A1 model in stock. While the basic M1A2 variant of the Abrams tank has undergone several upgrades over time, the newest M1A2 SEPV4 model is currently under development and will feature some significant improvements.

Here is why the M1A2 SEPV4 Abrams is truly special and perhaps the best tank ever:

Developed by Chrysler Defense (now General Dynamics Land Systems) in the early 1980s, the Abrams remains the main battle tank for the U.S. Army.

The original M1 Abrams hosted various advantages as compared to its foreign counterparts, including a heavier frame, a multifuel turbine engine, and Chobham composite armor.

Perhaps the most critical component of the M1 Abrams design was the integrated electronic Fire Control System, which considered variables ranging from ammunition type to wind velocity to provide the ideal fire solution.

The first prototype of the M1 Abrams sported license-build versions for the 105mm Royal Ordnance L7 gun, followed by the production of thousands of more tanks that were equipped with improved armor in addition to a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense (CBRN) protection system.

The latest M1 Abrams development is the variant, which is at the U.S. Army's Arizona.

The report in predecessor. feature Sight (GPS), lethality, onboard diagnostics systems.



variant to hit M1A2 SEPv4 undergoing testing Yuma Proving Ground in

Pentagon's Office of the Director released a 2021 that detailed some of the SEPv4's improvements from its The new Abrams variant will upgrades to its Gunner's Primary Commander's Primary Sight (CPS), communications, data-sharing and

Additionally, the SEPv4 model will sport a "new onboard meteorological sensor that can collect various types of data to improve accuracy," and a Laser Warning Receiver (LWR) system that should improve the crew's survivability by warning them when targeting lasers associated with weapons including guided anti-tank missiles are headed their way.

Why Trophy is real game changer for MBTs.

The Israeli-developed Trophy active protection system is also compatible with the M1A2 SEPv4 variant and is extremely effective at defending armored vehicles against anti-tank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades.

By providing its tank with increased security, the Trophy system allows crews to take more risks and act more offensively in combat.

While this system is also fitted to the SEPv3 Abrams model, it is unlikely that any Abrams tanks delivered to Ukraine will incorporate them since the Israeli government has been hesitant to stir the pot with the Kremlin, who may not take kindly to the use of Trophy by Ukrainian Forces.

Comments, Developments and Reports

BRICS is aiding and abetting Russia's war in Ukraine - The BRICS' mixed response to the Russian invasion highlights the realities of the BRICS group today. While Brazil, India, China and South Africa have all refused to criticize Russia's hostilities in Ukraine and have not voted against the invasion at the United Nations, none have done anything actively to support Russia, either.

Canada shoots down yet another possible Chinese spy balloon Saturday... what's going on? - Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau confirmed on Saturday afternoon that an "unidentified object" had been shot down.

This comes after two potential spy balloons were recently shot down in U.S. airspace. The first traveled all the way across the country before being shot down over the Atlantic Ocean last Saturday. Then, a second balloon was found floating above Alaska and was shot down on Friday.

Two or more potential spy balloons being monitored by US military - with one airborne over Canada.

NORAD has confirmed that the United States military is monitoring yet another potential spy balloon had been spotted flying over Canada.

This comes shortly after an unidentified object was shot down over Alaska after it was able to penetrate US airspace before detection, officials have revealed.

'We have positively identified a high-altitude airborne object over Northern Canada,' NORAD officials said in a statement.

'While we cannot discuss specifics related to these activities at this time, please note that NORAD conducts sustained, dispersed operations in the defence of North America through one or all three NORAD regions,' Major Olivier Gallant, a NORAD spokesperson, said in a statement.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that US intelligence officials believe a pair of unidentified objects shot down by US fighter jets are balloons.



His revelation this morning comes hours after an American fighter jet shot down a high-altitude airborne object that was tracked from Alaska into Canada. The White House, however, has said it's still too early to determine what they were, exactly.

Ukraine posts video of Russian bomb explosion as Olympics dispute deepens - Ukraine's defense ministry released a dramatic video depicting how Russia's aggression is not compatible with it competing in next year's Summer Olympics.

The clip starts with a Russian volleyball player serving the ball before segueing into a bomb explosion on a street in an unnamed location.

A caption appears saying "the white flag of Russia belongs on the battlefield, not at the Olympics" before ending with the hashtag "boycott Russian sport."

The Ukrainian defense ministry wrote on Twitter next to the video: "You don't see this direct connection? Come to Ukraine and find out! It is in your power to stop the promotion of terrorism on the world's premier sporting arena."

"It is in our power to stop terrorists on the battlefield," it added by the clip, which as of Saturday afternoon had been viewed 100,000 times.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has imposed sanctions on Russia and Belarus which include banning the display of Russian and Belarusian flags at IOC events.

However, the IOC has opened the door for Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete as neutrals saying that **no one "should be prevented from competing just because of their passport."**

Comment – Absolute balderdash by the IOC – they banned South African athletes for decades because of the country's Apartheid policy and any and all bearers of a South African passport was banned – even though they were competing **"just because of their passport."**

Putin & Russia

Putin opponent Mikhail Khodorkovsky is planning for a change of guard in the Kremlin - Along with other prominent Russians, Mikhail Khodorkovsky is at the forefront of the resistance against Putin. He sees Switzerland as a model for the future Russia.

Khodorkovsky (59) is Putin's greatest Russian opponent. The once wealthiest man in Russia, who had to spend ten years in a labour camp and then lived in Switzerland, is planning to build a new a new Russian state for when Putin is gone.

He is the founder of Open Russia^{External link} and the Russian Anti-War Committee^{External link} through which he fights against the elites in the Kremlin together with well-known figures such as the former world chess champion Garry Kasparov (59), the former Russian prime minister Mikhail Kassyanov (65) and the historian Vladimir Kara Mursa (41). Kasparov calls Khodorkovsky the man of the hour for the time after Putin.

In response to Hungarian President Orban saying last week that the war could be ended quickly if Ukraine gave up, Khodorkovsky said it is up to Ukraine to decide whether it wants to give up or not, and whether it wants to continue sacrificing human lives to defend its territory. But as an experienced politician, Orban should know that an end to the war is only possible if Putin leaves.

He said further that there are three ways in which the war will develop. The **first**: The Russian regime collapses, for example because Putin dies of a heart attack. The **second**: The war continues with great losses for years, whereby it is not predictable how it will end.

The **third**: The West equips Ukraine with the means it needs to end the war quickly. It must be a kind of aid where Putin knows he will lose.

Regarding sanctions against Russia he advised that in the long term, they certainly have an effect. But the main source of conflict is the potential of skilled labour force. Western countries would have to recruit Russian engineers, for example, and make it very easy for them to settle.

The loss of such people is much more painful for Putin than economic sanctions. Moreover, the West could benefit from such professionals, since there is a shortage of skilled workers despite the recession.

Russia's gold reserves will last another three years. At least.

Insofar as the threat of a nuclear conflict Khodorkovsky intimated that Churchill once said the danger of nuclear war should be eliminated forever. For as long as the atomic bomb can remain an argument, it would quickly become the only argument in a dispute. Who can stop Putin in his suicidal intent?

A nuclear war would be pointless. It would come down to a response by the US, which could wipe out Putin's troops with conventional weapons alone. The families of the Kremlin elites would also be wiped out. Everyone knows that.

As to the future Russian State, he advised that there are two paths. One is the **Yugoslavian** model, in which Russia would be divided into several states. That would be very dangerous and could lead to nuclear conflicts and new dictatorships.

I advocate the path of complete reconstruction and the development towards a parliamentary and federalist model - similar to **Switzerland**. There is a lot of support for this model in the cities.

It will take at least twenty years. Russia's development is currently where Germany was shortly after the end of the Second World War.

We have to convince Russian society of our model. For that we need the media. The elites should know that there is a way out of their situation without having their heads chopped off.

In addition, we want to convince the West not to use the sanctions to divide Russia, but to rebuild it.

Article quoted from Guido Felder of Blick, dated yesterday.

Kremlin leaders 'fear' Wagner group founder, Putin ally says - Kremlin leaders are afraid of Wagner Group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin, according to Sergei Markov, a key ally to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As the Russia-Ukraine war approaches its one-year mark later this month, Russia has struggled to achieve invasion goals against Ukraine, despite the vast size of its military. Challenges in maintaining motivated, well-trained forces opened the door for Ukraine to launch a counteroffensive in the fall, which allowed it to retake thousands of square miles of formerly occupied territory while delivering major losses to Putin.

Facing growing losses, Moscow in recent months turned to the Wagner Group, a paramilitary unit, in hopes of turning the tide of the war back in its favor. The group, which for years had a presence in other parts of the world including Africa, is heavily comprised of prisoners and is known for its brutality and disregard for international law.

Russia has denied connections to the group, but has publicly touted the group's efforts in the Ukrainian city of Soledar as one of its most significant victories in recent months.

Markov, a Russian political analyst who supports Putin and frequently appears on Russian state TV—which largely serves as Putin's propaganda machine—told The New York Times in an interview published Saturday that some Kremlin leaders are afraid of the "unpredictable" Prigozhin.

The Kremlin sent out a directive to Russian state TV pundits to not "excessively promote Prigozhin and Wagner," Markov told the Times. He did not say exactly who made the request, only clarifying that it came from "leadership."

'Shocking evidence': A former Australian prime minister is part of a plan to jail Putin - Legal experts are warning the international system makes pursuing Putin difficult. A former prime minister is part of a group aiming to change that.

Handcuffed bodies scattered in Bucha. Missiles raining down on civilians in Kyiv. Reports of mass sexual assault by Russian forces. They are part of what former Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull tells SBS News are "growing dossiers of shocking evidence of war crimes", committed at the behest of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Russian government flatly denies committing the atrocities, though the United Nations in December corroborated the murder of at least 441 Ukrainian civilians, warning the number is likely "significantly higher."

Pursuing the troops who pulled the trigger is one thing. But legal experts warn prosecuting the officials who ordered them over the border is a more complex process.

Australia has joined an international movement, looking back to the 1940s for a solution.

One route to justice already appears a dead end.

The ICC can drag officials into the dock, provided their country has ratified the Rome Statute, which established the court and the international crimes it rules on - genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crime of aggression. Russia withdrew from the statute in 2016 after its annexation of Crimea.

Special courts were established in the ICC during the 1990s, over atrocities committed in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. But both required a referral from the UN's Security Council, over which Russia wields a veto.

Mr Turnbull is one of more than 100 world leaders and legal experts calling for a special tribunal, established by like-minded countries, to break that deadlock. He warned failing to act would send a dangerous message to autocrats: you can act with impunity.

"We have to hold Putin, and those who have done his bidding, to account for their crimes. If we don't do so, we encourage them to commit more crimes, and we commit others to do the same," he said.

The Nuremberg courts, established in the 1940s to prosecute Nazi officials, provide an obvious model.

But while the trials secured more than 100 convictions - including of politicians, military leaders, and business people - many senior officials, including leader Adolf Hitler, died or escaped before facing justice.

Comment – Even if unsuccessful, hordes of Russian officials and politicians, military and command folk will be unable to travel or interact for the rest of their lives. Declaring Russia a “State Sponsor of Terrorism” will similarly impact its ability to trade and operate in a free society.

Widows of Russian soldiers were filmed being gifted fur coats – but weren't allowed to keep them, an anti-war group says - The widows of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine were filmed being gifted fur coats – but the coats were later taken away, according to an anti-war group.

A video circulated on social media showed a group of women holding up fur coats in Makiivka in occupied eastern Ukraine and saying "thank you" in unison.

The CHTD Telegram news channel shared the clip and said that the "widows were given 21 fur coats as compensation for the breadwinner who died in Ukraine."

"Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for taking care of us," one woman said in the video, adding that the widows were "very grateful," according to a translation by Newsweek.

The video was shared on social media by Miroslava Reginskaya, the wife of Igor Girkin, also known by the alias Igor Strelkov, a prominent military blogger and former Russian intelligence officer who played a key role in the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The person filming the video was identified by several media outlets as Yevgeny Skripnik, an associate of Girkin.



Last year, Girkin was sentenced to life in prison for his role in shooting down Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in 2014 by a Dutch court, but he remains at large. **(Comment** – He is a very regular critic of Russian tactics and losses).

His wife, who helped to deliver the coats, said on social media that 21 coats had been provided by businessman Alexander Vasilievich and were given to the wives of soldiers who had died in the Donbas region since 2014.