

Conflict Update # 57

May 12th, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Key Takeaways – Operational

Russian forces made marginal gains to the north of Severodonetsk and have likely captured Rubizhne and Voevodivka.

Russian forces fired intensively on Ukrainian positions in northern Kharkiv to stop the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive around Kharkiv City. The artillery focus on Ukrainian positions has likely diverted the Russian artillery that remains in range of Kharkiv to the more urgent task of stopping the Ukrainian advance.

Russian forces are strengthening their position on Snake Island in an effort to block Ukrainian maritime communications and capabilities in the northwestern Black Sea on the approaches to Odesa.

Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts

Russian forces did not make any confirmed advances around Izyum. Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces transferred additional equipment and one battalion tactical group (BTG) to the Izyum area. Russian forces launched unsuccessful assaults on Oleksandrivka and Novoselivka, 20 and 30 km east of Izyum respectively, to gain a foothold on the eastern bank of the Seversky Donets River. The Russians may abandon attempts at a wide encirclement of Ukrainian forces from Izyum along the Slovyansk road in favor of smaller encirclements in Lyman, Kreminna, and Severodonetsk, The UK Defense Ministry reported that Russian units withdrawn from near Kharkiv City will likely replenish units on the eastern flank of the Seversky Donets River in an effort to defend the western flank of Russian lines of communication. Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Ukrainian forces fortified 170 km between Kramatorsk and Slovyansk and, falsely, that the Ukrainians are using civilians as human shields, likely in an attempt to set information conditions to explain the abandonment of the Izyum axis or justify the slow and limited advances in the area.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 12, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces likely seized Rubizhne and made marginal advances to Voevodivka, a suburb of Severodonetsk. Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Serhiy Haidai said that Ukrainian forces partially control Rubizhne, but Ukrainian servicemen claimed that Ukrainian forces only have access to the T1302 highway exit on the settlement's western outskirts. Luhansk People's Republic and Chechen units today entered the Zorya Chemical Plant between Rubizhne and Voevodivka with ongoing fighting was ongoing at the plant. Ukrainian forces destroyed a second Russian pontoon bridge in the vicinity of Bilohorivka, approximately 13 km from Rubizhne, on May 11 to slow the Russian encirclement of the settlement from the northwestern direction. Severodonetsk Regional State Administration Head Oleksandr Stryuk confirmed that Russian forces today seized Voevodivka, contradicting the Ukrainian General Staff's assertion that the Russian offensive was unsuccessful. Russian forces will likely launch a ground offensive on Severodonetsk in the coming days once they fully secure Voevodivka.

Russian forces conducted several unsuccessful and disjointed offensive operations in northwestern Donetsk Oblast in the vicinity of Avdiivka. They tried and failed to seize settlements north of Donetsk City, likely in an effort to advance via Bahmut to Kramatorsk and Slovyansk. Ukrainian artillery continued to strike Russian forces on the western border of Donetsk Oblast, stopping Russian advances in the Bahmut and Zaporizhia City directions.

Supporting Effort #1—Mariupol - Russian forces continued to conduct air and artillery strikes against Ukrainian positions in the Azovstal Steel Plant on May 12, but notably did not conduct a ground offensive on Azovstal today, instead focusing on blocking Ukrainian defenders from using tunnels to exit the plant.

Russian authorities continued occupation activity in Mariupol. Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian forces have established filtration checkpoints throughout the entire city to further consolidate control. Andryushchenko noted that occupation authorities may hold a referendum for Mariupol to join Russia as soon as May 15, which is consistent with earlier reporting that children in Mariupol and the surrounding areas are signing their school notebooks with "Mariupol, Rostov Region, Russia."

Supporting Effort #2—Kharkiv City - Russian forces today continued their defensive action against Ukrainian gains made by the on-going Ukrainian counteroffensive northeast of Kharkiv City. Neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces made any confirmed advances in northern Kharkiv Oblast in the last 24 hours. Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces are focusing on regrouping troops and firing intensively on Ukrainian positions in Pytomnyk and Ruski Tyshky (both within 20 kilometers north of the northern border Kharkiv City) to prevent a further northward advance toward the Russian border. Head of Kharkiv Regional State Administration Oleg Synegebov noted that Russian forces did not shell Kharkiv City today, which indicates that Russian troops are likely largely out of artillery range of the city and that fire from units that are still in range is likely being directed at Ukrainian troops advancing on Russian positions instead of civilian suburbs.

Supporting Effort #3—Southern Axis - Russian forces attempted to improve their positions along the Southern Axis and continued to fire on Ukrainian troops but did not make any confirmed advances on May 12. Ukrainian Operational Command "South" emphasized that Russian forces are conducting hostilities along the Mykolaiv-Kherson border in order to launch an offensive into Mykolaiv, and fired on Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts, and Kryvyi Rih.

Ukrainian Ministry of Defense stated that the Russian grouping on Snake Island is trying to improve its position on the island in an effort to block Ukrainian maritime communications and capabilities in the northwestern Black Sea, particularly toward Odesa. They noted that Russian forces have built up their air defense system in Western Crimea in a likely attempt to provide air cover for naval activities in the northwestern Black Sea.

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

Immediate items to watch

- The Belarusian Defense Ministry announced the second stage of rapid response force exercises, but Belarus remains unlikely to join the war in Ukraine.
- Russia is likely setting conditions to integrate occupied Ukrainian territories directly into Russia, as opposed to creating proxy “People’s Republics.”
- Russian forces have apparently decided to seize the Azovstal plant through ground assault and will likely continue operations accordingly.
- Ukrainian counteroffensives around Kharkiv City are pushing back Russian positions northeast of the city toward the international border and will likely continue to force the Russians to reinforce those positions at the cost of reinforcing Russian offensive operations elsewhere.

Russia has now lost over 300 officers in the war - More than 300 Russian officers have been killed in Ukraine, according to publicly available data analyzed by independent news website Mediazona. This figure dates back three weeks, so it is to be expected that the current number is higher.

Russia Bugged Down in Ukraine - When Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine in February, Russian general Yakov Reztantsev apparently told his troops that they would not be at war for long. “This operation is going to be over in mere hours,” Reztantsev said, according to an intercepted conversation released by the Ukrainian security services. The Moscow Times was unable to verify the recording.

More than two months later, Russian troops have made only limited gains in Ukraine and are bogged down in brutal fighting, inching forward in some places and losing territory in others. With Russia’s losses of men and materiel rising rapidly, predictions of a long and bloody military stalemate are becoming increasingly common.

Reztantsev himself was killed in March in a Ukrainian airstrike near the Russian-occupied city of Kherson in southern Ukraine, according to the BBC.

This quiet electric motorcycle is helping Ukrainian snipers fight back against the Russians - Electric bikes and motorcycles have been seeing increased military use for several years. So it should come as no surprise that Ukrainian forces have found them to be an effective tactical vehicle to fight back against Russian aggression.

ELEEK, a Ukrainian electric bicycle and motorbike company based in Ternopil, has begun supplying the Ukrainian Army with the company’s ELEEK Atom motorbikes.

Mamuka Mamulashvili, commander of the Georgian Legion, a unit in the Ukrainian Army formed of mostly ethnically Georgian soldiers, told The War Zone that he requested the electric motorbikes for his sniper teams, explaining that they required the electric bikes to quietly insert into a target area, engage the enemy from a distance, and then quickly exfiltrate before the Russians answer with artillery strikes on the location.

‘They were furious’: the Russian soldiers refusing to fight in Ukraine - When soldiers of an elite Russian army brigade were told in early April to prepare for a second deployment to Ukraine, fear broke out among the ranks.

The unit, stationed in Russia’s far east during peacetime, first entered Ukraine from Belarus when the war started at the end of February and saw bitter combat with Ukrainian forces.



“It soon became clear that not everyone was onboard with it. Many simply did not want to go back,” said Dmitri, a member of the unit who asked not to be identified with his real name. “I want to return to my family – and not in a casket.” Along with eight others, Dmitri told his commanders that he refused to rejoin the invasion. “They were furious. But they eventually calmed down because there wasn’t much they could do,” he said.

Under Russian military rules, troops who refuse to fight in Ukraine can face dismissal but cannot be prosecuted, said Mikhail Benyash, a lawyer who has been advising soldiers who choose that option.

Benyash said “hundreds and hundreds” of soldiers had been in touch with his team for advice on how they could avoid being sent to fight. Among them were 12 national guardsmen from Russia’s southern city of Krasnodar who were fired after refusing to go to Ukraine.

Moscow initially put about 80% of its main ground combat forces – 150,000 men – into the war in February, according to western officials. But significant damage has been done to that army, which has confronted logistical problems, poor morale and an underestimated Ukrainian resistance.

Ukraine lists Russians killed at 28,000, meaning that 84,000 have been injured, amounting to 112,000 dead or injured – a 75% casualty rate. Enough to destroy any military force.

10 Warships and counting – Ukraine has now sunk 10 Russian vessels. They have ramped up these attacks as Russian naval bombardment of coastal cities has increased.

Ukrainian Troops Appear To Have Fought All The Way To The Russian Border - Ukrainian forces around Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, appear to have pushed Russian troops east past Ternova, a settlement on the Russian border. If confirmed, the Ukrainians’ liberation of Ternova could mark an inflection point in Russia’s 10-week-old wider war in Ukraine. In late March, Ukrainian forces drove Russian invaders from northern Ukraine. Now it appears they’re driving the invaders from northeastern Ukraine, too.

Note – Caution should be followed as according to the Russian Constitution, it cannot declare a war – unless it is being invaded. Up to now, Putin has been unable to justify this and has been forced to call it a “social Military Operation” bringing with it his inability to mobilize – as there is no “War”.

Should he however stretch Ukrainian entry into Russian territory as an “invasion” he may try to justify what to date he has been able to do. He desperately needs to mobilize in order to sway the current impasse in his invasion.

Russia has Fired Between ‘10 and 12’ Hypersonics into Ukraine, Pentagon Says - Russia has launched about a dozen hypersonic missiles during its war on Ukraine and is running out of precision guided munitions in general, a Pentagon senior defense official said Tuesday. Efforts to replace them are hindered by sanctions and export controls imposed since the February invasion, the official said.

As a result, Russia has relied more on dumb bombs in its airstrikes and have been launching between 200 and 300 sorties a day in recent weeks, but many of those aircraft only stay in Ukrainian airspace briefly to drop munitions, then return to Russian airspace, the official said.

Monday saw an uptick to about 350 sorties, focused on Mariupol, the Donbas, and some strikes on Odesa, the official said. On Monday night, Ukrainian officials told CNN that Odesa had been struck by three hypersonic missiles.

The senior defense official said the Pentagon could not confirm the Odesa strikes but said that Russia has launched “between 10 and 12” hypersonic missiles since the invasion began in February.

Early on in the war, Russia struggled to fire its precision guided munitions on their bombers and fighter jets, with the bombs refusing to release or misfiring. The Pentagon said it had seen indications of Russian aircraft returning to base with the munitions still on their wings.

The Russians Lost Nearly An Entire Battalion Trying To Cross A River In Eastern Ukraine - The better part of a Russian army battalion—50 or so vehicles and up to a thousand troops—in recent days tried to cross a pontoon bridge spanning the Siverskyi Donets River, running west to east between the separatist provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian artillery caught them at the river bank—and destroyed them.

The rapid destruction of around three dozen tanks and other armored vehicles, along with the bridge itself, underscores Russia's deepening woes as its troops try, and fail, to make meaningful gains in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region.

The Ukrainian army's 17th Tank Brigade spotted the bridge, perhaps using one of the many small drones that function as the army's eyes over the battlefield. The 17th is one of the army's four active tank brigades. Its line battalions operate T-64 tanks and BMP fighting vehicles. But it was the brigade's artillery battalion with its 2S1 122-millimeter howitzers that apparently got first crack at the Russian bridge.

The 17th's shelling destroyed at least seven T-72 and T-80 tanks, 17 BMPs, seven MT-LB armored tractors, five other vehicles and much of the bridging unit itself, including a tugboat and the pontoon span.

It's unclear how many Russians died or were wounded, but it's worth noting that no battalion can lose three-quarters of its vehicles and remain capable of operations. In one strike, the Ukrainians removed from the battlefield one of the roughly 99 Russian battalion tactical groups in Ukraine.

Putin

Henry Kissinger Predicts Point at Which Putin Will Have To End Ukraine War - Henry Kissinger believes Putin miscalculated the international situation and Russia's own capabilities when he launched the invasion of Ukraine. He will have to end the war when it effectively kills off any chance of Russia remaining a great power in the future, the former secretary of state predicts.

Kissinger, who served under the administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford in the 1970s, told a Financial Times event over the weekend that he fears the conflict could veer into the nuclear realm.

At the FTWeekend Festival in Washington on Saturday, Kissinger told the paper's U.S. national editor, Edward Luce, about how he managed to split Moscow from Beijing by treating the two enemies differently. Amid hostilities in Europe, Washington should now seek to do the same once again, Kissinger said.

The former secretary warned against taking "an adversarial position" on both China and Russia that could drive them closer together. "After the Ukraine war, Russia will have to reassess its relationship to Europe at a minimum and its general attitude towards NATO," he said.

At the current stage, it's hard to predict how the war will end. Asked about its possible conclusion, Kissinger told Luce that Russia would continue fighting in Ukraine until the conflict eats up so much of its military capability and resources that the country risks losing its status as a great power.

"The obvious question is how long will this escalation continue and how much scope is there for further escalation?" Kissinger said. "Or has he reached the limit of his capability, and he has to decide at what point escalating the war will strain his society to a point that will limit its fitness to conduct international policy as a great power in the future?"

At that point, Kissinger said, whether Russia would then turn to its nuclear arsenal in order to end the war was something he couldn't predict. "We are now living in a totally new era" from the Cold War, he said.

U.S. intel: Putin preparing for "prolonged conflict" beyond eastern Ukraine - U.S. intelligence assesses Russia is preparing for a "prolonged conflict" in Ukraine that is likely to become "more unpredictable and escalatory" due to a "mismatch" between Putin's ambitions and military capabilities, Director of NI Avril Haines testified Tuesday.

Putin has at least four "near-term military objectives," according to the U.S. intelligence community:

1. Fully capture and establish a "buffer zone" in the Donbas, where Russian-backed separatists have declared "people's republics."
2. Encircle Ukraine's military west of the Donbas "in order to crush the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces fighting to hold the line in the east."
3. Consolidate control of the land bridge that Russia has established from the Donbas along the southern coast of Ukraine to Crimea, allowing Russian forces to occupy the Kherson region and control Crimea's water supplies.
4. The U.S. also sees "indications" that Russia wants to extend the land bridge further west to capture the historic port city of Odessa and connect with the pro-Russian breakaway region of Transnistria in Moldova, fully cutting Ukraine off from the sea.

Between the lines: The U.S. views it as "increasingly unlikely" that Russia will be able to establish full control over the Donbas or extend the land bridge to Transnistria, especially without a broader mobilization of Russia's reservists.

Sanctions

What's the fallout from Ukraine's pipe shutdown? - The shutdown of a gas pipeline in eastern Ukraine has sent a fresh wave of energy jitters through Europe. The price of gas jumped — then fell. The cutoff is in sharp focus because it's the first time that the war has disrupted the Russian natural gas that flows through Ukraine to get to Europe, where it powers factories and generates electricity.

What happened in Ukraine? - The operator of the gas pipeline system, Gas TSO of Ukraine, said it could no longer transport gas through a compressor station in the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine, near the border with Russia. It said it had no operational control over the station in Russian-held territory, with occupying forces interfering in the station's operation and diverting gas in a way that endangered the stability of the pipeline system.

The pipeline handles around a third of Russian gas heading to Europe. The Ukrainian operator said the gas flows could be made up through another pipeline that crosses from Russia into Ukraine near the town of Sudzha.

Why is this getting attention? - While Russia has halted natural gas to Poland and Bulgaria over a dispute about payments in rubles, Wednesday's cutoff is the first disruption in gas supplies flowing through Ukraine due to the war.

What is going on with gas flows? - ICIS market intelligence firm said the Ukraine move "is not a huge cutoff to gas supplies," describing it as a loss of a few percent in overall European gas supply, when considering imports and domestic production. "Nevertheless, it is worrying to the market that a development like this has happened," he said, noting concerns about possible energy sanctions that could interrupt deliveries and the gas cutoff to Bulgaria and Poland. "But it is not fundamentally altering the supply and demand balance in the European gas market."

Before the war, the share of Russian gas that flowed to Europe through Ukraine had fallen to around 18%. Of that, about a third goes through this particular part of the pipeline system that was shut down. That can be up to 32.6 million cubic meters a day; in recent days, it has been around 23 million cubic meters a day.

What's the impact on energy users in Europe? Thanks to mild weather, Europe is in better shape on gas after scraping through the winter with barely adequate reserves. Reserves are filling faster than they did last year, but that needs to continue to cover demand this coming winter.

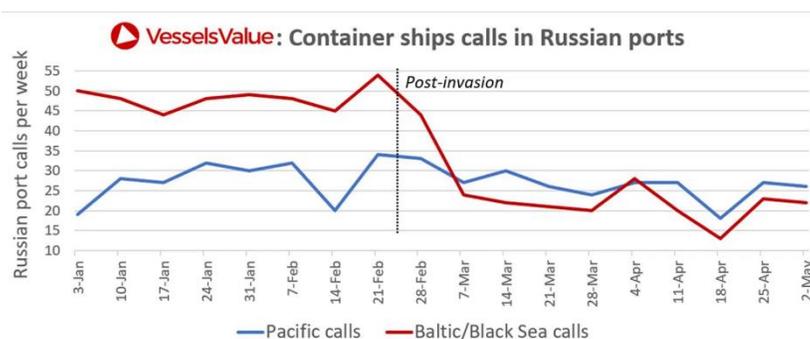
The interruption would make it harder for European countries to meet their goals for storage levels next winter and would “hasten Europe’s plans to move away from imports of Russian gas,” Luo said.

What are possible motivations for the move? - Both Gas TSO of Ukraine and Gazprom have sought to underline their reliability as gas suppliers despite the enmity fueled by the war, so analysts are still trying to figure out what the game is. Barbara Lambrecht at Commerzbank said, “It remains to be seen whether the disruption to supply turns out to be anything more than just a flexing of muscles.”

Tim Ash, senior emerging markets sovereign strategist at BlueBay Asset Management, said it could be about forcing Europe’s hand.

“I think frustrations are building in Ukraine that Europe is proving too slow in rolling out an energy embargo on Russia,” he said. “If Europe is not prepared to shut off the energy money printing machine for Moscow, why would Ukraine not take matters into their own hands?”

Russia’s isolation deepens as shipping lines make final port calls - Russia’s ocean container imports continue to collapse as shipping lines wind down the last remnants of their services to the country’s ports.



Now effectively a pariah within Western logistics circles — Russia still has cargo import options. Yet the loss of virtually all of its ocean shipping links makes obtaining consumer goods and components much more difficult.

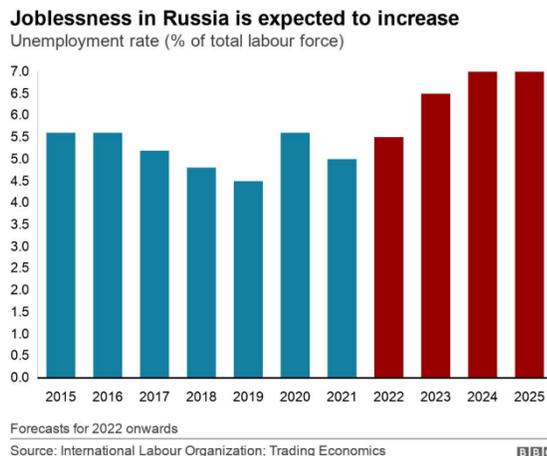
Elvira Nabiullina, Russia’s Central Bank chairwoman, recently warned that the range of consumer goods available in her country is already shrinking and Russian companies needing foreign components are facing “serious problems.”

Ukraine sanctions: What pain lies ahead for Russia's economy? - At a glance, Russia has so far been able to fend off an economic collapse following its invasion of Ukraine. It has been hammered by sanctions introduced by Western countries since February.

President Putin has insisted that the West's "economic blitzkrieg" has failed. But Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, says these "superficial" indicators "don't mean much to real life".

Russian steelmakers, chemical manufacturers and car companies are already feeling the brunt of sanctions aimed at crippling President Putin's war effort.

A recent survey of more than 13,000 businesses by Russia's central bank revealed that many are experiencing problems bringing goods such as microchips, car parts, packaging, or even buttons, into the country as a result. Shortages of raw materials or parts are forcing



some firms to temporarily close factories or to look elsewhere.

Japanese car-maker Toyota, for example, stopped imports of cars to Russia and suspended operations at its plant in St Petersburg in March, citing "supply chain disruptions" linked to the conflict.

Before the war a plane ticket would have cost 15,000 rubles (£170). Now it is 55,000 rubles (£640).

Every time people go to the market, things get more and more pricey. Last week milk went up by five rubles, tomatoes by 10. Despite everything, most Russians still firmly support this war. The TV set, filled with official propaganda, is still more powerful than an empty fridge. Putin has pledged that pensions and unemployment benefits for those struggling would rise in line with inflation.

Europe gets about 40% of its natural gas from Russia, which is also the bloc's main oil supplier, but some countries are more dependent on Russian fossil fuels than others, so sudden supply cuts could have a big economic impact.

"There is no doubt that Europe will have a difficult few years away from Russian oil and gas, but this is much worse for the Russian economy, which will suffer in the long-term," Ole Hvalbye, an energy analyst with the SEB bank, says.

While Russia might have enough of a financial cushion to provide subsidies to the poorest in the short-term, as well as to protect the ruble, Mr Ash says the long-term view is more uncertain. But he adds: "Whatever happens, whether an oil embargo is introduced in six months or a year... it will be a severe hit" for an economy isolated from the West.

Containment

Training, Logistics Snafus Show How US Advisors Could Help Ukraine, Volunteers Say - Endless images of damaged Russian tanks show how Ukrainians are putting U.S. Javelin missiles to use—and yet they could be fighting even more effectively if more U.S. advisors were there to help, say two U.S. volunteers who recently returned from the war-torn country.

Mark Hayward, a retired U.S. Special Forces operator from Alaska, went to Ukraine shortly after the war broke out and soon found himself training Ukrainians to use the shoulder-fired Javelin anti-tank missile. He said that the United States is missing a key opportunity by not sending more military advisors to offer training on weapons and help with logistics.

"We should have had American advisors in country with these units," he told Defense One. When asked if the lack of such trainers was hurting Ukrainian efforts to retake key areas from Russian forces, he said, "Yes. I say that that's fair."

Official U.S. announcements about the delivery of weapons to Ukraine conceal a far more complex reality. Hayward recounted how some Javelin launchers arrived on the front lines without key parts or instructions. The launchers' lithium-ion batteries often held enough charge for only a few shots, which made training on the systems difficult. Using old motorcycle batteries, he developed a "craPtastic" battery pack. "We just spliced together cables with alligator clips and little pieces of wire. We actually salvaged the connectors by breaking open the wiring harness for an old CPU fan."

Hayward said Ukrainian troops were even more resourceful. They figured out how to use 3-D printers in the field to manufacture key components, such as the six-pin plug that connects the battery. "They actually made a working prototype," he said. "We put this homemade thing into a \$100,000 command launch unit and we powered it. And thank god it worked." They also created a manual in Ukrainian that went viral, he said. But all this improvisation drains time for other tasks.

But it's not just the batteries. According to the Javelin manual, units are supposed to ship with a field tactical training unit—basically, a small device that attaches to the launcher to help practice tracking targets and firing its missile.

“These would be a rather useful tool to send out to these frontline units,” said Hayward. But the U.S. government was late in sending them, he said “because the Ukrainians didn't ask for them.”

As a result, a lot of Ukrainians fired a Javelin for the first time in combat. “There's no hands-on practice. The first time they do any of that is with a live missile under a four-minute countdown clock from the [battery coolant unit] while they're facing live Russian attack,” he said.

Russian efforts to jam Starlink are 'ramping up' - Elon Musk has said that Russian attempts to jam or otherwise hack the Starlink satellite communications network have been thwarted so far, but these efforts continue – and are ramping up. He was responding to a news story about how the European Union and the US with its Five Eyes partners were blaming the Russian military for a cyberattack on Viasat's KA-SAT network earlier this year.

The Amount Of Weapons The U.S. Has Sent To Ukraine Is Astounding - A historic amount of weapons are being sent to Ukraine – In a matter of a few weeks, the U.S. has provided Ukraine with more weapons than the entire Ukrainian military budget. A response to the illegal and unprovoked Russian invasion, the security aid that the U.S. (and dozens of other countries) has been providing has been vital in stopping the Russian forces.

American-made weapons have been wreaking havoc on Russian tanks and aircraft. But since the war started, there have been numerous packages of military aid, making it hard to understand what the Pentagon has committed to Ukraine.

The U.S. military has committed to providing its Ukrainian counterpart with the following weapons systems so far: (i)

Over 1,400 Stinger anti-aircraft systems; (ii) Over 5,500 Javelin anti-armor systems; (iii) Over 14,000 other anti-armor systems; (iv) Over 700 Switchblade Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems; (v) 90 155mm Howitzers and over 200,000 155mm artillery rounds; (vi) 72 Tactical Vehicles to tow 155mm Howitzers; (vii) 16 Mi-17 helicopters; (viii) Hundreds of Armored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles; (ix) 200 M113 Armored Personnel Carriers; (x) Over 7,000 small arms; (xi) Over 50,000,000 rounds of ammunition; (xii) 75,000 sets of body armor and helmets; (xiii) 121 Phoenix Ghost Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems; (xiv) Laser-guided rocket systems; (xv) Puma Unmanned Aerial Systems; (xvi) Unmanned Coastal Defense Vessels; (xvii) 17 counter-artillery radars; (xviii) Four counter-mortar radars; (xix) Two air surveillance radars; (xx) M18A1 Claymore anti-personnel munitions; (xxi) C-4 explosives and demolition equipment for obstacle clearing; (xxii) Tactical secure communications systems; (xxiii) Night vision devices, thermal imagery systems, optics, and laser rangefinders; (xiv) Commercial satellite imagery services; (xxvi) Explosive ordnance disposal protective gear; (xvii) Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear protective equipment; (xviii) Medical supplies to include first aid kits; (xxix) Electronic jamming equipment and (xxx) Field equipment and spare parts.

In the last two years, the U.S. has committed to providing Ukraine with more than \$4.5 billion in security assistance alone, with approximately \$3.8 billion of that assistance given since February 24.

But the Pentagon is highly likely to be sending more security aid to Ukraine. Congress is now deliberating on an approximately \$40 billion security, economic, and humanitarian aid package for Ukraine.

Humanitarian

Russian blockade of Ukraine's ports puts global food supply at risk – The Russian blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports risks causing a global food crisis, given that Ukraine is one of the world's top agricultural exporters. Analysts say this shows how Russia is weaponizing food in its geopolitical games – but it's a weapon the EU plans to neutralize by creating a land corridor to Poland's Baltic Sea ports, allowing Ukraine's vital food exports to reach the rest of the world.

When EU Council President Charles Michel visited Odesa on Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky highlighted the importance for the rest of Ukraine's major Black Sea port as a vital gateway for the world's food supply.

"For the first time in decades and decades, in Odesa there is no regular movement of the merchant fleet," Zelensky said by video. "This has probably never happened in Odesa since World War II."

"This is a blow not only to Ukraine," Zelensky emphasized. "Without our agricultural exports, dozens of countries in different parts of the world are already on the brink of food shortages. And over time, the situation can become – frankly – frightening."

Lockheed Is Going All In On Making More Javelin Missiles - Javelin Missile Production Increases as Russia Struggles to Resupply – Lockheed Martin, the manufacturer of the popular Javelin anti-tank missile systems currently being used by Ukrainian forces against Russian invaders, is set to almost double the production of the weapon.

This week, Lockheed Martin confirmed that the production rate of the anti-tank missile will be increased dramatically in response to calls from the Ukrainian government for THE continued supply of the weapons from the U.S.

NATO

Joint statement by the President of the Republic and Prime Minister of Finland on Finland's NATO membership –

"During this spring, an important discussion on Finland's possible NATO membership has taken place. Time has been needed to let Parliament and the whole society establish their stands on the matter. Time has been needed for close international contacts with NATO and its member countries, as well as with Sweden. We have wanted to give the discussion the space it required.

Now that the moment of decision-making is near, we state our equal views, also for information to the parliamentary groups and parties. NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security. As a member of NATO, Finland would strengthen the entire defense alliance. Finland must apply for NATO membership without delay. We hope that the national steps still needed to make this decision will be taken rapidly within the next few days."

Signed by Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland and Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland

Russia says Finnish entry to NATO poses threat to which it will respond – Russia said today that Finland's bid to join NATO was a hostile move that "definitely" posed a threat to its security.

The Kremlin said it would respond but declined to spell out how, saying this would depend on how close NATO moves military assets towards the 1,300 km (800-mile) Finnish-Russian frontier.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said Russia would need to take "retaliatory steps, both of a military-technical and other nature, in order to stop threats to its national security arising". "Helsinki must be aware of the responsibility and consequences of such a move," it said.

The Finnish move, which Sweden is expected to replicate, confronts President Vladimir Putin with the very outcome he said his war in Ukraine was designed to prevent - a further expansion of NATO to Russia's borders.

"Finland joined the unfriendly steps taken by the European Union towards our country. This cannot fail to arouse our regret and is a reason for corresponding symmetrical responses on our side," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Impacts

Ukraine town makes mockery of Putin's troops and their dubious arsenal - Rohan, Eastern Ukraine - Eighty-five-year-old Mykola Devyakato was a young child when the Nazis and the Soviets fought brutal battles over Kharkiv. "I think this is worse than World War II," he told The Daily Beast on Thursday while he sat on a wooden bench looking over the destruction his own nearby town, Rohan, had suffered under Russian occupation.

Ukrainians liberated the town on March 26, but the area quickly became the site of a massive artillery duel. The Ukrainians now consider the village safe enough for the residents to return, but it doesn't sound like that with the constant sound of explosions in the background.

Lyubov Zlubina is a local council member who owns a cattle farm on the outskirts of the town. She recalled when the Russians rolled into town and arrived at her farm, demanding to park their tanks in her animal pens. "Over my dead body!" she said she told them. "That can be easily arranged," one Russian allegedly responded as he pointed his gun at her. They eventually decided to leave her alive, but not before using her car, home and various household items for target practice, Zlubina said. According to her, they burned down half her farm on the day they retreated from the town and killed 140 of her cows in the process.

There does not seem to be evidence yet of the horrific organized massacres in Rohan such as those seen in Bucha. But one military official said that two locals had been shot during the occupation and that one girl was raped. The girl has reportedly been evacuated and moved out of the country where she is undergoing psychological counseling.

The front lines are only a few minutes' drive from the village of Rohan, which was one of the first settlements to be captured by the Russians in their first lightning offensive on Kharkiv. They made it almost to the center of the city before being driven back by fierce Ukrainian resistance to the outskirts of the city. Frustrated, they never tried to take the city again. Instead, they planted artillery in the surrounding villages and pummeled the city mercilessly, driving hundreds of thousands of civilians from their homes and making the city almost unlivable.

But now it seems that two months of misery is finally coming to an end for Ukraine's second largest city. A fresh counterattack by the Ukrainian army has pushed Russian forces out of almost all the surrounding towns, culminating with the liberation of Tsurkuny just a few kilometers north of the city.

Middle East Indifference to Ukraine is a Warning - We are now more than two months past the high-water mark of international solidarity on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Then, more than 140 countries voted in favor of a UN General Assembly resolution calling for an end to the Russian offensive, with 35 abstentions. A casual observer might think that the vote was proof that the rules-based international order that the United States had been nurturing for 75 years was alive and well.

Instead, the Ukraine crisis is a stark warning that the U.S. investments in the international order haven't left much residue. The United States has spent trillions and sacrificed more than 100,000 lives, but for much of the world, a decision to support the United States or some semblance of international law is a present-value calculation. International support for sanctions is almost non-existent outside of Europe and Northeast Asia, and outside of those areas, there is no appetite for any further action to influence Russian actions.

Nowhere is this more evident than the Middle East. While the United States has few formal allies in the Middle East, the region has driven most of the U.S. military's combat in the last half-century. A perceived Soviet threat drove the early U.S. efforts at regional engagement, as the United States sought to block Soviet efforts to access oil deposits and deny the USSR a warm-water port.

With the Soviet Union's demise, much of the U.S. focus shifted toward a more general effort to promote stability. Securing global energy flows, deterring Iran, and protecting neighbors from Saddam Hussein represented one side of the equation; protecting regional governments from transnational terror threats with roots in their own communities were the other.

Seen broadly, the consistent effort was to enwrap the region into a U.S.-led rules-based order. For decades, the United States dedicated blood and treasure in pursuit of that goal. Yet amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, U.S. partners in the Middle East don't see much attraction in furthering the rules-based order with which the United States has justified its efforts in the region. Instead, they shirk from choosing sides in a superpower competition, arguing that their economic and security interests with Russia preclude their alliance with the United States.

For U.S. policymakers, the alarm bell should be sounding. The notion that there is widespread support for this U.S.-led, rule-based order is at the core of how the United States sees itself confronting an emerging challenge from China. Yet, for most countries in the world, including ones that have been close to the United States for decades, preserving the rule of law in Ukraine seems of little concern. They will seek to strengthen their bilateral relationship with the United States, but they have no interest in taking sides in superpower conflicts, and they feel no need to do so.

It almost goes without saying that China is a fundamentally different kind of superpower, and different kind of rival, than Russia. China's economic ties with most countries of the world—including the United States—dwarf the ties they have with Russia. With a few exceptions in northeast Asia, fear of a Russian threat rather than affinity to the United States seems a better explanation for why they have lined up against Russian aggression. The further countries are from Russia, the less they care.

And that raises a very serious question: Is there any reason to think the world would line up with the United States in a future conflict with China?

Global indifference to Russia's actions in Ukraine represents a victory for Chinese diplomacy, which argues countries need not choose between close ties to the United States and its superpower competitors. U.S. thinking that three-quarters of a century of global leadership will give it an edge in a confrontation with China is likely mistaken, if Middle Eastern attitudes toward Ukraine are any indication. Firepower and economic strength will still matter in the fight, but even some of our closest friends are likely to stay above the fray.

One could take a long view, suggesting that the world has always cycled between periods of order and warfare, and the relative order of the post-World War II world has run its course. One could see this narrowly, as a sign of the world's uncertainty that the United States remains committed to maintaining a global order. One can see this specifically, that countries with more powerful neighbors need to calibrate their actions carefully. But it is hard to argue that the bipartisan alarm in the United States about the war in Ukraine, and the world's general disinterest, isn't a sign of a much deeper skepticism of U.S. global leadership. If the United States can elicit support only when countries believe it is in their direct interest to do so, we are in a much different world than we have convinced ourselves we are in. (Jon Alterman).

Once best friends, Bulgaria takes a stand against Russia - A week after Russia invaded Ukraine, Moscow's ambassador to Bulgaria climbed a snowy mountain pass to honor czarist-era Russian soldiers who died there fighting for Bulgarian independence in the 19th century.

Present-day concerns, however, quickly eclipsed the ambassador's effort to remind Bulgaria of the debt it owed Russia. On the same day, Bulgaria expelled two of her diplomatic underlings for espionage and announced the arrest of a senior military officer on charges of spying for Russia.

In the weeks since, Bulgaria, a country that Moscow long counted as its most ardent and reliable friend in Europe, has joined fellow members of the European Union in imposing ever tougher economic sanctions on Russia, offered to repair broken military helicopters and tanks for Ukraine, and expelled yet more Russian diplomats.

“Traditionally, Russia has always had a big influence here, but we have been a big surprise to them,” Prime Minister Kiril Petkov said last week in Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. “They don’t understand what happened,” he added.

The rapid souring of relations with Bulgaria, a poor but symbolically important country because of its historically close ties to Russia, underscores how far off-script the invasion of Ukraine ordered by Putin has veered, and not only on the battlefield.

Russia, furious at what it sees as its wayward friend’s insolence, last month abruptly halted supplies of natural gas to Bulgaria by Gazprom, making its erstwhile Balkan ally the first country along with Poland targeted by Moscow’s energy weapon.

Lithuania Seeks Ouster Of Vladimir Putin And His Inner Circle To Thwart 'warmongering' - As the Russian offensive against Ukraine continues, Lithuania said that the top Russian leaders & Putin's inner circle must be removed to stop the ongoing war.

Russia-Ukraine war to wipe \$1.5 trillion off global economy - Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will wipe \$1.5 trillion off the global economy this year, reveals new analysis released yesterday.

Soaring energy and food prices triggered by concerns about supply security as Moscow continues its assault on Ukraine will deliver a heavy blow to global economic activity, according to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). Central banks will have to respond to what is forecast to be an annual inflation rate of 8.2 per cent in the group of countries in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development by hiking interest rates.

Bulker Carrying Stolen Ukrainian Grain Spotted in Syria - Working with satellite imaging company Planet Labs, the AP has identified a bulker believed to be carrying stolen Ukrainian grain at the port of Latakia, Syria.

Ukrainian officials claim that the Russian bulker Matros Pozynich is carrying a cargo of 27,000 tonnes of grain from Russian-occupied territories. According to AIS data provided by Pole Star, the Pozynich made two trips from the Black Sea to Syrian waters in March and April, returning to Syria the second time on May 5. There are extensive gaps in her AIS record during these voyages, indicating periods when her transponder was turned off.

According to Ukrainian officials, the Pozynich loaded a cargo of stolen Ukrainian grain in Russian-occupied Crimea on her most recent trip to the Black Sea, then attempted to deliver it to a buyer in Alexandria, Egypt. After an appeal by the Ukrainian government, Egyptian authorities refused to allow the vessel to enter, and the Pozynich diverted to a port in Russia-aligned Syria instead. The AP reports that the Pozynich has been identified at a pier in Latakia by satellite imagery.

Brussels aims to circumvent Moscow's blockade of Ukrainian ports - Brussels is working to find solutions to end Russia's ability to block Ukraine's capacity to export goods. Kyiv is Europe's biggest grain producer and one of the main suppliers to the Middle East and Africa. But Moscow's naval blockade of the Black Sea is making it nearly impossible to export all these goods across the sea.

The European Commission wants to circumvent this by asking key market players to urgently send lorries and trains that can help reduce the waiting time at the border, which is currently at an average of 16 days with a wait of 30 days at some borders.

Widening of War

Another European war 'not an impossibility'; Unity crucial in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Amidst rising tensions, a months-long political stalemate and increasing speculation about yet another conflict in Europe, the international community must stand firm behind a peaceful, unified Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's UN envoy told the Security Council on Wednesday.

High Representative Christian Schmidt said that more than 26 years after the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace - known as the Dayton Accords - citizens are once again talking about the possibility of another conflict, posing the risk of inflammatory incidents.

"The conflict in Ukraine, not so far away, is a sobering reminder that even in the 21st century, another war on European soil is not an impossibility," he stressed.

Undermining national laws

Outlining the main challenges, Mr. Schmidt said that authorities in the ethnic Serb-dominated Republika Srpska - one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities, alongside the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina - have increasingly embraced rhetoric and actions that could undermine the constitutional framework.

They include attempts to render national laws inapplicable, which would likely mean the Republika's withdrawal from the country's unified forces.

Emphasizing that such constitutional changes cannot be made unilaterally, they would threaten the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he stressed the international community has a responsibility to defend the Dayton Accord and the rights of the country's three constituent peoples.

European integration

The High Representative praised international support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's unity, including through targeted sanctions by many Governments.

"We will not sit still while others seek to dismantle 26 years of peace, stability and progress," he said.

Turning to the country's potential membership in the European Union (EU) - a path that would help resolve grievances and foster peace and stability - he urged the bloc to keep its doors open to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of the Western Balkan nations.

Meanwhile, fulfilling Agenda 5+2 and the European Council's recommendations before membership can be considered, would help resolve grievances and foster lasting peace and stability, thereby improving the lives of every citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It would also help stem the ever-increasing flow of young people out of the country and provide hope for a brighter future, he said.

Satellite images reveal China's 'accelerated' threat to Australia - Satellite imagery from China has unearthed what could be a new or upgraded class of nuclear-powered attack submarine, with one expert warning Australia has a lot of catching up to do. The discovery by satellite imagery provider Planet Labs was at a dry dock in Huludao Port in the northeastern province of Liaoning.

The satellite image shows greenish covers shroud areas behind the submarine's superstructure and stern – parts of the vessel that could house missile launch tubes and a new, quieter propulsion system, analysts said. Such clear images of submarines in dry dock are seldom seen.



The submarine was out of the water between April 24 and May 4 and was later seen mostly submerged in the same place after the dry dock was flooded.

Jeffrey Lewis, a professor in arms control at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, said a new class of vessel is "plausible" but more questions needed answers to determine whether that was the case.

The Morrison government has repeatedly expressed its concern over China's rapid military growth, with Defence Minister Peter Dutton warning a war in the region involving Australia cannot be ruled out.

China has militarized multiple islands in the South China Sea, while Beijing's controversial security deal with the Solomon Islands has further strengthened China's territorial position, several Australian-based experts have warned.

Both China and Solomon Islands have denied the pact would bring a Chinese military base to the island nation, accusing Australia of paranoia and hypocrisy over the deal.

Russian Suggestions That Kazakhstan Is Russia's Enemy Frighten and Outrage Kazakhs - A rising tide of suggestions by Russia that Kazakhstan is becoming Russia's enemy has simultaneously frightened Kazakhstani that their country may be Moscow's next target for aggression and sparked outrage. For many in Kazakhstan, it is not their own country that has become an enemy of Russia but rather Russia has become an enemy of Kazakhstan. Such a remarkable opinion shift in that large Central Asian republic, long viewed as closer to Russia than any other, is captured by a sign carried at a recent street demonstration there. The poster read simply, "Yesterday it was Georgia. Today, it is Ukraine. Will it be Kazakhstan tomorrow?" Moscow may have hoped to intimidate Kazakhstan with Russian statements that Kazakhstan is on its way to being "a second Ukraine", but its provocative rhetoric has had the unintended effect of creating a self-reinforcing downward spiral in bilateral relations.

Russian commentators have long been angry at Kazakhstan for its increasingly nationalistic policies, a trend that reflects demographic shifts that have transformed that country from a binational republic, in which Russians and the Russian language played a far larger role than they did anywhere else in Central Asia, into an overwhelmingly Kazakh one. Over the past decade, the government has supported the Kazakh language and the Kazakh nation as a means to build its own authority and to legitimate itself in the eyes of the population. At the same time, Moscow has been alarmed by Kazakhstan's growing ties with Russia's geopolitical competitors, China and Turkey. Indeed, Russian concerns about mounting Turkish regional influence have grown especially shrill in recent months.

3 developments in 2022 have exacerbated such attitudes in Moscow as well as the response to them in Kazakhstan.

- First, the Kremlin expected President Tokayev's government, which Russia supported militarily in January, to be grateful and thus to follow Moscow's lead. Yet exactly the reverse has happened. Some Kazakhstanis are upset that Russia felt it had the right to intervene in their country at all, and the Tokayev government, as a result, has had to go out of its way to demonstrate it is not Moscow's puppet.
- Second, Kazakhstani authorities have played up the fact that the country's investment in national defense now makes it possible to unilaterally stand up to potential opponents without needing to defer to Russia, as had been the case in the past.
- However, those first two factors pale in comparison with the third: the impact of Putin's war in Ukraine on the Kazakhstani government and population. Russian writers have a long list of complaints about how both have responded to the Ukrainian "crisis." They are upset that Kazakhstan has permitted pro-Ukrainian demonstrations while banning pro-Russian ones