

Conflict Update # 287

December 7th, 2022

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 92,740 (540) soldiers killed, 2,935 (+6) enemy tanks, 5,909 (+4) armored combat vehicles, 1,923 (+8) artillery systems, 395 (+0) MLRS systems, 211 (+0) air defense systems, 286 (+0) warplanes, 264 (+0) helicopters, 1,601 (+14) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 592 (+0) cruise missiles, 16 (+0) warships/cutters, 4,526 (+21) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 163 (+0) units of specialized equipment.

Key Takeaways



A Ukrainian priest is found guilty of assisting Russia - A Ukrainian priest from a church affiliated with Russia is sentenced to 12 years in prison after being found guilty of assisting Russia, the Prosecutor General's Office said.

The state prosecutors said the priest, from the Luhansk region, had been collecting information on equipment and weapons held by the Ukrainian military since mid-April.

“The enemy used the information to establish the location and fire on targets,” they wrote on Telegram.

Ukraine’s government has been tasked with creating a law banning churches affiliated with Russia under what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said was necessary to prevent Moscow from being able to “weaken Ukraine from within”.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) has carried out a series of raids on parishes that Kyiv says could be taking orders from Moscow.

Explosion at Russian nuclear base – We previously reported on Ukrainian strikes against Russian bases within the country itself.

These are not isolated as there have been a number of explosions and other “unexplained incidents” in and around Russia, but mainly in the areas adjacent to their common border.

These strikes however are much further inland and have caused consternation within Kremlin ranks seeing a special security meeting convened yesterday in Moscow by Putin to address the threat.

Aside from the actual strikes in the past few days, and just as in the Kerch Bridge attack a few months ago, Ukraine is sending a message that “we are here and we can strike you anywhere.”

Explosion at Russian airbase

A drone hit the Engels airbase, one of Russia's largest military airfields, which hosts the strategic Tupolev Tu-160 and Tu-95 bombers.



Tactically however, bombers departing these air bases are from the Russian nuclear strategic air fleet but currently used for launching airborne attacks against Ukrainian civilian targets.

Also of import here is that the technology used in these far-flung attacks is quite novel and Ukrainian – something the Russians will be keenly aware of. Especially significant is that the Ukrainian drones evaded extremely complex Russian air defense systems which NATO and the US hitherto believed were virtually impregnable. This last factor in and of itself is a major development and the one sending panic through Russian ranks.

Ukraine also yesterday trolled Putin and the Kremlin with a message saying “You can launch missiles anonymously but sometimes they find their way back to you.”

Another Russian airfield hit by Ukraine - Another Russian airfield was set ablaze by a drone strike yesterday, a day after Russia said two of its air bases, including one located hundreds of kilometers away, had been hit by drones.

The U.S. State Department said there was no confirmation the strikes were carried out by Ukraine, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States has "neither encouraged nor enabled the Ukrainians to strike inside of Russia."

He added that it is important to understand what Ukrainians are living through every day with the "ongoing Russian aggression," accusing Russia of "weaponizing winter" through attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Officials in the Russian city of Kursk, around 90 kilometers north of the Ukraine border, released pictures of black smoke above an airfield, where the governor said an oil storage tank had gone up in flames.

Ukraine did not directly claim responsibility for the strikes December 5 that targeted a Russian military air base about 600 kilometers east of Ukraine in the Saratov region and another at an airfield outside Ryazan southeast of Moscow.

Presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said the air base in Saratov is Russia's only base fully equipped for the long-range bombers Russia has used in its campaign to damage Ukraine's energy grid.

A senior Ukrainian official quoted anonymously by The New York Times said the drones were launched from Ukrainian territory and at least two planes were destroyed at one of the Russian bases and several more were damaged.

"All this complicates the operation against Ukraine," Arestovych said. "Yesterday, thanks to their 'unsuccessful smoking,' we achieved a very big result," he said, poking fun at an earlier claim by Russia that explosions at one of its bases had been caused by carelessness with cigarettes.

Russia responded to the December 5 attacks with what it called a "massive strike on Ukraine's military control system," though it did not identify any specific military targets. The Russian missiles destroyed homes and knocked out power as part of the ongoing campaign against Ukraine's civilian infrastructure.

Belarus plans 'counterterrorism' exercises amid concerns of new Russian attacks on Ukraine - The Belarusian Security Council says it plans to start a two-day program of moving military personnel and equipment on December 7 in "a counter-terrorism exercise." The announcement comes amid concerns that Russia may launch a new attack on Ukraine from Belarusian territory. Council officials told the BelTA state news agency that the move will include the transportation of vehicles and persons in unspecified parts of the country.

UN Aid Chief: Ukrainians are suffering 'colossal' torment - The UN humanitarian chief on December 6 decried the "colossal" torment Ukraine is suffering from Russia's destruction of its infrastructure. That view was echoed by Western allies of Ukraine at a UN Security Council meeting but strongly opposed by Russia. Humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths outlined the toll of "widespread death, displacement, and suffering." He said more than 14 million people have been displaced -- 7.8 million to Europe and 6.5 million still within the country -- and 17,023 civilians have been killed, including 419 children, though the UN human rights office believes "the real toll is far greater."

Russian soldier says commander stabbed Ukrainian woman to death - A Russian commander stabbed an elderly Ukrainian woman to death during the chaotic retreat from Izyum in September, according to a soldier in his unit. Evidence of the alleged war crime first emerged from a phone intercept by Ukrainian intelligence in which the soldier described how he heard that two commanders killed civilians. In a later phone call, arranged by Schemes, the investigative project of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, the soldier expressed the opinion that his commander could have chosen not to kill the woman.

Ukraine says embassies in Denmark, Romania receive more 'bloody packages' - Ukrainian embassies in Denmark and Romania have received more "bloody packages," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in an online interview yesterday with the Ukrinform news agency. Last week, Ukrainian embassies and consulates in several

European countries received "bloody packages" that contained animal eyes as Russia continues its ongoing unprovoked invasion of Ukraine launched in late February.

Russian forces attacked several Ukrainian regions with kamikaze drones and heavy artillery, officials said earlier today, killing two people and wounding several others, as heavy fighting continued in the east a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of hitting an airfield inside Russia.

Among areas targeted throughout November, Zaporizhzhya was the most commonly struck with nine attacks recorded across the region.

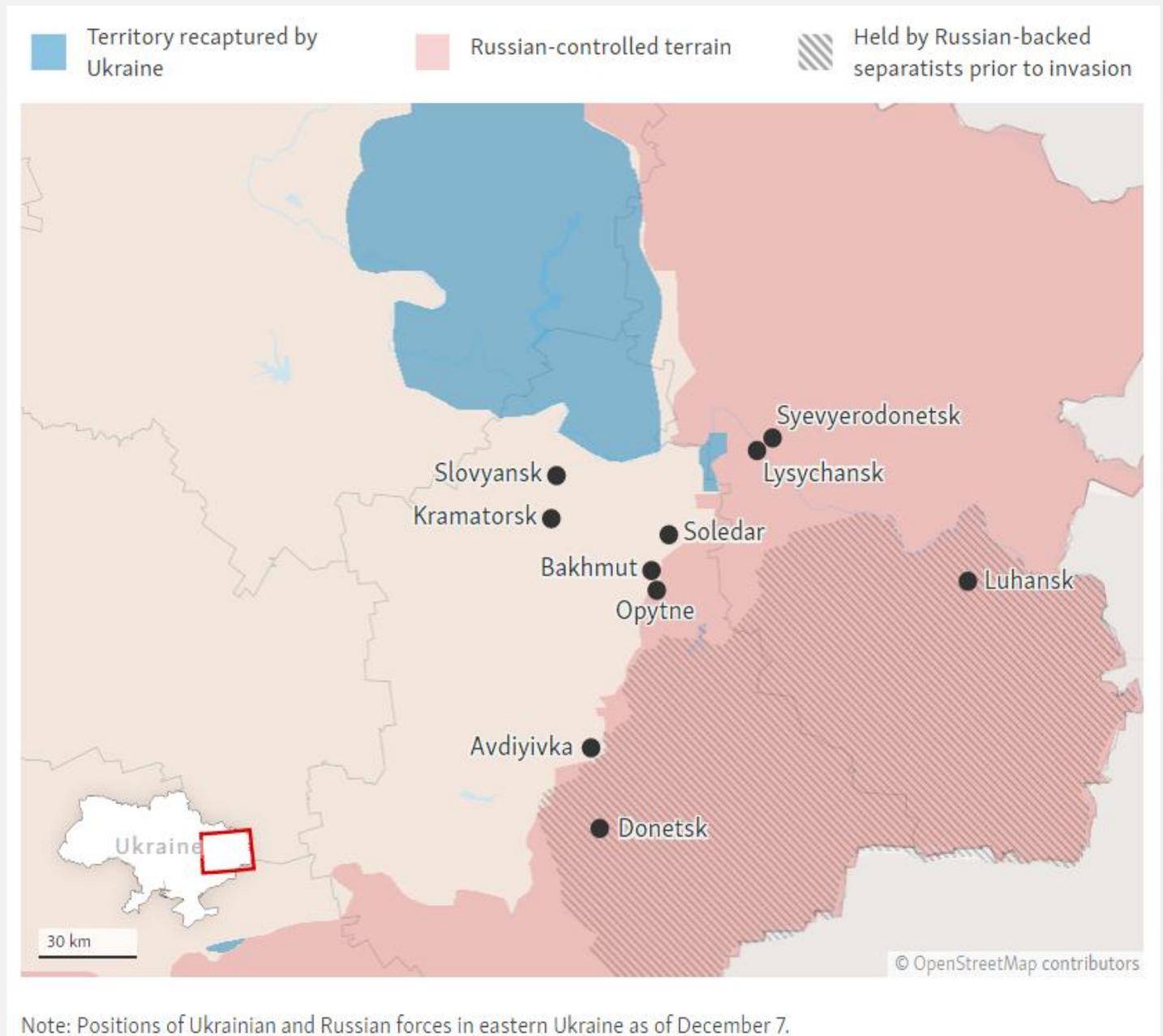


Notes: Positions of Ukrainian and Russian forces in eastern Ukraine as of December 1.
Strikes as of 0800 GMT December 1.

Map: Giovana Faria • Source: Liveuamap.com, The Kyiv Independent, Ukrainska Pravda, RFE/RL

Heavy Fighting In Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine – Heavy fighting continues in eastern Ukraine with Russian forces tied down in the Bakhmut area and Ukrainian forces slowly encroaching on the Svatove and Kremmina areas.

Russian forces have been attempting to make further advances in the eastern region of Donetsk and their artillery hit Ukrainian positions and several towns in the area, including Bakhmut, Soledar, Avdiivka, and Opytne.



Ukrainian Rocket Crews Fend Off Russian Infantry With Updated Launchers - After rolling Bureviy rocket launchers out of their hiding places in the woods of the Donetsk region, Ukrainian artillery teams can quickly start firing rounds at their enemy. RFE/RL correspondent Maryan Kushnir met crews there who say they are regularly stopping the advance of Russian infantry with the upgraded version of the Soviet Uragan system. Mounted on a heavy-duty Tatra vehicle from the Czech Republic with improved controls, they claim it gives them an advantage over their Russian foes.

Russian army stays on the defensive likely because of munition shortage - Russian forces continued to conduct defensive measures, build fortifications, and move personnel on the east bank of the Dnipro River in the Kherson region, says the Institute for the Study of war.

The UK defence ministry adds that Russia's shortage of munitions is likely one of the main factors currently limiting Russia's potential to restart effective, large-scale offensive ground operations.

In Zaporizhzhia, Russian military movements may suggest that Russian forces cannot defend critical areas amidst increasing Ukrainian strikes on Russian force concentrations and logistics.

The potential withdrawal from Polohy is particularly notable as the settlement lies at a critical road junction, and Russian forces would likely have a harder time defending Tokmak from potential Ukrainian operations without control of that junction.

The withdrawal from a critical position may suggest that Russian forces cannot defend the entire frontline in the Zaporizhzhia region and are prioritizing where to concentrate forces. It is just as likely that Russian forces are reorienting their grouping in the Zaporizhzhia region and may move different personnel back into these settlements.

Gepard anti-aircraft systems from Germany target Iranian drones over Ukraine - Ukrainian troops say Gepard mobile anti-aircraft systems donated by Germany have proven effective at stopping Russian-operated drones made in Iran. The Ukrainian crews say they can detect the drones at a distance of 16 kilometers. But they add that they must use the Swiss-made ammunition judiciously because Bern bans its export to Ukraine.

War Crimes

Children from Ukraine's occupied areas sent to 'military-patriotic' camp in Chechnya - Children from occupied areas of Ukraine were taken to a camp in Chechnya for "military-patriotic" training in November, according to Russian officials. The children were described as "socially troubled" and designated for "reeducation."

These are the first reports of Ukrainian children being taken into Chechnya for any purpose.

This constitutes a War Crime.

'Loyal Soldiers Of Putin': Ukraine, Activists Call Militarization Of Schools In Russian-Occupied Crimea A War Crime - In mid-November, the Russian-installed occupation authorities in the Ukrainian Black Sea region of Crimea approved a program of "preliminary military training" for schoolchildren of all ages beginning in the current academic year.

The program follows years of increasing militarization of the schools on the occupied peninsula, mirroring a similar process in Russia. Russia also approved its program for military training in schools beginning next autumn.

However, the Ukrainian prosecutor's office for Crimea and the port city of Sevastopol, in conjunction with the Crimean Human Rights Group (CHRG), have filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague condemning the militarization of education in Crimea as a war crime.

CHRG activist Iryna Sedova says the compulsory military training of children under the age of 15 in an occupied territory violates the Rome Statute's Article 8, Section b, Point 34.

"With the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine [on February 24], the probability of sending these children to war and their being killed has increased," she told RFE/RL's Crimea. "The Russian state machine is teaching children in Crimea to

be 'loyal soldiers of Putin.' It is teaching them to unquestioningly follow orders...and to be ready to go into the army and serve and die for Russia."

Ukraine Territorial Control

Positions of Ukrainian and Russian forces in eastern Ukraine as of earlier today.



Zelensky "Person of the Year" Time Magazine award

Time Magazine announces Ukraine's Zelenskiy as Person Of The Year for 2022 - Time magazine says it has chosen Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the "Spirit of Ukraine" as its person of the year for 2022 for standing up in the face of Russia's invasion. Noting that the 44-year-old leader had no military background or interest in military affairs, he instead used instincts honed "from a lifetime as an actor on the stage" to guide him through the

country's most difficult hour. "Zelenskyy's success as a wartime leader has relied on the fact that courage is contagious," the magazine said in an article making the announcement on December 7.

Putin

Russia's elite begins to ponder a Putinless future - "What is next? Is there life after Putin? How does he go and who replaces him?" Such are the questions that heavily weigh these days on the minds of the Russian elite, its bureaucrats and businessmen, as they observe the Ukrainian army advancing, talented people fleeing Russia and the West refusing to back down in the face of Vladimir Putin's energy and nuclear blackmail. "There is a lot of swearing and angry talk in Moscow restaurants and kitchens," one member of the elite says. "Everyone has realised that Putin has blundered and is losing."

Putin says Ukraine war is 'long process' - Russian President Vladimir Putin says the fighting in Ukraine could last for a long time but there is no need to mobilize additional soldiers.

"As for the duration of the special military operation, well, of course, this can be a long process," Putin said.

But he said there was "no sense" in another round of mobilisation at this point, after a call-up of 300,000 reservists in September and October.

Putin said that out of that total, 150,000 were now deployed in Ukraine, of those, 77,000 were in combat units, with the remainder performing defensive functions.

Russia will defend itself with all available means: Putin - Putin says Russia will fight to defend its interests using all available means.

Putin spoke at a televised annual session of his Human Rights Council, where he said Western rights organisations viewed Russia as "a second-class country that has no right to exist at all."

"This is what we are dealing with," Putin said.

"There can be only one answer from our side – a consistent struggle for our national interests. We will do just that. And let no one count on anything else."

He continued: "Yes, we will do this by various ways and means. First of all, of course, we will focus on peaceful means, but if nothing else remains, we will defend ourselves with all the means at our disposal."

Putin was speaking in the 10th month of the Ukraine war, responding to comments by a member of the rights council who said Ukrainian forces were shelling residential areas of the Russian-controlled Donetsk region.

Comment – Projectionism, Russia has been doing this for decades.

Putin's war in Ukraine looks more and more like a failure. Past Russian leaders haven't survived similar mistakes - Putin expected an easy victory in Ukraine, but he has ended up with a fiasco.

Over and over again, demoralized and ill-equipped Russian soldiers have raped, tortured, and looted their way through Ukrainian towns before fleeing in disgrace — often with highly motivated Ukrainian troops close behind them.

In the greatest humiliation yet, Russian forces withdrew from Kherson — the only regional capital that they had captured — just weeks after Putin declared at a triumphant rally on Red Square that the city was "Russian forever."

For now, Putin's rule appears secure. But the experience of past Russian leaders shows how failure at the front can lead to a critical loss of authority at home — sometimes with deadly consequences.

The most extreme scenario is the fate of **Tsar Nicholas II**.

At the outbreak of World War I, Russia had the largest army in Europe. Over 5 million men — 15% of the population — were mobilized in 1914 alone.

But the autocracy's weak infrastructure, transportation links, and low productivity impaired the war effort: Ammunition ran out by the end of 1914. By the following summer, the Germans had taken huge swathes of Russian-controlled territory and a million Russian soldiers were dead.

The Romanov dynasty's out-of-touch scion — a gentle man who preferred gardening and taking photographs with his family to governing — attempted to improve the situation by taking command of the armed forces himself.

While Russia struggled at the front, food shortages and spiraling inflation created chaos back home. When strikes and street protests broke out in Petrograd (now called St. Petersburg) in February 1917, mutinous soldiers joined the riots.

The Tsar, forsaken by his generals and advisors, abdicated on a railroad siding in Pskov in March 1917 and was placed under house arrest with his family a few weeks later.

After the Bolsheviks seized control later that year, Vladimir Lenin signed a separate armistice with Germany.

The Tsar and his family were shot and stabbed with bayonets by Bolshevik troops in a Yekaterinburg basement in July 1918, bringing the Romanovs' 300-year reign to an ignominious end.

Soviet leader **Nikita Khrushchev** was also felled in part by a foreign-policy blunder, though it thankfully resulted in no deaths.

In October 1962, an American U-2 spy plane photographed Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba. The resulting confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union put the world on the brink of destruction.

But as Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it, "We've been eyeball to eyeball, and someone just blinked." Soviet ships stopped in the water, and Khrushchev announced that the missiles would be removed.

He could have stepped down with dignity after his 70th birthday in April 1964, but instead he was forced into retirement later that year by a group of rivals who had the support of the KGB.

Ironically, Khrushchev's removal was made possible by his own desire to reject Stalin's despotism. After leading a limited attempt to democratize the Soviet Union, Khrushchev saw his peaceful overthrow as a sign of his success.

He spent the final years of his life in obscurity, dictating his memoirs outside Moscow.

The last and most ambitious Soviet reformer, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, presided over a military failure that imperiled his authority — and brought the Soviet Union down with it.

When Gorbachev came into office in 1985, he inherited the Soviet Union's flailing war in Afghanistan, launched in 1979 under the sclerotic Leonid Brezhnev. After an ineffectual troop surge, Gorbachev gave up on trying to improve the situation, and the last Soviet troops left Afghanistan in February 1989.

The withdrawal signaled to Eastern Bloc countries that Gorbachev was unwilling to use force to preserve the Soviet empire. In 1989, the Berlin Wall crumbled, Poland held free elections, and sovereignty movements arose within Soviet republics—all without any crackdown from Moscow.

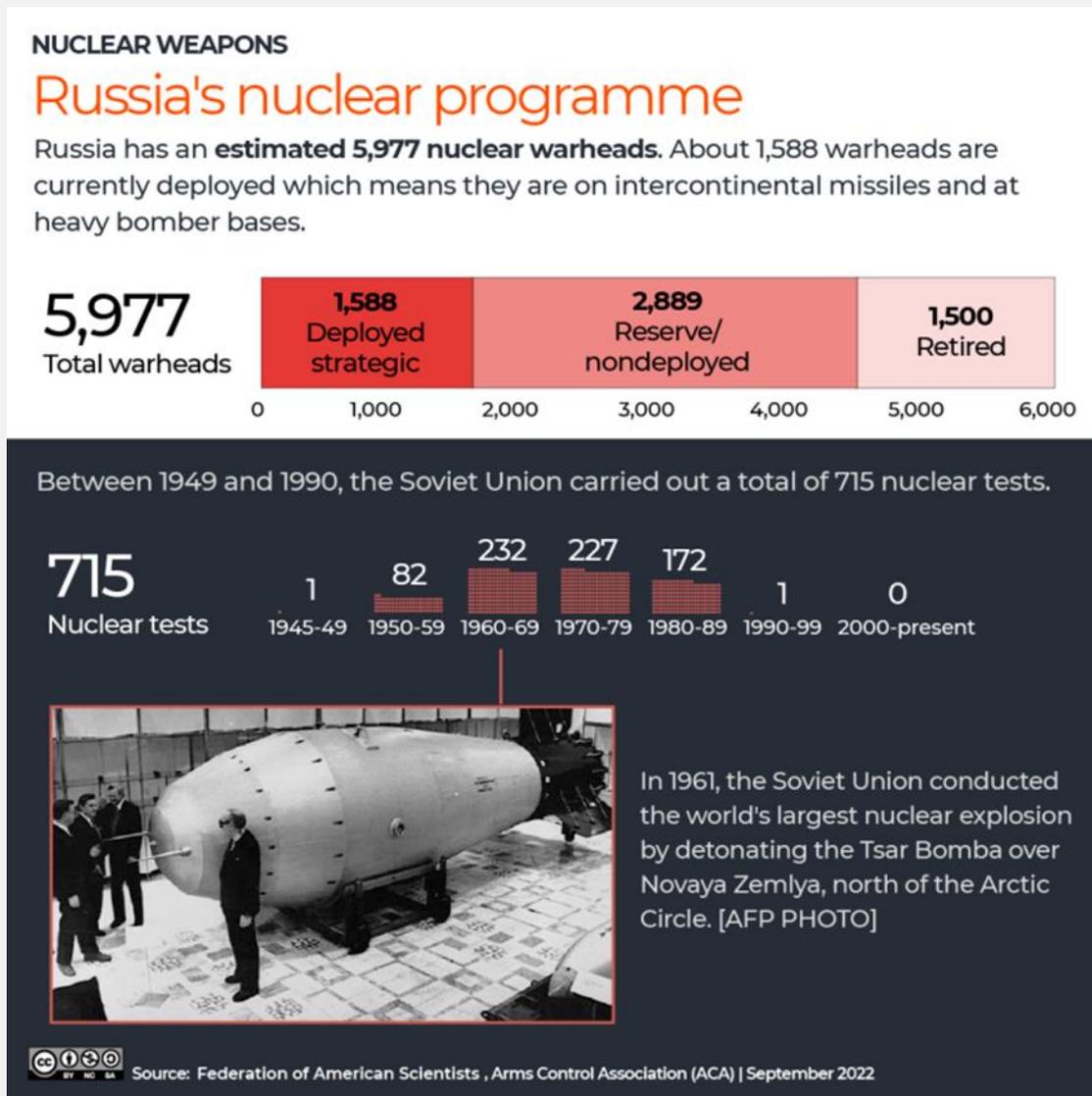
Senior military officers viewed Gorbachev as a traitor and tried to overthrow him in August 1991. After the hardliners failed to seize power, the country fell apart.

In December 1991, Gorbachev's rival, Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, presided over the Soviet Union's dissolution at the Belavezha Accords. But Yeltsin soon began a battle against separatism within Russia that nearly unseated him.

Putin – Nuclear

Nuclear war threat rising but arsenal purely a defensive deterrent - Putin says the risk of a nuclear war is rising but insists Russia has not “gone mad” and saw its own nuclear arsenal as a purely defensive deterrent.

Nevertheless, Putin said Russia would defend its territory and its allies “with all available means,” adding that it was the United States, not Russia, that had deployed “tactical” nuclear weapons in other countries.



Containment

Czech company modernizes tanks for Ukraine with the help of refugees - Soviet-era T-72 tanks are getting new optics, armor, and more at a Czech facility in Sternberk, thanks in part to the efforts of Ukrainian refugees working there. Some 150 people have been hired by Excalibur Army in the effort to modernize old military equipment from around the world, which is shipped to Ukraine after months of work on upgrades.

U.S. lawmakers authorize \$800 million more for Ukraine in defense bill - U.S. lawmakers agreed to provide Ukraine at least \$800 million in additional security assistance next year and to boost Taiwan with billions in aid over the next several years, according to an \$858 billion defense policy bill unveiled on December 6. The Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, authorizes the additional spending for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, an increase of \$500 million over President Joe Biden's request earlier this year.

Hungary vetoes EU aid for Ukraine; Bloc delays decision on funds for Budapest - Hungary vetoed an 18 billion euro (\$19 billion) EU loan for Ukraine and EU finance ministers delayed a decision on whether to unfreeze billions of euros in aid earmarked for Budapest. At a meeting in Brussels, Hungarian Finance Minister Mihaly Varga confirmed his government's opposition to supporting Ukraine with the loan. Locked in a tug-of-war with Hungary, the ministers decided to take off their agenda on December 6 any decision about 7.5 billion euros (\$7.9 billion) in EU funds earmarked for Hungary, according to EU officials.

Nordic nations may pool their growing military support to Ukraine - Nordic governments are exploring a number of joint initiatives to support Ukraine's defense against Russia, including proposals for shared weapons buys, coordinating arms donations and expanding logistics cooperation to safely transport military equipment to the war-torn country.

The discussions emanate from a meeting of Nordic defense ministers in November that was hosted by Finland in Helsinki. The meeting, which focused on deepening pan-Nordic defense collaboration against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, examined the potential for greater linkage of the four countries in support of Kyiv.

Finland is moving ahead with its 10th military aid package (MAP) to Ukraine since Russia invaded that country in February 2022. The latest shipment of weapons, which is valued at \$58.5 million, includes specialist sniper rifles, mortars, munitions, in addition to extreme climate combat equipment and clothing.

The latest batch in aid increases Finland's total spending on defense equipment to Ukraine to around \$200 million.

Among the Nordic states, Sweden is set to become the largest provider of direct military aid to Ukraine in 2022. Sweden has ratified a new MAP for Ukraine, worth \$290 million, that will include an air defense system and munitions from the Swedish Armed Force's (SAF) stockpile. The delivery will be Sweden's biggest aid package since the outbreak of war.

"For security reasons we are not detailing what is in this package, but it is substantial," said Pål Jonsson, Sweden's

Sweden's \$290 million package may include the military's portable air-defense system which is designed for anti-climate zones. RB 70 missiles can also be some of the armed forces' other missile

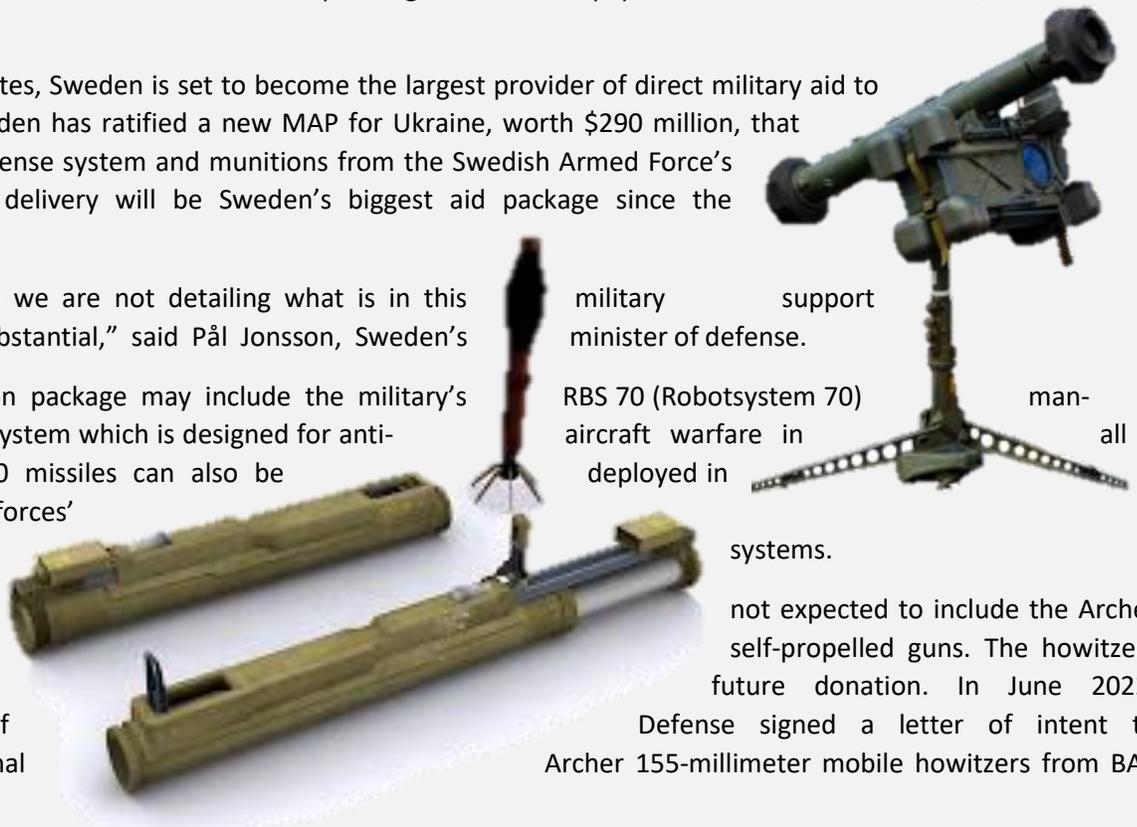
The latest MAP is Artillery System might form part of a Sweden's Ministry of purchase 24 additional

military support minister of defense.

RBS 70 (Robotsystem 70) aircraft warfare in man- all deployed in

systems.

not expected to include the Archer self-propelled guns. The howitzers future donation. In June 2022, Defense signed a letter of intent to Archer 155-millimeter mobile howitzers from BAE



Systems Bofors AB.

Danish-delivered military support deliveries for Ukraine have included shoulder-launched anti-tank weapons and Harpoon long-range anti-ship missiles sourced from the Danish Defense Forces' (DDF) stocks. In August, the Danish government approved a new MAP valued at \$141.2 million to finance weapons procurement and training.

For its part, Norway has allocated \$443 million to a financially reinforced military support program for 2022-2023. In addition, the country plans to contribute \$1 billion in civilian and humanitarian aid to Ukraine over the same period.

Sanctions

EU Commission proposes ninth package of sanctions against Russia - The EU has proposed a ninth package of sanctions on Russia, including adding almost 200 additional individuals and entities on the sanctions list.

EU President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement they also propose to introduce sanctions against three additional Russian banks and wants to impose new export controls and restrictions, particularly for dual-use goods including key chemicals, nerve agents, electronics and IT components.

"Russia continues to bring deaths and devastation to Ukraine. It is deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure," von der Leyen said. "But we stand by Ukraine, and we will make Russia pay for its cruelty."

Von der Leyen also said the bloc would look to curb supplies of drones to Moscow and take four more Russian "propaganda" channels off air.

Russia, Belarus athletes' fate at 2024 Paris summer Olympics still unclear - Russian and Belarusian athletes' qualification and participation at the 2024 Paris summer Olympics is still unclear and no date has been set for a final decision on the matter, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach has said.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, many sports bodies have moved events and suspended Russian teams or athletes while sponsors ended contracts in protest against the war.

The IOC had also recommended that events in Russia be cancelled or relocated and that Russian and Belarusian athletes not take part or compete under a neutral flag. However, it has repeatedly said the ban of those athletes was not part of the sanctions but was a protective measure.

"We had to act against our own values and mission to unify the world under peaceful competition," Bach said. "What we never did and did not want to do was prohibit athletes from competing in competitions only due to their passports."

Uzbek minister says 'gas union' plan with Russia can only be sales-based - Uzbekistan's energy minister says they will not agree to political conditions that would jeopardize its national interests after a Russian proposal for a "gas union" including the Central Asian country.

Russia said it discussed a gas union with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan last month to support shipments between the three countries and other buyers, including China.

It is part of a shift in Moscow's strategy since its invasion of Ukraine. But the Uzbek minister, Jorabek Mirzamahmudov, said Uzbekistan had yet to receive the proposal.

"Even if a gas agreement is concluded with Russia, this does not mean a union," he said.

Negotiations were being conducted to deliver Russian gas by pipeline via Kazakhstan, but this would be a "technical contract," not a union.

“If we import gas from another country, we cooperate only based on a commercial, sales contract. We will never agree to political conditions in exchange for gas. In short, we will get the gas contract offered to us only if we agree to it, otherwise not,” he said.

US blacklists more companies for aiding Russia’s military - President Biden’s administration has added 24 companies and other entities which have supported Russia militarily, Pakistan’s nuclear activities or supplied an Iranian electronics company to an export-control list.

The entities, based in Latvia, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore and Switzerland, were added over US national security and foreign policy concerns, the Commerce Department said.

The companies include Fiber Optic Solutions in Latvia, which produces fiber optic gyroscopes and other equipment and Russia’s AO Kraftway Corporation PSC, which calls itself one of the biggest Russian IT companies.

The Commerce Department also added four trading and supply companies in Singapore for supplying or attempting to supply an Iranian electronics company, Pardazan System Namad Arman.

Impacts

Putin cronies resort to begging on live TV over war failures - Russia’s ill-conceived invasion of Ukraine has so far failed to yield the goals set out by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and his top propagandists are struggling to hide their growing sense of panic.

On Monday, head of RT Margarita Simonyan appeared on The Evening With Vladimir Solovyov and admitted that the Kremlin’s collaborationist elite has concerns about the possibility of being tried for war crimes. After disingenuously claiming that neither the Russian leadership nor her fellow propagandists in the studio ever wanted to conduct strikes against Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, Simonyan said, “I am amazed by our people—and I unfortunately know many of them—including those in very high circles, who are afraid of this and are scared to call things by their proper names because of what people over there may think.”

Simonyan defiantly asserted: “We could spit on what they think over there! People who are afraid of the Hague—listen, you should be afraid to lose, to be humiliated and be afraid to betray your people. Let me tell you that if we manage to lose, the Hague—whether real or hypothetical—will come even for a street cleaner who is sweeping the cobblestones behind the Kremlin.”

In her rant, Simonyan contradicted her earlier claim of Russian forces not seeking to bomb civilian infrastructure and surmised that one more Kyiv district being left in the dark won’t change the potential of the future war crimes trials, or the “catastrophe” that will befall Russia if it loses its war against Ukraine.

Host Vladimir Solovyov immediately reverted to his old and tired routine of threatening nuclear strikes if things don’t go Russia’s way: “There won’t be any Hague if this happens, there won’t be anything at all. The whole world will be reduced to ashes.”

During Wednesday’s broadcast of 60 Minutes, host Olga Skabeeva carried on with the same theme. “God forbid, we can’t allow it and don’t even say it out loud but suppose that suddenly something happens, and our country is unable to achieve victory: then we should proceed from the premise that everyone with no exception will be held accountable—whether they are located within the Russian Federation or abroad. Those abroad will most likely be immediately arrested. Whether he is a collaborator of Putin’s regime or was just passing by, it doesn’t matter. All of us will be considered guilty. What’s at stake is not only the existence of the country, but also the carefree existence of every citizen of the Russian Federation—our future is on the line.”

US indicts 'Russian spy' for fraud, money laundering - An alleged Russian agent who was involved in US election interference efforts in 2020 has been charged with fraud and money laundering over purchases of high-end condominiums in California.

The US Justice Department said Andrii Derkach, whose whereabouts remain unknown, hid his identity from banks as he spent \$3.9 million to buy two Beverly Hills residences in 2013.

Derkach, a wealthy member of the Ukraine parliament who the US says is a trained Russian intelligence operative, used the units for his family, according to the indictment.

Derkach's father was director of the Ukraine Security Service, and he attended the Russian security ministry's intelligence academy before joining the Ukraine security service as well.

In June, Derkach was accused by the Ukrainian government of supporting Russia's invasion and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Geopolitics

Russia's war and 'imperialistic dreams' can't pay off, says Estonia's Kaja Kallas - The Ukraine war cannot lead to Russia becoming richer and should instead end in punishment, Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas has said.

"The message that we have to say loud and clear is that aggression cannot pay off," Kallas told Euronews, while attending an EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana, Albania.

"If you attack a sovereign country, then you are not leaving with more territories or more resources, but you are punished for this because we have agreed in the international rules-based order that it's illegal to attack another country."

Kallas weighed in on the recent controversial comments made by President Emmanuel Macron of France, who suggested the West should offer Russia security guarantees to end the war.

"I wouldn't offer Russia anything. I wouldn't worry about Russia right now. I would worry about Ukraine surviving. And also Russia can always go back to its borders," Kallas said.

"We have intelligence that shows clearly that the sanctions are hurting Russia," Kallas said, noting the lack of transparency in Moscow made the true impact more difficult to discern.

"Remember when the Russian propagandists were talking about hunger is our last hope to lift the sanctions? They are very cynical, but the sanctions really hurt," she added.

"We need to have strategic patience in order to not lift the sanctions and see the sanctions working in the longer term."

NATO

Government proposal on Finland's accession to NATO submitted to Parliament - The Finnish Government submitted a proposal on Finland's accession to NATO to Parliament on 5 December. The consultation on the draft proposal generated about 1,600 responses. The Government reviewed the proposal based on the responses and supplemented the rationale with specifications concerning cooperation between the Government and the President of the Republic, Parliament's role in the handling of NATO matters and in making decisions on them, and the status of Åland Islands under international law.

The Government proposes that Parliament approve the North Atlantic Treaty and the Agreement on the Status of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, National Representatives and International Staff. The North Atlantic Treaty establishes the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and defines the principles governing the activities of the Alliance and the obligations of its members. The Agreement on the Status of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, National Representatives and International Staff, known as the Ottawa Agreement, defines the status of NATO as a legal person and the privileges and immunities of NATO staff.