

Conflict Update # 212

October 15th, 2022

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 64,700 (+400) soldiers killed, 2,524 (+3) enemy tanks, 5,179 (+7) armored combat vehicles, 1,582 (+16) artillery systems, 365 (+3) MLRS systems, 186 (+0) air defense systems, 268 (+0) warplanes, 242 (+2) helicopters, 1,210 (+11) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 316 (+0) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 3,951 (+7) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 142 (+6) units of specialized equipment.

Key Takeaways

Trojan Horse? Putin, with all the feinting of an interest in “peace talks,” via his lackeys and outside allies such as Lukashenko, has been postulating some kind of openness to discussions to end the war in Ukraine.

But as always suspected, it is a feint in order to buy time to rebuild his shattered army. Leaked information indicates as much, and entirely consistent with his previous abrogation of agreements and pseudo peace accords, dating back decades, he will double-cross any “peace agreement” in the present tense with Ukraine.

Ukraine will need an iron-clad agreement, such as membership of NATO, to be even thinking about De-tente and joining any discussion with the Russians, proven liars in the international court of relationships.

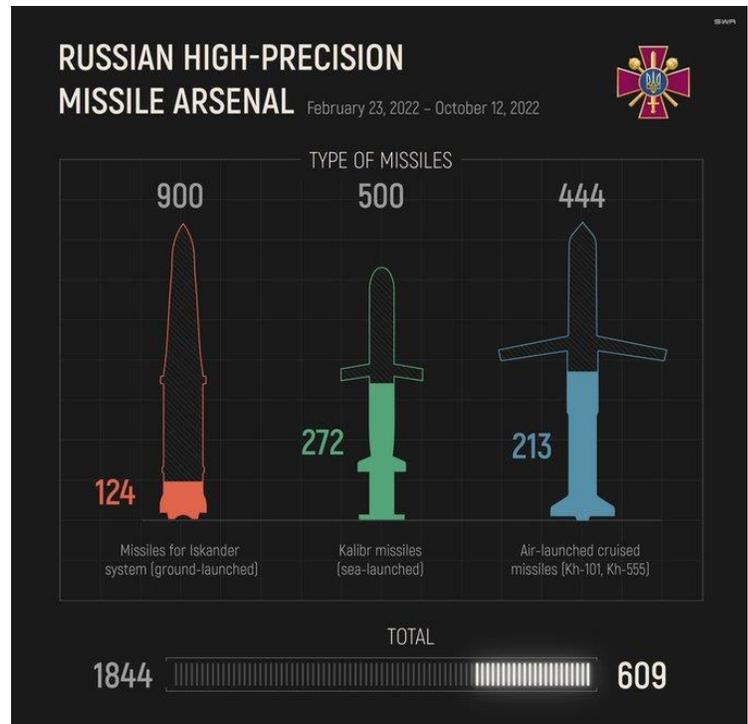
Ukraine reveals how many missiles Putin Has Left: 'Defeat is inevitable' - Ukrainian Defense Minister Reznikov revealed yesterday morning the number of missiles Russia has left and said that defeating Putin's military is "inevitable."

Reznikov posted an illustration on Twitter, alongside, showing that, as of October 12, Russia has 609 missiles left out of a pre-war arsenal of 1,844.

Remaining missiles include 124 ground-launched missiles out of an initial 900 and 272 Kalibr missiles, which are launched by sea, out of an initial 500. There are also 213 air-launched cruise missiles (Kh-101-Kh555) still remaining from the 444 that Moscow initially had at the beginning of the war.

"Demilitarization of Russia," Reznikov wrote in the tweet that included the missile illustration graph. "By using hundreds of high-precision missiles against civilian objects of Ukraine, the aggressor state reduces its ability to strike the military targets."

He continued: "Two conclusions: - Russia's military defeat is inevitable; - Russia is a terrorist state."



By the numbers – Judging from today’s numbers of Russian attrition above, it appears that there is currently siege and positional tactics underway from Ukrainian forces.

Limited numbers of tanks and armored personnel carriers seems to point to trench and defensive warfare, with Ukraine, from Twitter, You Tube and other commentator mapping, moving to encircle Russian positions in both Kherson and the northeast. It seems as if they are enticing Russian movement around Bakhmut into a “killing zone.”

Elon Musk U-turns – will continue funding Starlink in Ukraine - Founder of SpaceX says although Starlink is losing money, he will ‘just keep funding Ukraine gov’t for free’ a day after suggesting he cannot.

Musk announced his company will continue to pay for Starlink satellite internet in war-torn Ukraine a day after suggesting he cannot keep funding the project.

“The hell with it,” the world’s richest man wrote on Twitter on Saturday. “Even though Starlink is still losing money & other companies are getting billions of taxpayer \$, we’ll just keep funding Ukraine govt for free.”

Musk said on Friday that SpaceX would not be able to pay for Starlink in Ukraine indefinitely. And the US military confirmed it was communicating with the billionaire’s company about funding for the key network.

The discussions come as Musk has been embroiled in public spats with Ukrainian leaders who were angered by his controversial proposals for de-escalating the conflict.

While Ukraine has long maintained it will never agree to relinquish land taken by force, Musk suggested that it permanently cede the Crimea region to Russia, that new referendums be held under United Nations auspices to determine the fate of Russian-controlled territory, and that Ukraine agree to neutrality.

SpaceX has donated some 25,000 ground terminals to Ukraine, according to an updated figure given by Musk last week.

The disruption of the service may have dire consequences for Ukraine. Vice Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said this week Starlink services helped restore energy and communications infrastructure in critical areas after more than 100 Russian cruise missile attacks.

Encrypted satellite messages have been used for military communications after the local mobile phone network was severed during heavy shelling.

Report: 'Elite' Iranian troops cross into Ukraine to support Russian aggression - A group of "elite" Iranian troops have stealthily entered Ukraine to help the Russian armies along the front lines of battle, according to an exclusive report from The Daily Mirror.

The report reveals that up to 50 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps specialists were deployed to Ukraine, with the intent of training Russian forces in how to use so-called "kamikaze" drones.

The Iranian experts have reportedly been sent to the southern and eastern front with "hundreds of Shahed-136 drones," which have been "hammering" Ukrainian cities.

11 killed, 15 injured in shootout at training ground in Russia’s Belgorod region - “Two nationals of a CIS country” have opened fire at a training ground in Russia’s Belgorod region, the Russian Defence Ministry reports. Eleven people were killed and 15 are injured.

“During a shooting exercise with volunteers getting ready for the special operation, terrorists opened fire on unit personnel using firearms,” the message reads.

“Two terrorists were eliminated” in return fire, the ministry added. Law enforcement bodies are working on the scene.

According to Mash Telegram channel, volunteers from the Bryansk region were killed in the shootout.

Baza Telegram channel reports that the shooting took place today at about 10 AM at a training ground in the Valuyki district of Russia's Belgorod region.

"Several minutes later, the shooters were killed. The injured were taken to a hospital in Valuyki. At least two of them have gunshot wounds of the legs, another one was shot in the chest," Baza wrote.

Ukraine says air force destroyed six 'Kamikaze' drones - Ukrainian forces destroyed seven air targets overnight including an attack helicopter, according to the country's general staff, amid the ongoing Russian invasion of the country.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported on Facebook early on Saturday morning that the nation's air force had destroyed the seven targets at midnight on October 14/15.

"Two are in the south of the country," the Facebook post said. "The 'Shahed-136' kamikaze drone and an attack helicopter (type to be specified) were destroyed by anti-aircraft missile units of the Southern Air Command of the Air Force."

Note – these strikes are not included in the header article numbers.

Trains in Russia halted as destroyed missile debris rains down on tracks in Belgorod - Train services in a

Russian region near the Ukrainian border were suspended Friday after the wreckage of destroyed missiles showered onto railroad tracks, a regional governor said. Vyacheslav Gladkov shared an image on his Telegram channel which appeared to show the smoking remnants of a rocket alongside damaged tracks, explaining that air defenses had shot missiles out of the sky near Novy Oskol—a town around 56 miles north of the Ukrainian border. "Power lines are damaged. Trains are temporarily suspended," Gladkov said in the post, adding that there were no casualties. Kyiv has not immediately reacted to the news. On Thursday, Gladkov accused Ukraine of shelling an apartment building in the city of Belgorod after Russia launched widespread missile strikes across Ukraine earlier this week. Ukrainian officials said the building had actually been hit by a misfiring Russian missile targeted at the city of Kharkiv.



Russia's evacuation of civilians in southern Ukraine betrays Kremlin concern - Putin has illegally annexed territory, attacked civilian targets, called up military reservists and threatened nuclear escalation. But the Kremlin still doesn't seem confident that its military can hold back a Ukrainian counteroffensive ahead of winter.

Civilians in the country's occupied south should evacuate to Russia, Moscow-installed officials there urged this week, in a sign that the Kremlin is worried about its hold on the strategic region as Kyiv pushes to reclaim more land there after recent breakthroughs.

The head of the Moscow-appointed regional administration, Vladimir Saldo, without using the word "evacuation," asked Moscow Thursday to welcome families from the Kherson region that want "to protect themselves" from what he described as constant Ukrainian shelling.

The Kremlin promptly agreed to support such efforts, with officials in the southern Russian region of Rostov saying the first arrivals were expected Friday, state news agency Tass reported.

Western military analysts said the move underlined Russia's growing concern over its ability to hold Kherson, just weeks after it claimed to annex the region and in light of sudden gains made by Ukraine's military this month — its biggest advance in the south since Russian forces seized it early in the war.

"You don't evacuate from a region that you have recently annexed (illegally) if you are confident of holding it," said Phillips O'Brien, a professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. "I think we can read this as a sign that they are very worried about their ability to hold the west bank of the Dnieper River."

The preparation to evacuate some civilians could mean that the Russians are anticipating that combat could extend to the city of Kherson itself, the U.K. Defense Ministry said in its assessment of the situation Thursday.

The city is a strategic gateway to the Black Sea and the neighboring Crimean Peninsula and has been critical in cementing Moscow's grasp on the area. It's the only regional center that the Russians have controlled since the start of the war.

Losing Kherson would deal a major blow to the Kremlin, with Putin himself boasting that it had been "reunited" with Russia forever after the region became one of four occupied provinces that Russia claimed to have annexed last month.

'My son has died': Russia mourns loss of first drafted soldiers in Ukraine - Andrei Nikiforov, a lawyer from St Petersburg, was one of the hundreds of thousands of Russians mobilized since last month to hold the frontlines in his country's faltering war in Ukraine.

On 25 September he received his call-up papers. By 7 October, just two weeks later, he was dead.

"We don't know what happened," said Alexander Zelensky, the head of the Nevsky Collegium of Lawyers, of which Nikiforov was a member. Zelensky and a member of Nikiforov's family confirmed his call-up and death. "All we have is a date and a place."

That place was Lysychansk, one of the most dangerous spots near the frontlines.

The first coffins are now returning to Russia from Ukraine, bringing the remains of ordinary Russians who at first were promised a quick "special military operation" and now have been drafted to go and fight in a war. Their deaths may mark another inflection point for Russia in this conflict, where mismanagement has led to Kremlin infighting and at least half a million men have been drafted or fled their homes to avoid it.

The newly minted soldiers died within weeks of Putin's mobilisation announcement. On Thursday, the Chelyabinsk region announced the deaths of five mobilized soldiers from a single military commissariat. Reports on Saturday said that another four had died from the Krasnoyarsk region alone. Family members of some men who died said they had been promised two months of training before they would be sent to the frontlines.

According to BBC Russian, another 14 have died, even before reaching the front, of causes including suicide, heart attacks, in fights and other mysterious ailments.

Nikiforov, by contrast, played the role asked of him by the Kremlin: loyal, willing and able. A military veteran who had served in Chechnya, he wasn't surprised to be called up.

"He didn't hesitate," said Zelensky, adding that military recruiters had delivered his call-up papers to his home. "He didn't try to get out of his service. He gathered his things together and went. He acted bravely."

Yet deaths happening so quickly, some just days after men have been called into service, have caused anger at home.

Alexei Martynov, a 28-year-old employee of the Moscow government, was mobilized on 23 September, his father said. His death was confirmed on 10 October. "My son has died, what am I for?" he wrote in a post on 13 October. "We don't know anything more than what was put on the internet," he told the Observer.

Old photographs from Victory Day in 2016 showed Martynov in army uniform, two months after completing his mandatory service. According to Natalya Loseva, the deputy editorial director of the RT television channel, he had served in the Semyonovsky regiment, whose main activities are ceremonial.

"He had no combat experience," Loseva wrote in an angry post last week that made Martynov the highest-profile death yet from the wave of mobilization. "He was sent to the front within just a few days. He died heroically on 10 October."

Roman Super, a Russian journalist who has reported on anger among state employees, said that Martynov's death had led to a backlash among the educated cadres of city workers.

"Military leaders now is not the time to lie," wrote Loseva. "You have no right to lie and now it is a crime."

Anger at Russia's military leadership had led to considerable infighting in the Russian government, with an insurgency led by Chechnya head Ramzan Kadyrov and the Wagner private military company founder Yevgeny Prigozhin calling out individual commanders by name for their failure to halt the Ukrainian advance.

At a press conference in the Kazakhstan capital of Astana on Friday, Putin said that 16,000 mobilized troops were already fighting in Ukraine, and that 222,000 Russians had already been called up.

He said that mobilized Russians would receive basic training of five to 10 days and then unit training of five to 15 days. Then combat training would continue, he claimed.

Yet some of the deaths clearly show that men have been shipped off to war far more quickly than that. Several Russian soldiers captured by the Ukrainians claimed that they had received almost no training whatsoever.

Russia's war on Ukraine will keep hurting its economy for years to come, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen says - The fallout from Russia's war on Ukraine will harm its economy for years to come, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday.

Western sanctions imposed since the invasion in late February are likely to lead to a significant drop in the country's economic growth, the US Treasury Secretary said at a meeting hosted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

"Lost investment, including hundreds of private sector companies that have left the country and are unlikely to return, and constraints on Russia's real economy will create a drag on Russia's growth prospects for years to come," Yellen said in prepared comments.

Humanitarian

Russia's open effort to adopt Ukrainian children and bring them up as Russian is already well underway, in one of the most explosive issues of the war, an Associated Press investigation shows.

Thousands of children have been found in the basements of war-torn cities like Mariupol and at orphanages in the Russian-backed separatist territories of Donbas. They include those whose parents were killed by Russian shelling as well as others in institutions or with foster families, known as "children of the state."

Russia claims that these children don't have parents or guardians to look after them, or that they can't be reached. But the AP found that officials have deported Ukrainian children to Russia or Russian-held territories without consent, lied

to them that they weren't wanted by their parents, used them for propaganda, and given them Russian families and citizenship.

The investigation is the most extensive to date on the grab of Ukrainian children, and the first to follow the process all the way to those already growing up in Russia. The AP drew from dozens of interviews with parents, children and officials in both Ukraine and Russia; emails and letters; Russian documents and Russian state media.

Whether or not they have parents, raising the children of war in another country or culture can be a marker of genocide, an attempt to erase the very identity of an enemy nation. Prosecutors say it also can be tied directly to Putin, who has explicitly supported the adoptions.

"It's not something that happens spur of the moment on the battlefield," said Stephen Rapp, a former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues who is advising Ukraine on prosecutions. "And so your ability to attribute responsibility to the highest level is much greater here."

Even where parents are dead, Rapp said, their children must be sheltered, fostered or adopted in Ukraine rather than deported to Russia.

Russian law prohibits the adoption of foreign children. But in May, Putin signed a decree making it easier for Russia to adopt and give citizenship to Ukrainian children without parental care — and harder for Ukraine and surviving relatives to win them back.

Russia also has prepared a register of suitable Russian families for Ukrainian children and pays them for each child who gets citizenship — up to \$1,000 for those with disabilities. It holds summer camps for Ukrainian orphans, offers "patriotic education" classes and even runs a hotline to pair Russian families with children from Donbas.

"It is absolutely a terrible story," said Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to the Mariupol mayor, who claims hundreds of children were taken from that city alone. "We don't know if our children have an official parent or (stepparents) or something else because they are forcibly disappeared by Russian troops."

Nevertheless, Russia portrays its adoption of Ukrainian children as an act of generosity that gives new homes and medical resources to helpless minors. Russian state media shows local officials hugging and kissing them and handing them Russian passports.

Comment — According to official UN reports, Russia's population is forecast to decline rather sharply over the next few decades. It also has the world's worst alcoholism rate and a significantly low average death age among young men.

This all points to a need to bolster population numbers, and illegally abducting children of war may be their perverted and warped way of thinking they can solve these issues.

"The Poland Moment"

Putin and the Kremlin have been over exuberant in (assumed) Russian war capability, arising out of illegal war actions in Georgia, Chechnya, Crimea and Syria, where they engaged in scorched earth tactics against minor opposing players, players sans Western and NATO reinforcement.

But they have now reached their "**Poland Moment.**"

The West tolerated and even appeased Hitler in his pushes into Austria, Sudetenland, western France and Czechoslovakia, amongst others in the 1930's.

But when Germany invaded Poland (with Stalin and Russia in cahoots with them), it all came to a head, and then to an end six years later.

September 1939 was ***“The Poland Moment,”*** where Europe and the UK ended any cooperation with Germany and declared war on a belligerent nation intent on invading and occupying a smaller neighboring state.

Putin has followed a similar path and it has all come to a head and is now headed to an end.

2022, February 24th was Putin’s ***“Poland Moment.”***

Russian Roulette? – or Blundered Russian Poker?

By annexing the four southern Ukrainian oblasts – Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, albeit missing out on Kharkiv as the 5th because of the overwhelmingly successful Ukrainian counteroffensive, Putin played a major blundered card in his Ukrainian game of Russian geopolitical poker.

He now cannot negotiate anything in and around these annexations. Anything other than utter success here will be viewed as a defeat and loss of political prestige and invincibility within Russia and its satellite sphere of influence.

Should he not have pursued this path of annexation, he would have been able to play the geopolitical game of border demarcation maneuver. There are many examples where international borders have been moved and settled for the greater good of peace and stability.

Granted, these do not always work – view the Balkans, Africa and the sub-Continent as good examples of political expediency and geopolitical folly.

But, in this instance, he has boxed himself in. He now has nowhere to run to, as said in *“Clockwork Orange,”* instead wholly committed to his actions of annexation.

Should he not have taken this decision, Ukrainian advances could have been factored into future negotiations, even if flawed and illegal with regard to Russian-occupied territories within Ukraine.

But it would have left him room to maneuver – now he has, as said above, nowhere to run to – outside of back to Russia.

A seriously flawed political and military maneuver.

Putin

Putin will be replaced – but by someone even more extreme, warns former UK spy chief - The former head of the UK's secret intelligence service said that Russian President Vladimir Putin will be replaced "in due course" – most likely by someone even more extreme.

Sir Alex Younger, who served as MI6 chief from 2014 and 2020, appeared on BBC Newsnight on Tuesday and was asked by presenter Kirsty Wark whether Putin could be overthrown.

"He's in danger of being outflanked by the very political constituency he created," he replied. "The chauvinistic, nationalistic, arguably fascist, right-wing that was his support base and is now castigating him for not going far and hard enough."

Wark suggested to Younger that Putin's replacement might be more extreme and further to the right.

"Yes – so we need to be very careful what we wish for here," Younger said. "I personally think in due course, that is what will happen. He will be replaced but will be replaced by critics from the right."

Several reports suggest that Putin's inner circle might be starting to turn against him.

Last week, The Guardian reported a claim by Yevgenia Albats, editor of the Russian-language magazine News Times, that an estimated 70% of the elite around Putin was opposed to the war in Ukraine.

The Washington Post reported that a member of Putin's inner circle had voiced disagreement over the handling of the war in Ukraine directly to Putin, citing information obtained by US intelligence. (See following article).

Chechnya's Ramzan Kadyrov now 'voice of the Russian people'? - In recent weeks, Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of Chechnya, has to the surprise of many become "the voice of the Russian people" because unlike the nomenklatura and other Russian politicians, he is not afraid to speak the truth about the problems Moscow is facing in Ukraine, according to Moskovsky Komsomolets political observer Dmitry Popov.

Unlike almost all others in the Russian political firmament, Popov continues, Kadyrov is prepared to "call a failure a failure, a retreat a retreat, a wrecker and a saboteur a wrecker and a saboteur and not come up with beautiful euphemisms" to hid the truth.

Kadyrov is able to do this, something the Russian people welcome, for three reasons. First, he has eliminated all competitors in Chechnya so there is no one who can conspire with Moscow against him if he does something the center doesn't like. Second, were he to be removed, the Kremlin would face a problem that would rival the one Ukraine presents.

And third, at a time of war, Kadyrov who is a man of war is in his element and again unlike his counterparts elsewhere he and his children are prepared to take part in the conflict and thus are in a position to be taken seriously when he engages in criticism that appears to be intended to solve things rather lies and so makes the problem worse.

The Russian people see this, Popov says; and they welcome it. And so even if the words come with a Chechen accent, it is from Kadyrov that the real "voice of the Russian people is now heard."

Russia's repeating failures - Putin's new strategy in Ukraine is just as bad as the old one - When Russia invaded Ukraine in February, it placed its military forces in an unsustainable position, ordering them to take on more operations than they could bear.

It commanded nearly all battalions to surge simultaneously and rapidly into Ukraine along multiple fronts, without taking protective measures, clearing routes of explosives and determining secure paths of advance. It advanced at an unmanageable pace, with troops vulnerable to ambushes, counterattacks, and severe logistical problems costing enormous numbers of soldiers and equipment, and a complete loss of battle impetus.

That initial error was caused by Kremlin prewar delusions. Moscow was overconfident in its intelligence, in the ability of its agents to influence events and politics inside Ukraine, and in its own armed forces. It underestimated Ukraine's capabilities and will to fight. And it failed to account for a massive expansion of Western support to Kyiv.

There is a military parlance – "**Appreciation**" – taught to all common soldiers in their early days of service. "Appreciation" refers to gaming out the landscape ahead of an ambush or advance, where "scouts" and intelligence are used to determine not only the killing zone, but also positions, strengths and tactics. Commanders and planners take into account all facts, intelligence and then game the ratio of success to failure.

And they never advance unless the ratio is overwhelmingly in their favor. Russia did not "appreciate" before advancing.

But although he has had six months to learn from his mistakes, Putin and the Kremlin appear poised to once again commit to an untenable mission: holding Ukraine's Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

Holding this territory requires substantial manpower and armored equipment—particularly given that the regions have contested frontlines and that Russian forces in each oblast continue to run into organized partisan attacks.

Moscow has lost its most advanced equipment, without equivalent replacement. Its army has a reported 90,000 “irrecoverable” casualty loss, including well-trained personnel and most of its local “Oblast” centered enlistees (now being replaced with Russian soldiers, something they vehemently tried to avoid).

This strategy for replenishment—recruiting new soldiers from a motley mix of communities and armed groups—will not create an effective combat force and remains, in short, a mismatch between goals and an ability to deliver.

Putin will continue with his plans regardless, concluding that by annexing these four regions, he is forcing a rapid end to the war, stymie Western support for Ukraine, and buy himself time to repair and regenerate his military.

This is not going to happen though. Reduced to firing missiles from afar from a rapidly reducing (missile) inventory (see article above) and deploying untrained and incapable soldiers, with woefully inept battlefield leadership, Russia is focused instead on striking civilian targets in a cowardly attempt to cower Ukraine and its supporters.

Not a strategy of success. But then again, not once has he evidenced a modicum of strategic skill.

This is what happens when a smalltime bit player with a backroom KGB role in erstwhile Soviet East Germany rises to supreme commander of a world power. He is deplorably out of his depth.

Containment

\$725 Million in Additional Security Assistance for Ukraine - Department of Defense (DoD) announced the authorization of a Presidential Drawdown of security assistance valued at up to \$725 million to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs. This authorization is the Biden Administration's 23rd drawdown of equipment from DoD inventories for Ukraine since August 2021.

The United States has delivered unprecedented security assistance to Ukraine and will continue to work with allies and partners to ensure Ukraine has the support it needs. This new security assistance package includes:

- Additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS);
- 23,000 155mm artillery rounds;
- 500 precision-guided 155mm artillery rounds;
- 5,000 155mm rounds of Remote Anti-Armor Mine (RAAM) Systems;
- 5,000 anti-tank weapons;
- High-speed Anti-radiation missiles (HARMs);
- More than 200 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs);
- Small arms and more than 2,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition;
- Medical supplies.

Senator wants to redirect Saudi-bound missiles to Ukraine after OPEC cut - Democratic Senator Chris Murphy has proposed transferring U.S. weapons slated for Saudi Arabia to Ukraine in the wake of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) decision to cut oil production.

In a series of tweets, the senator from Connecticut said that "there are two practical, immediate changes the U.S. can make to Saudi policy that will have a near term impact on the war in Ukraine."

That includes halting future arms sales to Saudi Arabia, as well as moving Patriot missile batteries currently in Saudi Arabia to either Ukraine or to NATO partners.

Comment – Although not going to transpire, this public comment from Sen Murphy, coupled with similar comments from fellow Sen Menendez (D-NJ) who chairs the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, will send the

Saudi's a clear message about America's discontent with their recent behavior. The latter senator has promised to block any and all US military assistance to Saudi Arabia because of its pivotal role in reducing oil production in the Middle East.

Spain announced it will provide four HAWK launchers to strengthen Ukraine's air defense.

US extends battalion in Lithuania as Russia fears persist - The United States will extend its rotation of a heavy tank battalion in Lithuania, which sees no reduction in the threat from Russia since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Lithuanian officials said Friday.

Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas said that the battalion, in the town of Pabrade since 2019, will stay at least until the start of 2026.

In a statement after meeting US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in Brussels, Anusauskas said the decision implements "one of the most essential objectives put forward by the sitting government: we have a persistent military US presence in Lithuania."

Lithuania, along with neighboring Poland and fellow Baltic states Latvia and Estonia, has been at the forefront of support to Ukraine since Russia attacked on February 24.

The invasion renewed fears in nations formerly under Moscow's control. They have cheered on recent Ukrainian successes in taking back land.

But a senior Lithuanian official said that Russian forces still had the capacity to attack the Baltic states -- all members of the NATO alliance, which he said had insufficient forces in the area before the Ukraine war.

Saudi Arabia announces \$400m humanitarian aid for Ukraine: SPA News Agency - Saudi Arabia today announced \$400 million in humanitarian aid for Ukraine, the official SPA news agency said, adding that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had made a phone call to President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The prince emphasized "the Kingdom's position of supporting everything that will contribute to de-escalation, and the Kingdom's readiness to continue the efforts of mediation," SPA reported.

Saudi Arabia last month played an unexpected role in facilitating a prisoner-of-war swap between Moscow and Kyiv.

The war in Ukraine has, however, fuelled tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United States after the kingdom largely resisted pressure to ramp up oil production to ease the energy crisis resulting from the conflict.

Additional howitzers - Norway, Germany, and Denmark invested into Slovakia's indigenous production of Howitzers.

Ukraine's path to victory

For too long, the global democratic coalition supporting Kyiv has focused on what it should not do in the invasion of Ukraine. Its main aims include not letting Ukraine lose and not letting Putin win — but also not allowing the war to escalate to a point where Russia attacks a NATO country or conducts a nuclear strike.

These, however, are less goals than vague intentions, and they reflect the West's deep confusion about how the conflict should end. More than seven months into the war, the US and Europe still lack a positive vision for Ukraine's future. The West clearly believes that Kyiv's fight is just, and it wants Ukraine to succeed.

But it is not sure yet whether Ukraine is strong enough to retake all its territory. Many Western leaders still believe that Russia's military is too large to be defeated. This thinking has led the members of the pro-Ukrainian coalition to define

only their interim strategic military goals. They have not plotted out the political consequences that would come from a complete Russian military collapse.

It is time to start - Ukraine can win big. The country has proved again and again that it is capable of routing Russia. It first did so by preventing Russia from seizing Kyiv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, and the Black Sea coastline. It succeeded again by halting Russia's concentrated offensive in the Donbas, the eastern Ukrainian region comprising Donetsk and Luhansk Provinces, part of which Russia has occupied since 2014. Most recently, Ukraine retook Kharkiv Province in less than a week, broke through Russia's defensive lines in the south, and began liberating parts of the east.

The West must join Kyiv in aiming for an unequivocal Ukrainian victory. It should recognize that Ukraine's military is not just more motivated than Russia's but also better led and better trained. To win, Ukraine doesn't need a miracle; it just needs the West to increase its supply of sophisticated weaponry.

Ukrainian forces can then move deeper and faster into enemy lines and overrun more of Russia's disorganized troops. Putin may respond by calling up additional soldiers, but poorly motivated forces can only delay a well-equipped Ukraine's eventual triumph. Putin will then be out of conventional tools to forestall losing.

Outside analysts worry that before facing defeat, Putin would try to inflict massive civilian casualties on Ukraine, seeking to coerce the Ukrainian government into making concessions or even into surrendering. He might do so, Western analysts fear, by continuously targeting densely populated areas in Ukrainian cities with long-range missiles—as he has done this week—or through carpet-bombing raids. But Putin lacks the resources to truly level Ukrainian cities.

Russia's remaining inventory of conventional missiles and bombs is large enough to cause substantial damage, but it is not big enough to destroy swaths of Ukraine (see article above). And Ukraine has already proven that it will fight on even when Russia reduces cities to rubble. Putin destroyed Mariupol, ruined large parts of Kharkiv, and launched thousands of strikes on other cities and regions. The damage just made Ukrainians more committed to victory and closed off chances for negotiated settlements.

Many Westerners also fear that Putin might act on his threats to use nuclear weapons. But the West can intimidate Putin in ways that will deter him from seriously contemplating such an attack, and a nuclear strike might turn all global powers, not just the United States and Europe, against him. It is ultimately unlikely that Putin will go nuclear. But if he does, the West must make sure that his plan backfires.

As Ukraine's counteroffensive advances against an increasingly cornered Putin, it should mainly focus on liberating territory that Russia has seized since February 24. But a full Ukrainian victory also entails freeing the parts of the country that Russia has occupied since 2014, which includes Crimea. It means that Ukraine must reclaim its territorial waters and exclusive economic zones in the Black Sea and Azov Sea, without any compromises or conditions.

Russia's president has increasingly staked his regime on conquering Ukraine, sacrificing his country's economic growth and international reputation in the process. Such a broad defeat could well push Russian elites to remove him from power. Indeed, as the mass of Putin's failures and Ukraine's achievements grows, Putin's fall may become inevitable.

This scares certain leaders, who worry that a power struggle in Russia will breed dangerous instability. But it's hard to imagine a Russia more dangerous than the one led by Putin, given all the havoc he has wreaked—in Ukraine and throughout the world. The international community should welcome his departure.

Many Western observers believe that Ukraine will have to cede territory to Russia if it wants peace. They are wrong; territorial gains will only embolden the Kremlin. Putin decided to attack eastern Ukraine in 2014 because he succeeded in occupying Crimea. He invaded the entire country because he managed to establish proxy puppet regimes in the Donbas. Partial success simply motivates Putin to continue his campaigns and seize more territory. The only way to stop the war and to deter future aggression is for the invasion to end with an unequivocal Russian failure.

Winning everywhere might seem overly ambitious, and it certainly won't be easy. But it is far more possible than most outside observers realize. Ukraine, after all, has repeatedly outperformed international expectations.

In the opening weeks of the war, the country stopped Russia's blitzkrieg against the capital and then forced Moscow to retreat. Putin responded to this defeat by declaring that he would regroup and focus on conquering the Donbas, which is filled with the kind of open fields that favor Russia and its heavy artillery. And yet Ukraine steadily wore Russia down, making it pay for every tract of land with massive casualties. Eventually, Russia was forced to halt.

Ukrainians have also proved that they can make Russia not just retreat but run. Ukraine's lightning offense across Kharkiv in late September prevented Russia from even trying to annex the province. Its early October victory in Lyman has made Russia's position in the Donbas deeply uncertain. Ukraine is now even liberating villages in adjoining Luhansk, the only Ukrainian province that Russia entirely seized after February 24. And Ukrainian soldiers are moving closer to Kherson, the first major city that Russia seized in its 2022 offensive.

Ukraine's repeat successes are not coincidences. The country's military has structural advantages over its Russian adversary. The Russian military is extremely hierarchical and overly centralized; its officers are unable to make critical decisions without getting permission from senior leaders. It is very bad at multidirectional planning, incapable of focusing on one segment of the frontline without distracting from its operations in another.

Ukraine, by contrast, is quick to adapt, with a NATO-style "mission command" system that encourages lower-ranking officers and sergeants to make decisions. Ukraine has also carried out many successful multidirectional attacks. The country's counteroffensive in the south, for example, diverted critical Russian resources away from Kharkiv, allowing Ukrainian units to advance there with ease.

Ukraine's advantages are unlikely to dissipate. The Russian military continues to make unsound decisions. A critical number of junior Russian officers were killed in the first months of the war, and without them, Russia will find it harder to organize and train its troops. Unlike Ukraine, Russia does not have a strong core of noncommissioned officers who can help with the war. Although Russia's mass mobilization will likely have an impact—the influx of new soldiers will complicate Ukraine's efforts to advance—it will mostly yield inexperienced and poorly trained men who neither want to fight nor know how to fight. As they experience the shock of battle, coming under loud and devastating artillery attacks, many will run. Many will die.

Ukraine has also suffered serious casualties, and its soldiers will continue to fall in combat. But unlike the Russians, who are fighting a "special military operation" fueled by Putin's imperial delusions, the Ukrainians are fighting a total war to save their country. Ukraine continues to see a steady stream of motivated fighters; Russia continues to see long lines of men fleeing the country. Ukrainians value and respect their military commanders and President Zelensky, and the military protects its soldiers and promotes its brightest. The Russian military, however, mistreats its troops, showing little regard for their lives. This helps explain why Russian soldiers fled from Kharkiv and are now running in parts of the Donbas and Kherson. Armies that run once tend to run again.

Quality and quantity

It is true that Russia has more weapons than does Ukraine. Despite months of losses, Moscow still possesses sizable stockpiles of missiles, guns, and ammunition that it can use to attack Ukrainian forces. But this is not the advantage that it may seem. When it comes to using weapons, Russia and Ukraine follow different philosophies: Ukraine's focuses on high-tech and precision-driven equipment, whereas Russia's relies on high quantity but lower-precision systems. Because precision substantially affects accuracy, Ukraine can do more with less. If Ukraine continues to receive a steady supply of Western weapons, it will negate Russia's numerical superiority.

Long-range firepower is one critical capability where Ukraine will need more support. The country must have enough weapons and ammunition to outfit its brigades with artillery systems and multiple rocket launchers that can reach behind enemy lines, hitting ammunition depots and making it extremely hard for Russia to send in reinforcements.

Ukrainian forces have already successfully used such Western systems, especially U.S.-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS). But they will need even more equipment, including new, powerful weapons that can hit deeper targets.

If supplied, U.S.-made Army Tactical Missiles Systems (ATCAMS) would prove particularly useful by allowing Ukraine to destroy Russian battlefield positions up to 190 miles away. It must also have enough weapons to simultaneously meet its operational requirements in at least two or three regions, such as the east and south, while holding off the Russians in others. If it maintains an initiative and equally strong presence along the war's long lines of contact, Ukraine can be assured of hitting Russia in the areas where the Russian military is weakest.

But firepower is not the only thing that Ukraine needs.

To defeat Russia, Ukraine must be equipped with more tanks and armored personnel carriers, both of which it used to great effect in retaking Kharkiv Province. Ukrainian artillery units will also need enough counterbattery radars, such as AN/TPQ radar systems, so they can swiftly detect incoming fire.

They need more midrange air-defense units, such as the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS), to protect troops and cities as they come under Russian bombardment. It will need to sustain all these capabilities, so their military must set up ammunition and spare-parts facilities around its western borders. It must also build comprehensive support facilities closer to the frontlines, where it can quickly repair damaged weapons and equipment.

Ukraine has already proved itself capable of downing Russian aircraft and defying predictions that Russia would gain air superiority, and they have also damaged the Russian navy. The country's successful strike against Russian navy installations and vessels, including the Moskva cruiser—the Russian Black Sea Fleet's flagship—helped push Russia's ships farther away from the Ukrainian coast.

But sea access denial is an ongoing process, not a one-time achievement, and Ukraine will need help if it wants to fully break Russia's blockade. The West must supply the country with more coastal missiles, unmanned systems, and detailed intelligence so Ukraine can eventually regain full access to its seas.

The West has reasons to supply Ukraine that go beyond just this conflict. The war has given NATO a rare chance to test its equipment in a real-time, high-intensity operational environment. The United States and Europe can learn invaluable lessons from the way their weapons perform, and the more gear they provide, the more knowledge they will acquire. Together, the West and Ukraine can figure out which weapons systems need tweaking and which ones work best, and Kyiv can use the most effective ones to keep pushing Russian forces back.

Saving the world

Putin is aware that Russia is losing on the battlefield, and his not-so-veiled threats to use nuclear weapons are a transparent attempt to halt Western assistance. He likely knows that these threats will not stop Ukraine. But if he follows through on them, it would be both to deter the West from helping Ukraine and to shock Kyiv into surrendering.

Breaking the nuclear taboo, however, would devastate the Kremlin in ways that simply losing the war wouldn't. Tactical nuclear weapons are difficult to target, and the fallout can extend in unpredictable directions, meaning a strike could seriously damage Russian troops and territories.

Ukrainians will also fight on even if hit by a nuclear attack—for Ukrainians, there is no scenario worse than Russian occupation—so such a strike will not lead to Kyiv’s surrender. And if Russia goes nuclear, it will face a variety of severe retaliatory measures, some of which may have consequences that go beyond just the battlefield.

China and India have so far avoided backing Ukraine or sanctioning Russia, but if the Kremlin launches a nuclear attack, Beijing and Delhi are highly likely to join the West’s anti-Russian coalition, including by implementing severe sanctions and banning relations with Russia. They may even provide military assistance to Ukraine. For Russia, then, the result of nuclear use would be not just defeat but even more international isolation. (**Comment** – It is very likely that both China and India have emphasized this to Putin)(China has a far lower arsenal of nuclear weaponry than does the West, and if seen to be condoning Russian nuclear performance, it will fear for its own safety once this threshold has been breached. Even If China harbors any tactical nuclear intent, it is not at this point ready for any escalation).

Putin, of course, is capable of making terrible choices, and he is desperate. Neither Ukraine nor the West can discount the possibility that he will order a nuclear attack. But the West can deter him by making it clear that, should Russia launch such a strike, it will directly, and conventionally, enter the conflict.

Avoiding NATO involvement is one of the main reasons Putin continues to threaten a nuclear attack—Putin knows that if Russia cannot prevail against Ukraine, it has no chance against NATO—and he is therefore unlikely to do something that would bring that bloc in. That’s especially true given the speed with which NATO would win. Ukraine’s counteroffensive is moving comparatively slowly, giving Putin space to use his propaganda apparatus to manage public perception of the events. Once NATO joined, he would have no time to shield his reputation from the Russian military’s stunning collapse.

NATO has no shortage of ways to seriously threaten Russia without using nuclear weapons. It might not even need a land operation. The Western coalition could credibly tell the Kremlin that it would hit Russian capabilities with direct missile strikes and airstrikes, destroying its military facilities and disabling its Black Sea Fleet. It could threaten to cut all its communications with electronic warfare and arrange a cyber-blackout against the entire Russian military.

The West can also threaten to impose sanctions that are totalizing and complete (no exceptions for energy buys), which would quickly bankrupt Russia. Especially if taken together, these measures would cause irreparable, critical damage to the Russian armed forces.

What the West should not and cannot do is be cowed by Russia’s nuclear blackmail. If it stops aiding Ukraine because it fears the consequences, nuclear states will find it much easier to impose their will on nonnuclear ones in the future. If Russia orders a nuclear strike and gets away with it, nuclear states will have almost automatic permission to invade lesser powers. In either scenario, the result will be widespread proliferation. Even poorer countries will plow their resources into nuclear programs, and for an understandable reason: It will be the only sure way to guarantee their sovereignty. (**Comment** – China and India have long-standing disputes along their mutual border. Should any global escalation ensue, this may well “explode” into open conflict, surely then followed by a nuclear Pakistan’s passage to venting its own long-standing border frustrations with India). Not a good situation for Russia to trigger and one, which no doubt, is alive and well in Chinese and NATO thinking, never mind India).

Crime and punishment

With enough Western weapons, Ukraine will continue breaking through Russian defenses. It will use long-range rockets to destroy command posts, depots, and supply lines, making it impossible for Russia to properly reinforce its battered troops. It will shoot down Russian aircraft, preventing the Russian air force from defending positions. It will keep sinking Russian naval craft. And it will be helped along the way by the Russian military’s many deficiencies: its intense centralization, its emphasis on punishing its forces for mistakes rather than learning from them, and its highly

inefficient style of combat. In the face of mounting setbacks, Russian morale will eventually collapse. The country's soldiers will be forced back home.

Ukraine's liberation of Crimea and parts of the Donbas that Russian proxies seized in 2014 will come next. And after Ukraine's victories elsewhere, these operations are unlikely to be all that taxing. By the time Ukrainian forces get to those regions, the Russian military will most likely be too exhausted to seriously defend them. Many of the male residents of the Russian-controlled Donbas will already have been killed on the frontlines. The survivors (which will likely include most of the region's remaining male population) are unlikely to be loyal to the Kremlin, given what Putin has put them through.

Some Western observers may consider Crimea to be a special case and encourage Ukraine to not press forward there, but although it has been under Russian control longer, its annexation remains every bit as illegal today as it was in 2014. International law should know no compromises or double standards. **(Comment** – Crimea is c98% Russian-speaking so may well be a tougher nut to crack for Ukraine)(But, it is essential to re-take, given its prominence in opening and defending the Ukrainian Black Sea coast and access to international shipping lanes for Ukrainian exports).

The liberation of Crimea and the Donbas should, however, include a reintegration campaign. Because the periods of Russian occupation, with their attendant aggressive propaganda, have lasted so long, residents will need to receive social, legal, and economic assistance from Ukraine as part of reconciliation efforts. These efforts will make for a more delicate operation. As the Ukrainian government restores its governance, it will need to show residents that, unlike Moscow, Kyiv can provide stability and the rule of law.

Meanwhile, the world must prepare for what Ukrainian wins in these long-occupied regions will mean for Putin.

Annexing Crimea and creating puppet states in the Donbas were two of his signature achievements, and his regime may not survive losing them. The world may want to prepare even before Ukraine moves into Crimea; Putin's regime will be endangered if it retakes just the areas Russia seized after February 24. Losing almost all the land it just annexed would be a humiliating failure for Moscow, one that may get Russia's elites to finally realize that their president's obsession with war is deeply unproductive and to rise up against him. It would not be the first time in Russian history that a leader has been pushed out of power.

Once Putin is gone, the world must focus on making Russia pay restitution. Moscow should be held fully responsible for the damage it has done to Ukraine, providing reparations to the country and to the Ukrainian people. Ideally, after regime change, Russia will do this of its own volition. But if it doesn't, the West can redirect hundreds of billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets to Ukraine as collateral. Russia must release all prisoners of war and all Ukrainian civilians it has detained or forcibly moved to Russia. It especially needs to return the thousands of children it kidnapped during the invasion and occupation.

Finally, Ukraine and its partners must demand that Moscow hand Putin, other senior Russian leaders, and any figures involved in wartime atrocities over to a globally recognized criminal tribunal. The West should refuse to lift any sanctions on Moscow until these demands are met. They must demonstrate that extreme aggression, genocide, and terror are not acceptable.

This program of penance and justice may seem frightening to international leaders, who believe it could cause instability in Russia. Some analysts even say that the Russian Federation could disintegrate, leading to catastrophic consequences for the rest of the world.

Many international leaders had similar fears when the Soviet Union collapsed, including former U.S. President George H. W. Bush, who traveled to Ukraine in 1991 to try to stop the country from seceding from Russia.

But these leaders were wrong. Despite the war, Ukraine has become a symbol of democracy around the world. Many other post-Soviet states have grown far wealthier and freer since 1991. If Russia were weakened today, the net outcome would be similarly positive. Its reduced capabilities would make it harder for Moscow to threaten as many people as it does now. And it is simply unjust to try to keep the country's residents under the foot of a paranoid, genocidal dictator. (Foreign Affairs).

Comment – Aside from the above, there remains, and an instrumental element of the above, the growing anti-Western direction of a newly created bi-polar world order dominated by China and Russia. It is already well-ensconced in their thought processes as evidenced by their moves to befriend ASEAN, Middle Eastern, African and South American nations. China is extending its BRI as far as it can, albeit suffering some recent setbacks, with Russia in lockstep behind them.

What remains to be seen though is how the Russian elite will take to being a distinctly subordinate partner in this geopolitical role. For centuries they have viewed themselves as primary players on the international stage and have been influential in matters geopolitical for too long to remember. Putin's current Ukrainian gambit has severely dented that capability and reputation, disastrous for any international prestige and role of influence.

Should Russia however fail, and in the process disintegrate or lean westward, China will find itself geographically surrounded. Something I am sure not left out of their thinking and strategies. Perhaps this eventuality is something behind this (driving) period of history after all.

Methinks we should not view this in terms of a short or medium term scenario, it is increasingly looking like a 30 to 35-year strategy about China, not Ukraine or Russia.

Interesting time and as they used to say, "The Great Game" continues.

China

Xi to open party congress at challenging time for China - Chinese President Xi Jinping will take the stage tomorrow to kick off a historic congress of the ruling Communist Party, where he is poised to win a third term that solidifies his place as China's most powerful ruler since Mao Zedong.

The congress comes at a tumultuous time, with Xi's adherence to his zero-COVID policy battering the economy, while his support for Russia's Vladimir Putin has further alienated China from the West. Still, diplomats, economists and analysts spoken to by Reuters say Xi is set to consolidate his grip on power.

Few expect significant deviation in direction during a third Xi term, with continued focus on policies that prioritise security and self-reliance, state control of the economy, more assertive diplomacy and a stronger military, and growing pressure to seize Taiwan.

An interesting comment – A confidential source of mine who is well connected, tells me to check into steel usage numbers in China and the US. He says what I will find is the China uses more steel annually in laying down hulls for its naval vessels than the US uses across the entire country. And has been doing so for years.

Impacts

Details of expelled Russians spies in The Hague revealed - Dutch and Belgian journalists, working with the Dossier Center, an NGO in London, have revealed the identities of 18 more Russian diplomats expelled from the EU in April on grounds of espionage.

The group of 18 came from Russia's embassy in The Hague as well as its mission at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Dutch capital.

Peace Talks

Russia's Putin reacts to PM - Putin today said India and China

GeoPolitical

Now Putin has to listen to lectures from the President of Tajikistan: 'We want to be respected' - Putin was given a stern dressing down by the president of Tajikistan in another indicator that the Russian dictator has lost respect and influence in his own backyard.

Fellow longstanding dictator Emomali Rahmon, ruler of the Central Asian state of 9 million since 1994, seized upon Putin's woes back home and in Ukraine to give him a piece of his mind and tell him how he really feels during a summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana.

A glum and awkward looking Putin slouched back in his chair and took the seven minute tirade as a host of Central Asian leaders and officials at the Commonwealth Of Independent States Summit (CIS) watched on.



'Yes, we are small nations, we are not 100-200 million, but we have history, culture, we love, we want to be respected.' Rahmon said in a fiery outburst.

We do not need anything; just to be respected.'

The humiliation was witnessed by the rulers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

'Why do we have to beg (Russia to attend) some miserable forum in Tajikistan?' Rahmon demanded of Putin, jabbing his finger and making expansive gestures.

Russian mobilization and annexation

Russian reservists in Ukraine likely buying their own body armour - Russian troops 'have been fielded with very, very limited training and very, very poor equipment,' Western officials say.

The hundreds of thousands of Russian reservists called up to fight on the frontline in Ukraine are "likely" having to buy their own body armour, says the UK Ministry of Defence.

Its latest intelligence briefing on the situation in Ukraine also said that the price of combat kit for Vladimir Putin's newly-conscripted troops had soared in recent months.

On Saturday, the ministry said the Russian 6B45 bulletproof military vest had been selling online for £570 (40,000 roubles) up from £170 (12,000 roubles) in April.

“Many reservists are likely required to purchase their own body armour, especially the modern 6B45 vest, which is meant to be on general issue to combat units as part of the Ratnik personal equipment programme.

“This vest has been selling on Russian online shopping sites for 40,000 roubles (approx. USD \$640), up from around 12,000 roubles (approximately USD \$190) in April.

“In 2020, the Russian authorities announced that 300,000 sets of Ratnik body armour had been supplied to the Russian military, which was ample to equip the force currently deployed in Ukraine.

“Endemic corruption and poor logistics remain one of the underlying causes of Russia’s poor performance in Ukraine.”

Russia forcibly enlisting the homeless, illegal migrant workers – report - Since Putin's announcement of partial mobilization, dozens of homeless people have been taken to recruitment offices, according to local sources.

Recruiting bureaus in Russia have begun pulling homeless and needy people off the street and recruiting them for the war in Ukraine, an independent local news source reports.

"The officers of the military commissariats in Moscow came to charity centers that provide shelter and food to the needy and homeless, as well as hostels where migrant workers live, and forced them to enlist in the Russian army," the independent Russian news site "Mediazona" reported.

Volunteers in the "Food Not Bombs" group told Mediazona that since Putin's announcement of partial mobilization, dozens of homeless people have been taken to military commissariats." Similar testimonies also came from other charities that operate in Moscow and other major cities.

"The police come here and see the line of people who are about to receive food. They grab them by the back of the neck and take them against their will," testified an employee of a Christian charity organization that helps the members of the charity center. "They loaded them onto buses that were waiting and drove from there to the military commissariats," she added.

Russian soldiers calling Ukrainian surrender hotline by the thousands – GUR - A representative from Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense (GUR) announced that thousands of phone calls have been made by Russian forces declaring their surrender to the ministry since the hotline debuted a few weeks ago, the GUR representative announced on an interview with TV channel "FREEDOM" on Monday.

Representative Andriy Yusov from GUR said the calls have come from soldiers awaiting deployment and even Russian troops who have already been mobilized. He added that over 2,000 calls have been made thus far and that the number is growing.

Yusov added that in some instances, wives call the hotline to inquire about securing surrenders for their husbands. Yusov also explained that Ukraine will follow Geneva Conventions protocol and allow surrendering forces access to medical care and allowed to contact their relatives.