

Conflict Update # 336

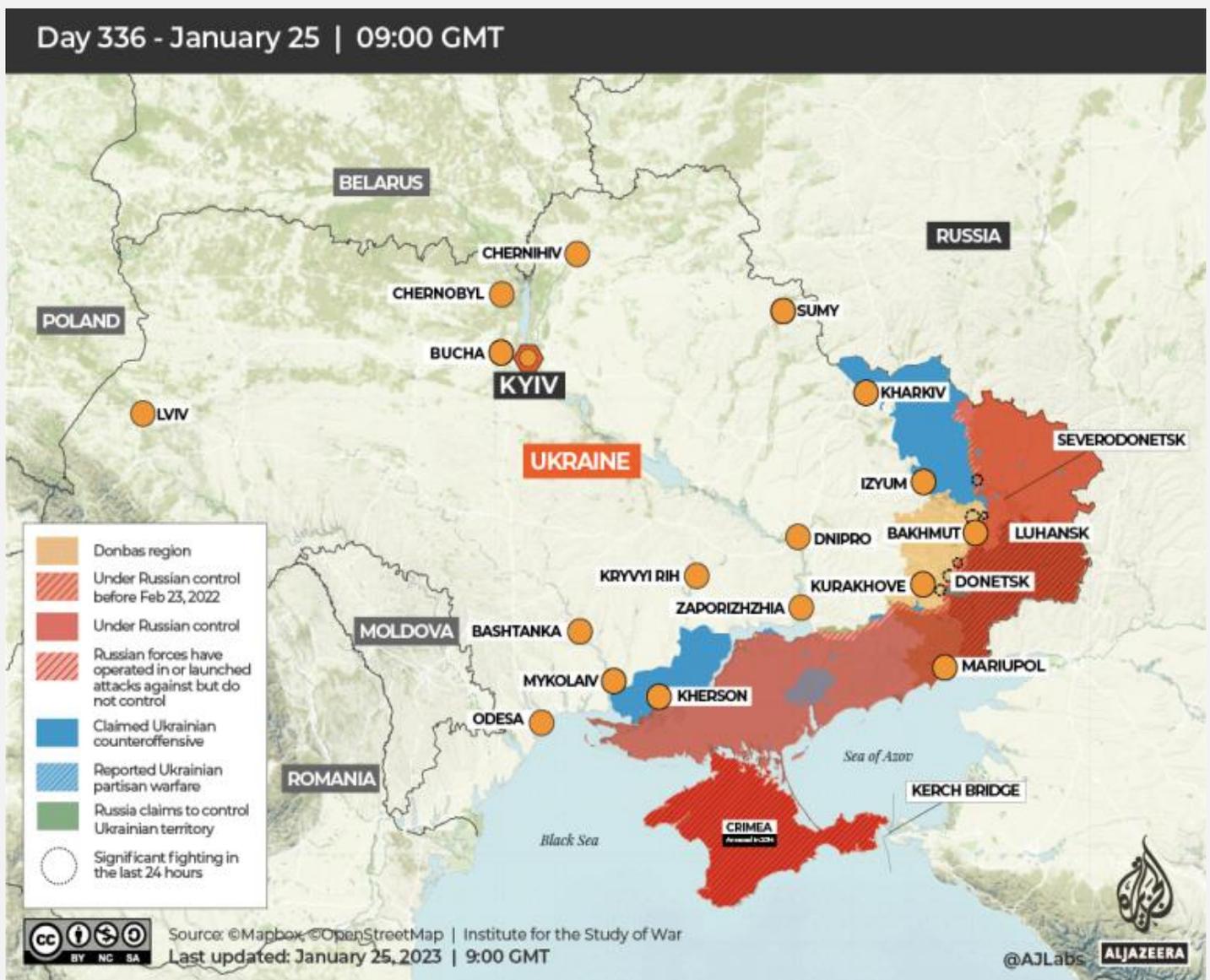
January 25th, 2023

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses¹ – 123,080 (910) soldiers killed, 3,161 (+9) enemy tanks, 6,307 (+23) armored combat vehicles, 2,154 (+6) artillery systems, 450 (+2) MLRS systems, 220 (+0) air defense systems, 290 (+1) warplanes, 281 (+0) helicopters, 1,902 (+5) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 749 (+0) cruise missiles, 18 (+1) warships/cutters, 4,967 (+23) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 239 fuel bowsers (+0) and 194 (+0) units of equipment.

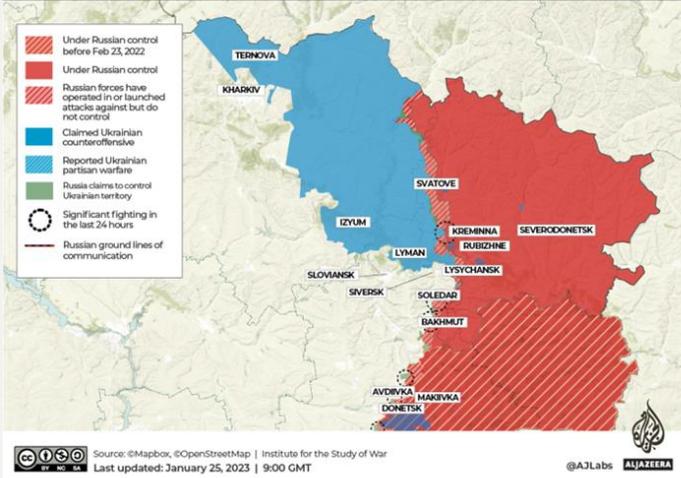
Key Takeaways



Who controls what in eastern Ukraine?

Russian forces conducted ground attacks in Bakhmut, where they made marginal gains, and areas around Avdiivka and Donetsk city, the Institute for the Study of War said.

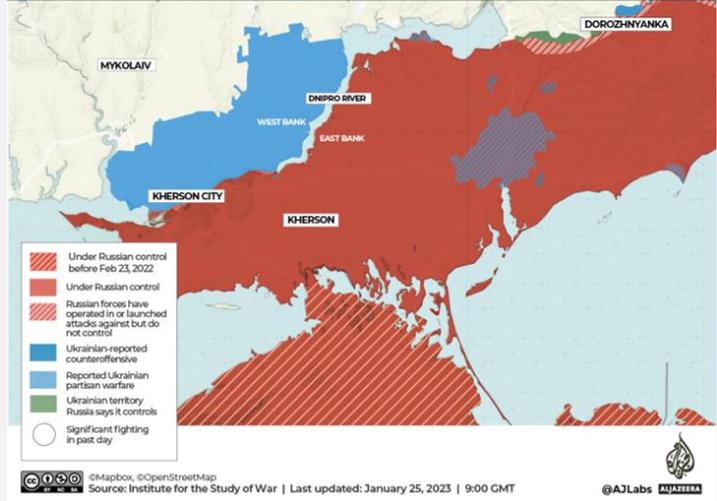
Day 336 - January 25 | 09:00 GMT



Who controls what in southern Ukraine?

Ukrainian special forces launched attacks across the Dnieper River in the Kherson region while Russian troops conducted limited and localised ground assaults in the Zaporizhia region, the Institute for the Study of War said.

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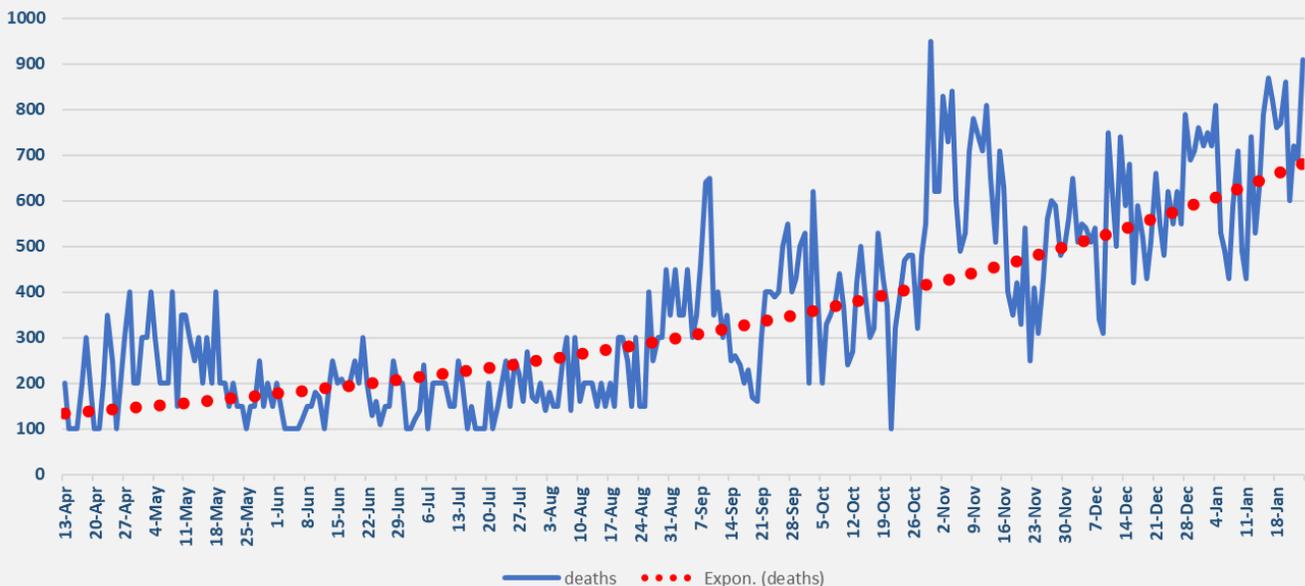


German Chancellor Olaf Scholz⁵ agreed to supply Ukraine with Leopard 2 battle tanks, according to media reports, after weeks of mounting pressure on Berlin to give Kyiv the heavier weapons it says it needs to drive back invading Russian forces.

Germany's decision reportedly came after the United States⁵ was said to be poised to start a process that would eventually send dozens of M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine's front lines.

Delivery of tanks⁶ by the US to Ukraine would be "another blatant provocation" against Russia, Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador, said.

Russian troop deaths by day



A Swiss parliamentary body proposed waiving a re-export ban⁷ that prevents ammunition it manufactures from being re-exported from another country to Ukraine.

The US determined that some Chinese companies⁸ are providing non-lethal assistance to Russia for use in the Ukraine war and officials noted their concern to the Chinese government, a source familiar with the matter said.

Kyiv Says Forces Outnumbered, Battling 'Intensifying' Russian Attacks Near Bakhmut¹⁰ - A Ukrainian deputy defense minister said today Russian forces are "intensifying" their attacks near Bakhmut in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine and warned that Moscow had a "superior number of soldiers and weapons" in what has become a hot spot in the 11-month-old invasion.

Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar wrote on Telegram that "the enemy is intensifying pressure in the Bakhmut and Vuhledar sectors" in a broader region that Ukrainians frequently refer to as the Donbas.

"The enemy is throwing a significant number of personnel, weapons, and military equipment into the battle, trying to break through our defenses, [and] is suffering significant losses but is not giving up its plans," Malyar said. "The intensity of the fighting is increasing."

Russian-backed separatists have controlled large swaths of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions that compose the Donbas since 2014, when Russian troops also invaded Crimea ahead of its annexation.

They are two of the four regions, along with Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, that Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed to have annexed in September in a move dismissed by Kyiv and the international community.

Comment – This is precisely the type of war Russia seeks – throw huge numbers of troops and equipment at the enemy. This will persist until vehicle mobility returns. The US has been urging Ukraine to evacuate these areas and push for a renewed southern front toward Crimea. Ukraine cannot do so, as this allows the Russian to circle back behind their forces and seize additional territory.

The cost to Russia is enormous with **910** soldiers dying over the past 24 hours. This is one of the highest daily death tolls of enemy force since they began their illegal invasion.

Putin

'Deny, deflect, distract': How Russia spreads disinformation about the war in Ukraine¹⁸ - When a missile struck a nine-storey apartment building in the southern Ukrainian city of Dnipro last week, Yevhen Fedchenko knew what to expect from Russian news coverage of the strike.

"They immediately started to build disinformation narratives on the top of the story, first of all accusing Ukraine of doing that," Fedchenko told CBC Radio's The House in an interview that aired Saturday.

He said Russian disinformation is aimed at convincing its audience that Ukrainians bomb their own infrastructure in order to discredit Russia in the eyes of the world. Russian media also accuse Ukrainian forces of being incapable of operating military equipment supplied by their western allies.

"On the one hand, nothing unique was happening," Fedchenko said of the Russian coverage of the strike on the apartment building, which killed at least 45 people.

"But on the other hand, you still cannot grasp how sinister this system can be."

Fedchenko is a co-founder of StopFake.org, an organization made up of journalists, professors and students working out of the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kyiv. The group was formed nine years ago, after Russia annexed Crimea.

Since then, StopFake.org has debunked thousands of stories — including Russian claims that Ukrainians and their allies staged the massacre of civilians in Bucha early last year, using crisis actors and doctored photos.

Numerous human rights organizations have reported that Russian troops committed war crimes in Bucha and the International Criminal Court has opened investigations into events there, based on reports it has received.

Russian disinformation efforts reach Canada²⁰ - While Russia has long been known for using propaganda as a military strategy, the Internet era has put those information operations "on steroids," said Anatoliy Gruzd, director of research at the Social Media Lab at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Those operations target audiences beyond Ukraine and Russia.

Russian troll farms — a co-ordinated network that posts provocative or misleading information to sway political opinion or stoke division abroad — were widely acknowledged to have attempted to sway the results of the 2016 American presidential election. Gruzd said their work also has affected Canadians.

In a study last year, Gruzd and fellow researchers found that about half of Canadians were exposed to "at least one persistent, false claim" about the war on Ukraine. Nearly half of Canadians believed "to some extent" the false claim that NATO had been surrounding Russia with more military bases since the end of the Cold War, the study said.

"We may think the Kremlin is far away and they may not care about Canadians, but in fact their messages are propagating through different channels to Canadians," Gruzd said in an interview on The House.

He said that as platforms like Twitter and Facebook proactively ban some Russian state media accounts, official accounts — such as those run by Russian embassies — are also contributing to disinformation operations.

Russian saboteurs seek to hamper Putin's war machine⁹ - Anti-Putin activists try to slow down Russia's war in Ukraine and say they are willing to step up their violence.

According to Ukrainian intelligence, ongoing and multiple incident occurring in Russia this year after 40 incidents during all of 2022, suggesting that anti-war resistance in Russia is growing bolder.

Since the invasion of Ukraine in February, Russian-occupied territories there have experienced regular sabotage from the Ukrainian resistance. But in Russia and Belarus, a secret network of activists is also doing its best to slow down the Russian war machine.

"We are not only against Putin and the war but also against Russian imperialism and against the existing capitalist system of oppression in general," a BOAK representative told Al Jazeera by email.

BOAK describes itself as anarcho-communist, meaning it seeks a decentralized society in harmony with nature with a focus shifted away from profit and onto the needs of the people. It rejects all forms of inequality and oppression.

This puts it at odds with Russia's Communist Party, which embraces Stalinism and enthusiastically rallies behind President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are disgusted by this fratricidal bloodbath, and we believe only by halting Putin's aggression we can hope for this to stop and to never happen again," the BOAK representative continued.

Partisans

BOAK and other Russian anti-war groups such as Stop the Trains call themselves partisans after the resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II when fighters hid in the forests of Belarus, Ukraine and western Russia and launched attacks on German forces.

BOAK says it consists of several dozen cells of various sizes that operate independently, but the central network may help coordinate or publicize their actions. The central organization follows a horizontal command structure, meaning that decisions that affect everyone in the organization are made by consensus.

The group locates their targets through open-source websites such as Wikimapia, and posts the results of its work on Telegram along with detailed instructions for other would-be saboteurs. In August, Telegram was fined by Russian authorities for refusing to take down the anarchists' material.

A favorite target of BOAK is railroads, which the army uses to move supplies to the front line.

"They are the blood vessels that feed Russian aggression," the representative explained. "It is along them that soldiers, equipment and ammunition are delivered. Stop them, and the Russian army will choke without resources."

At first, Russian authorities tried to play down the partisans' activities, blaming derailments on faulty train lines, until Russian citizens started being arrested for committing acts of sabotage.

Other targets have included army recruitment centres, police stations, national guard buildings and the ruling United Russia party's offices. Since the start of the war, scores of draft offices and government buildings have been set alight, usually with Molotov cocktails, according to the independent Russian media outlet MediaZona.

It's not clear how many of these fires were directly orchestrated or inspired by BOAK. Some were caused by arsonists of various political persuasions and unaffiliated individuals on their own initiative.

"While we can always be skeptical of claims, what we do know is claims of attacks and proof of those attacks, including photos and videos, are frequent enough that certainly attacks are occurring quite frequently, perhaps several per week," Jeff Hawn, a non-resident fellow at the New Lines Institute think tank, told Al Jazeera.

Lethal force

Although the group has not yet carried out any assassinations, it is not against the use of lethal force and said it would only target state security officials. It said it takes care to minimize the risk to passers-by by targeting railways near military targets where civilian trains are unlikely to travel.

"We consider the destruction of the oppressors of the people quite acceptable," the spokesperson said.

Belarus

Railroad saboteurs have also been active in Belarus. Although it is not formally taking part in the war, the country is being used by Russian forces as a logistics hub.

Diplomacy

Belarus lawmakers pull out of cultural, education deals with France, Poland¹¹ - Belarus's lower legislative chamber today voted to terminate a 2010 intergovernmental agreement with France on cooperation in the areas of culture, education, science and technology, and mass media, state media reported. Another report said it had also voted to withdraw from a 2016 agreement with neighboring Poland on cooperation in education. France, Poland, and other Western states have imposed sanctions since Belarus's widely criticized 2020 presidential election and the subsequent crackdown on civil society. They further isolated Belarus after Minsk let Russian troops stage Moscow's invasion of Ukraine from Belarusian territory.

Odesa placed on UNESCO's list of Endangered Heritage Sites¹³ - The UN cultural agency decided on January 25 to add the historic center of Ukraine's Black Sea port city of Odesa to its list of endangered World Heritage locations,

recognizing “the outstanding universal value of the site and the duty of all humanity to protect it.” The decision was made at an extraordinary session of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee in Paris. Russian forces have launched multiple artillery attacks and air strikes on Odesa since invading Ukraine 11 months ago.

Comments and Reports

More Ukrainian prosecutors removed from posts amid graft scandal¹⁴ - Prosecutors in five Ukrainian regions have been removed from their posts amid a high-profile corruption scandal that has led to several resignations and firings of senior officials across the country. The Prosecutor-General's Office said on January 25 that prosecutors of the regions of Zaporizhzhya, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, and Chernihiv had been relieved of their duties. The scandal broke on January 22, when allegations surfaced in local media that the Defense Ministry was overpaying suppliers for food for troops.

Russia fumes at West’s decision to send tanks to Ukraine, says red lines have been crossed¹⁵ - Russia expressed mounting fury at the prospect of modern Western tanks being sent to Ukraine, calling it “extremely dangerous” and saying previous “red lines” were now a thing of the past.

Germany announced earlier Wednesday that it was ready to send 14 Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine, and to allow other countries to send their own German-made tanks to Kyiv. The U.S. is also expected to announce its own intention to send Abrams tanks to Ukraine imminently.

The use of modern Western tanks by Ukraine is likely to add momentum to its efforts to push Russian forces out of occupied areas of the country, particularly the eastern Donbas region, but Russia sees the gift of tanks as further evidence that the West is fighting what it sees as a proxy war against it in Ukraine.

‘Extremely dangerous’

The Russian Embassy in Berlin called the German government’s decision “extremely dangerous” and said it “takes the conflict to a new level of confrontation.” **Comment** – The whole intent of providing armament to Ukraine is precisely to “take the conflict to a new level” in order for Ukrainians to defend themselves.

In a statement online, translated by Google, the embassy said the move “contradicts the statements of German politicians about the unwillingness of the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] to be drawn into it [the war]. Unfortunately, this happens over and over again.”

The embassy said it was now convinced that Germany and its closest allies were “not interested in a diplomatic solution to the Ukrainian crisis” but were “set up for its permanent escalation and unlimited pumping of the Kyiv regime with more and more deadly weapons.”

Lastly, it warned that “red lines,” or limits, for both sides were now “a thing of the past,” echoing similar comments from Russia’s Foreign Ministry earlier Wednesday as it reacted to the prospect of U.S. Abrams tanks being sent to Ukraine, claiming Washington “has unequivocally stated its desire to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia.”

Comment – Of course no “red lines” exist for Russia’s illegal invasion and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. Russia has obfuscated, denied and deflected any accountability or responsibility for activities in Ukraine. Mariupol strangely just bombed itself with no Russian involvement.

Russian embassy tweets map that shows Crimea as part of Ukraine¹⁶ - A Twitter account operated by the Russian Embassy in Sweden posted a map identifying Crimea as part of Ukraine.

Officially, Moscow claims Crimea, a Ukrainian peninsula that extends into the Black Sea, as part of Russia. Crimea was seized from Ukraine when Russia invaded the region in March 2014.

The map also appears to show the Donbas, a region in eastern Ukraine that Russia claims, as part of Ukraine.

The map had been viewed 7.3 million times as of the early morning hours Ukrainian local time. It purports to show the per-liter cost of gasoline in European countries.

The Russian embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, did not immediately respond to a CNBC request for comment.

Containment

Ukraine eyes fighter jets after tanks: ‘This is what we want’² - Ukraine says it will now push for Western fourth-generation fighter jets such as the American F-16 after securing dozens of high-end battle tanks from NATO allies. “The next big hurdle will now be the fighter jets,” said Yuriy Sak, who advises defence minister Oleksiy Reznikov.

“If we get them the advantages on the battlefield will be just immense ... It’s not just F-16s, fourth-generation aircraft, this is what we want.”

Ukraine’s air force has a fleet of ageing Soviet-era fighter jets that came off the assembly line before Kyiv even declared independence more than 31 years ago. The warplanes are used for intercept missions and to attack Russian positions.

Former Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko told Euronews the next significant weapon system needed from the West is fighter aircraft.

“We also need attack helicopters and long-range missiles to reach logistic bases and Russian commanding centres. We should receive these now before Russia attempts its great spring offensive,” Poroshenko said.

“The real game changer now is the jet fighter. We should immediately launch training programs for Ukrainian pilots and prepare to deliver them to Ukraine.”

Which countries are supplying tanks to Ukraine?¹⁷ - The US, Germany and United Kingdom have pledged to deliver advanced battle tanks to Kyiv – a move Russia warned was ‘extremely dangerous’.

The United States and Germany have pledged to send state-of-the-art battle tanks to Ukraine, paving the way for several of its European allies to follow suit.

The moves, announced by President Biden and Chancellor Scholz on Wednesday, will see Washington deploy 31 Abrams tanks while Berlin will supply Kyiv with 14 German-made Leopard 2 units at first.

It comes after the United Kingdom promised to deliver 14 of its own Challenger 2 tanks last week.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has requested 300 tanks to help push back Russia’s invasion forces. Moscow said Western-supplied tanks will “burn” and dismissed suggestions they will impact the outcome of the nearly yearlong conflict.

There are about 2,000 Leopard 2s currently spread across Europe at different levels of readiness, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a British think-tank. This (German) now allows other NATO countries to provide Ukraine with German-made units.

M1 Abrams battle tanks

The United States is planning to send advanced M1 Abrams battle tanks to Ukraine, which Kyiv says would help reshape the conflict.

Max speed 67.5km/h
Max range 1,005km
Engine 1,500hp gas turbine engine
Crew 4 - driver, commander, loader and gunner

Armament
 M256 120mm smoothbore cannon
 12.7mm machinegun
 7.62mm M240 machinegun



Source: Army Technology, Military | Date: January 25, 2023

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Germany clears Leopard 2 tanks for Ukraine

Germany has agreed to supply Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks to help it fight Russia. The main battle tank is considered one of the best-performing worldwide.

Max speed 72km/h
Max range 500km
Weight 62 tonnes
Crew 2

Armament
 Rheinmetall 120mm L55 smoothbore gun
 Coaxial 7.62mm machinegun
 7.62mm anti-aircraft machinegun



Source: Army Technology | Date: January 22, 2023

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We can now expect to see a number of countries moving equipment from their arsenals to those of Kyiv. This is also an opportune time for European armies to re-equip with the latest updates and modifications to armored vehicles, including new barrels and electronic aiming capabilities.

‘Also need attack helicopters’³ - Last week, allies pledged billions of dollars’ worth of military aid including hundreds of armored fighting vehicles and troop carriers. Those are seen as more effective for attacking enemy lines when used alongside tanks.

Russia scorns Germany for sending Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine⁴ - Germany’s move to deliver Leopard 2s to Kyiv will lead to ‘permanent escalation’, says Russian embassy in Berlin.

Moscow has slammed Berlin’s move to supply Ukraine with battle tanks and accused Germany of abandoning its “historical responsibility to Russia” arising from Nazi crimes in World War II.

The Russian embassy in Germany said on Wednesday the decision to send 14 German-made Leopard 2 tanks to Kyiv and allow allies to re-export the same models would worsen the war in Ukraine to a new level and lead to “permanent escalation.”

“This extremely dangerous decision takes the conflict to a new level of confrontation and contradicts the statements of German politicians about the unwillingness of the Federal Republic of Germany to be drawn into it,” Ambassador Sergei Nechayev said.

Challenger 2 tanks

The UK promised Ukraine 14 Challenger 2s, the advanced main battle tank built by British Aerospace Systems.

Max speed 40km/h cross country
 59km/h by road
Range 250km cross country
 450km by road
Crew 4 - Commander, gunner, loader, driver

Armament
 L30, 120mm rifled tank gun
 Boeing 7.62mm chain gun
 7.62mm GPMG L37A2 anti-air machine gun



Ukraine has been asking for heavier tanks, like the US Abrams and German Leopard 2, for months.

Source: Army Technology | Date: January 15, 2023

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“It destroys the remnants of mutual trust, causes irreparable damage to the already deplorable state of Russian-German relations, and casts doubt on the possibility of their normalisation in the foreseeable future.”

Russia’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a post on the Telegram messenger app that the German decision confirmed what she said was a “pre-planned war” against Moscow.

Parliamentary panel seeks to allow reexports Of Swiss weaponry to Ukraine¹² - A parliamentary panel in Switzerland has recommended waiving a law that bars countries from reexporting Swiss armored vehicles, weapons, and other war materiel to Ukraine for its defense against Russia, insisting that the move would not violate the country’s much-vaunted neutrality. Adherence to the concept of neutrality is enshrined in the Swiss Constitution. The National Council committee’s January 24 vote amounts to only a small first step, and it remains far from certain whether the government would authorize such a waiver.

Bradley armored carriers en route to Ukraine – American infantry fighting vehicles M2 Bradley were spotted in Poland today. I was watching someone’s personal cell-phone coverage of a train-load of American Bradley fighting vehicles moving through Poland en route to Ukraine.

Included on the train were maintenance units for the Bradleys and other military vehicles. The train can be observed at <https://twitter.com/EuromaidanPress/status/1617223293710262275> .

NATO

Turkey may exit NATO in 5-6 months over US, alliance's provocation: Minister²¹ - The Turkish leaders slammed the United States and NATO over the stalled F-16 fighter planes deal, urging that Ankara must withdraw from the Alliance.

Turkey has announced that it might leave NATO within five to six months, citing the provocative actions against Ankara by the US and its European allies—mainly Sweden. Turkey’s deputy leader of the Patriotic Party (Vatan Partisi) Ethem Sancak made the wide-ranging announcement speaking to the reporters in Ankara, asserting that Turkey will exit the Western military Alliance over the friction with the Alliance and its non-compliant attitude towards Turkey’s demands and interests. He also slammed the recent episode of the Quran burning in Sweden. Notably, Ankara abruptly cancelled Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson’s upcoming visit to Turkey.

"The developments prompt us to take such steps. NATO is making us do so with its provocations. They have been seeking to contrast us to our neighbor Turkey. Turkey will leave NATO in five to six months," Ethem Sancak said.

"They [NATO] have been trying to get us caught in the Middle East crossfire. Finally, you can see campaigns against the Quran in Sweden and the Netherlands," Ankara’s Aydinlik newspaper quoted him as saying.

80% of the Turkish population against US-led NATO

80% of the Turkish population is against Turkey being in the military alliance led by the United States, the Turkish Minister claimed. "The US is a country running the most hostile and destructive policy towards Ankara," he stated.

Comment – Turkey will not discuss its pursuit of the Kurdish tribe within its borders and along the Syrian boundary. It wishes to exterminate them as they present a (nationalist anti-Turkey) threat to the southern Turkish zone. What Ankara will never acknowledge is that this region, together with areas in surrounding states, used to be called “Kurdistan” pre-Balfour Agreement. This is where the Kurds have been living for centuries.

As mentioned in previous Updates, Turkey was created out of the old Ottoman Empire by the English and French in 1919, uprooting the Kurdish people, who since then have been struggling to cement their ages-old existence.

Sources

¹ <https://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2022/09/22/the-total-combat-losses>

^{2 - 9} <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023>

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^{15 - 17} <https://www.cNBC.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/deny-deflect-distract-how-russia-spreads-disinformation-about-the-war-in-ukraine>

^{19, 20} <https://www.msn.com/>

²¹ <https://www.republicworld.com/>