

Conflict Update # 170

September 3rd, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 49,050 (+350) soldiers killed and 147,150 injured, 2,034 (+25) enemy tanks, 4,403 (+37) armored combat vehicles, 1,126 (+11) artillery systems, 289 (+2) MLRS systems, 153 (+0) air defense systems, 234 (+0) warplanes, 205 (+0) helicopters, 853 (+2) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 196 (+0) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 3,247 (+8) trucks and tankers, 76 fuel bowsers and 104 (+0) units of specialized equipment.

Key takeaways

Russia loses ground in Kherson Oblast - Russian troops have lost ground during Ukraine's recent counteroffensive in the Russian-occupied Kherson region, according to maps from British defense intelligence. When compared with a map from August 26, several days before the Kherson effort was announced, a stretch of contested area on the Kherson front has increased in size. Although a small change, that contested area has noticeably widened into Russian-controlled territory.



When compared with a ministry map from August 26, several days before the Kherson effort was announced, a stretch of "contested area" on the Kherson front has increased in size. Albeit a small change, that contested area has noticeably widened into Russian-controlled territory.

Russia loses 25 tanks, 37 armored vehicles in a single day - Ukraine has said that Russia lost 25 tanks and 37 armored vehicles in a single day as it gave its latest estimates of Russian losses.

On Saturday, the Ukrainian armed forces said on its Facebook page that Russia had lost an additional 25 tanks, taking the total number of such vehicles reportedly destroyed since the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24 to 2,034.

In its daily update, Ukraine also said that Russia now had lost a total of 4,403 combat armored machines, with 37 destroyed on a single day. "The opponent suffered the biggest losses in the Donetsk and Kryvyi Rih directions," its Facebook statement said, referring to the center and east of the country.

Meanwhile, the death toll of Russian troops is also nearing 50,000, according to the latest Ukrainian figures, which said that a further 350 had been killed, taking the total to 49,050.



Ukrainian helicopters flying at tree height – Ukrainian helicopter pilots fly their aircraft at tree height, skipping over power lines and other ground obstacles.

They do so to avoid detection en route to and from rescue missions and attack sorties. On some occasions they fly under power lines and at maximum speed in getting into and out of operational zones.

This practice is exceptionally hazardous but is needed in order to maintain Ukrainian helicopter stocks.

Rare Russian drone 'Kartograf' shot down by Ukrainian forces - Ukrainian air forces yesterday shot down a Russian reconnaissance drone named "Kartograf" in Ukraine's Mykolaiv region as the war continues.

"On September 02, at about 09.00 a.m. the Russian 'Kartograf' drone was eliminated in the sky over Mykolaiv by the anti-aircraft missile unit of the Air Force. The drone is part of the Ptero family of multipurpose unmanned systems (UAV)," the Air Force Command of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said in a Facebook post, according to an English translation.

The Kartograf is a type of aircraft with an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) system, which is often used to help adjust or organize artillery fire or missile strikes, the Ukrainian Military Center reported, adding that Russian forces have been trying to carry out aerial reconnaissance in south Ukraine.

Russia's game? – With both sides seemingly in a military impasse, albeit with mounting Russian losses, is Russia's game to wait out the conflict in the hope that they can muster future advantage?

Putin may well (i) dig in around southern Ukraine and make it too costly for Zelenskyy to recover large tracts of occupied territory, (ii) claim these oblasts as part of the "New Russia" and install Russian or Russia-friendly authorities, subjugating these lands and people, (iii) wait for political changes across the EU and US, in the hope that new political parties will be elected and start shorting Ukrainian support and embody Russia-friendly positions, (iv) giving Russia time to rebuild its forces and then (v) re-launch their full Ukrainian invasion in the plan to occupy the entire country.

This will take years to accomplish, if ever, but outside a dramatic uptick in unconventional warfare, this may well be all that is left to Putin and the Kremlin.

The West is no doubt aware of any such Russian strategy and is bolstering Ukrainian armories and weapon stocks, providing new types of longer-range weapons and training in order to give Ukraine the upper hand in the next six months, and at least through the looming winter.

There are increasing reports of Ukrainians being trained in NATO aircraft and weaponry, none of which have been confirmed but all pointing to a medium to long term support approach by the US, NATO and the EU.

Of course, Ukraine can also succeed in its southern counter offensive and push Russian forces further back.

The next few months will provide a firmer indication of tactics on both sides, but the implications and stakes are extremely high from a geopolitical standpoint.

200 Russian soldiers killed in Kherson counter-offensive battle – Ukrainian forces have killed an estimated 200 Russian soldiers in another battle underway in Kherson Oblast and destroyed another six ammunition dumps..

Russia is losing between 350 and 500 conscripts per day, seven days per week and a huge number of battlefield equipment as mentioned above.

Ukraine destroys Russian ammo depot less than 50 miles from Kherson – A Russian ammunition depot in Ukraine's embattled Kherson region was destroyed yesterday as the Ukrainian military's counteroffensive continued.

Ukraine's Operational Command South (OCS) said on Facebook that 10 armored vehicles and an ammunition depot were wiped out in the Kherson region's Berislav district, which is located less than 50 miles from the Russian-occupied city of Kherson. While OCS did not indicate the precise location of the depot, a video appearing to show the fiery aftermath of an attack on an ammunition depot, shared to Twitter by Kyiv Post, suggests that the strike may have been in the village of Vysokopillia.

Ukraine exploiting Russia's poor leadership with 'broad front' counter - Ukrainian forces have been taking advantage of Russia's poor leadership, logistics and administration as they undertake a counteroffensive in Ukraine's south, according to British defense officials.

The UK MoD said part of the push by Ukraine's forces in the country's south has been an advance on a broad front located west of the Dnipro River, focusing on three axes within the Kherson region occupied by Russia.

Kherson fell to Russian forces early in the war and has significant value for both sides due to its strategic location at the mouth of the Dnieper River's exit into the Black Sea.

Putin

The key to understanding Putin's Game of Thrones - The poisoning of Aleksei Navalny is a grim reminder that Russian politics seems to operate by its own set of rules.

Poisoning is a particularly cruel way to die – more so than simply being gunned down in the street (a fate which has also struck several Russian opposition figures in recent years.)

As medievalist Yvonne Seale notes, “poison is such a useful political weapon because it can kill effectively—and because even the suspicion of its use can spread fear and mistrust among your political opponents.”

Sadly, that logic still seems to apply to 21st century Russia.

Even if Vladimir Putin did not personally order these killings, he could have done more to try to prevent them from happening. Why does Putin apparently sees poisoning as a legitimate political tool?

Some would blame the Soviet era, pointing to Putin's 17 years' service in the KGB. The KGB used poison as a discreet but effective way to remove critics who were living overseas. For example, in 1957 KGB defector Nikolai Khokhlov was poisoned with thallium in Frankfurt (he survived); in 1978 Bulgarian writer Georgi Markov died after being injected with ricin on Waterloo Bridge in London.

Most biographers of Putin report he decided to become a spy after watching the 1968 TV series *Shield and Sword*, depicting a Soviet double agent at the heart of the Nazi regime. In 2010 Putin sang a song from *Shield and Sword*, "With what does the Motherland begin?", when he met 10 Russian spies recently deported from the US.

However, there is another cultural influence on Putin which has been barely noticed in the English-speaking world. In the 1950s French conservative and Resistance hero Maurice Druon wrote a series of novels "The Accursed Kings" depicting the struggle for power in 14th century France. The books were translated into Russian, and, since few contemporary Western works were available in the Soviet Union, they became a sought-after item.

It turns out that Putin was also an enthusiastic reader of *The Accursed Kings*. Years later, in 2003, during his first state visit to Paris as Russian president, Putin visited Druon at his home in Bordeaux. Putin met him again in his Paris apartment just a year before his death in 2009.

Much ink has been spilt on possible intellectual influences on Putin – with Alexander Dugin or Ivan Ilyin being the most commonly cited authors. But in reality there is little evidence that he actually engages with them as thinkers. Much more important, arguably, in shaping his world view are the novels and television that he absorbed as a teenager.

Druon's work inspired George Martin's fantasy novels, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, that became the hit TV series *Game of Thrones*. Martin wrote in an introduction to a 2013 edition of *The Iron King* "Believe me, the Starks and the Lannisters have nothing on the Capets and Plantagenets. It is the original game of thrones."

The historical "Iron King" was Philip IV, a ruthless ruler who turned France into a centralized state and destroyed the Knights Templar, the 14th century equivalent of the oligarchs, in a 1307 purge. One critic said of him: "He is neither human nor beast. He is a statue." (A role model for Putin, perhaps?)

Although Putin's enthusiasm for *The Accursed Kings* has gone largely unnoticed, *Game of Thrones* has attracted some attention from political scientists, keen to use it to model the intricacies of coalition politics and strategies for seizing power.

Although *Game of Thrones* was the most popular TV show in Russia in 2019, Putin himself did not watch it. Russia invested \$20 million into making its own version, *Viking* (2016), a movie about Prince Vladimir, the founder of Kievan Rus. Putin attended the official opening: stressing the "1000 year history" of Russia is an important part of the new nationalist narrative that has been crafted under Putin's rule. The movie was partly filmed in a Viking theme park constructed in occupied Crimea. (It was Crimea where Vladimir converted to Christianity in 988).

Game of Thrones features over a dozen poisonings. Likewise *The Accursed Kings*: the third volume, *The Poisoned Crown*, focuses on the poisoning of Louis X. Poison was commonly used in medieval Europe to clear a path to power. For example, Dmitrii Shemyaka, Grand Prince of Moscow, was poisoned by his own cook in 1453, on the orders of his Muscovite rivals. Henry of Flanders, the second Latin emperor of Constantinople, may have been poisoned by his own family in 1216.

Poisoning was also prominent in the last days of Tsarist Russia: Rasputin ate poisoned cake in 1916, and Alexander Ulyanov (Lenin's elder brother) tried to kill Tsar Alexander III with a poison-laced bomb in 1887.

But who would have thought that such practices would return to world politics in the 21st century?

Denounce thy neighbour - More and more Russians are reporting each other to the police — how the number of incidents has grown, and why people are most endangered by their closest friends and relatives.

Husband against wife, mother against son, students against teacher, teacher against student, and finally a man against himself. From the beginning of the war, Russians took to scribbling denunciations with such zeal that Sergei Dovlatov's question seems to answer itself. (The 20th century Russian writer famously mused: "We endlessly curse Comrade Stalin, understandably, for the purges. And yet, I want to ask—who wrote the four million denunciations?")

According to the estimates of human rights activists and lawyers, at least 80 criminal cases charging "military fake news" have already been incited, and more than 340 administrative citations for "discrediting the army" have been registered. In a significant number of cases, the denunciations became formal reasons for government checks. Many of them were filled out by friends and family against each other. The sin of Judas.

Impact

Head of Russia's Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov announces 'indefinite leave of absence' - Head of Russia's Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov has stated that he deserves "an indefinite and long leave of absence" in a video address published on his Telegram channel.

"My friends, today I've found out that I am one of the 'long livers' among the current heads of Russian regions. I've noticed I've been here a while. I deserve an indefinite and long leave of absence," Kadyrov wrote.

In the video, he said that he had led Chechnya for 15 years, and that his youth is long gone. "I think my time has come, or else they kick me out," the Chechen leader said.

Moscow theatre cancels all upcoming plays by director Aleksandr Molochnikov - The Moscow Drama Theatre on Malaya Bronnaya has cancelled all upcoming plays by director Aleksandr Molochnikov, Theatre magazine reports, citing the director himself.

"The plays are being removed from the repertoire. The head of the troupe send identical text messages to all actors regarding the cancellation," the magazine quotes Molochnikov as saying. The director added that the theatre had not informed him of this decision in advance. He found out about it from the actors.

At the moment of the publication, the plays have been removed from the theatre's website. It is impossible to purchase tickets for the plays.

It was reported earlier that Molochnikov would not take part in staging Sergei Rachmaninoff's Francesca da Rimini and Alexander von Zemlinsky's A Florentine Tragedy at the Bolshoi Theatre. The director was ousted after the request by the working group on investigating anti-Russian activity in the sphere of culture. The working group was established in early August by A Just Russia party. Its goal is to "determine the main mechanisms of foreign influence and anti-government activity in the sphere of culture."

Pianist Polina Osetinskaya's performance cancelled in St. Petersburg after public post in support of Ukraine - Performance in the Saint Petersburg Philharmonia by piano player Polina Osetinskaya has been cancelled, she herself shared on Instagram.

"I've just arrived in Petersburg. I've just received a phone call and been told that I wouldn't be playing the Beethoven triple concerto in the Philharmonia tomorrow anymore. Everyone knows the reason why. Thank you for your attention," she wrote.

Currently, her name is not featured in the announcement on the Philharmonia website. According to RTVI, the previous version of the announcement, featuring Osetinskaya's name, can be viewed on the web archive.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the pianist came out in support of Ukraine. Furthermore, she shared the open letter of the Russian NGOs asking for the end of the war.

'Physical integrity' of Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant 'has been violated several times' - Further damage to the embattled Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine "cannot" be allowed to happen, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said.

Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi was speaking on Thursday after he and IAEA experts visited Europe's largest nuclear plant, which has seen repeated shelling in recent weeks, sparking fears of a catastrophe.

"It's obvious that the plant, and the physical integrity of the plant has been violated, several times. [Whether] by chance [or deliberately], we don't have the elements to assess that. But this is a reality that we have to recognize, and this is something that cannot continue to happen," he told journalists.

"Wherever you stay, wherever you stand, whatever you think about this war, this is something that cannot happen, and this is why we're trying to put in place certain mechanisms and the presence of our people there, to try to be in a better place."

The Zaporizhzhia plant houses six of the 15 nuclear reactors in Ukraine.

It has been occupied by Russian forces since the early weeks of the war in Ukraine, now in its seventh month.

Both sides have accused the other of shelling the plant.

Containment

How Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet keeps Ukraine online - Among the Ukrainian military, Elon Musk, the richest tech entrepreneur in the U.S., is often half-jokingly referred to as "Saint Elon."

The reason is Starlink, Musk's satellite communication system that keeps many Ukrainians, most importantly the military, online despite power outages and Russia's attacks on the country's internet infrastructure.

Starlink allows access to the internet even during power outages or in the absence of other internet infrastructure. It is also more secure than other types of communication: Experts say that it's nearly impossible for Russian troops to intercept.

It is also easy to use – it takes Ukrainian soldiers just up to 20 minutes to install a Starlink dish and connect to satellite internet, according to Eugene, a drone operator from Kharkiv. He declined to give his last name for security reasons.

"I use Starlink every day: to text my girlfriend, call my mom, and fly drones, of course," he told the Kyiv Independent.

Eugene's military unit is based in a village with poor internet connection. The Starlink dish donated to the unit by local volunteers allows soldiers to use drones anywhere and quickly send data to a command center that analyzes the footage and plans strikes on the Russian military equipment.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has received more than 20,000 Starlink terminals from foreign partners, volunteers, or directly from SpaceX, Musk's spacecraft manufacturer that operates Starlink, according to Andriy Nabok, head of fixed internet development at the Ukrainian Ministry of Digital Transformation.

During the war, Ukrainians can use the terminals without paying a monthly subscription fee of \$60, Nabok told the Kyiv Independent.

Portable white-and-gray Starlink satellite dishes can be mounted on the roof of the house, hidden in a shallow pit, or fastened to the hood of a car – anywhere with a clear view of the sky. When Ukrainian soldiers have to move positions, they carefully pack Starlink equipment and bring it to a new location, plugging the dish into a generator if the power goes out.

Sanctions

Kyiv offers nuclear energy to Germany -

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal has said a proposal to export electricity to Germany amid the ongoing energy crisis would be "a very good deal for both sides."

Ukraine has said it plans to provide its surplus energy to Germany, in a bid to help Europe's largest economy end its dependence on Russian energy.

"Currently, Ukraine exports its electricity to Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and Poland. But we are quite ready to expand our exports to Germany," Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told the dpa news agency on Saturday.

"We have a sufficient amount of electricity in Ukraine, thanks to our nuclear power plants," he said. The issue will be discussed during Shmyhal's visit to Berlin over the weekend, where he will be meeting with Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Electricity consumption in Ukraine has fallen since the start of the Russian invasion, due to the mass exodus of refugees and an economic slump.

Shmyhal said such a deal "would be very good for both sides."

"The EU would get more energy and we would get the foreign currency we urgently need," the prime minister said.

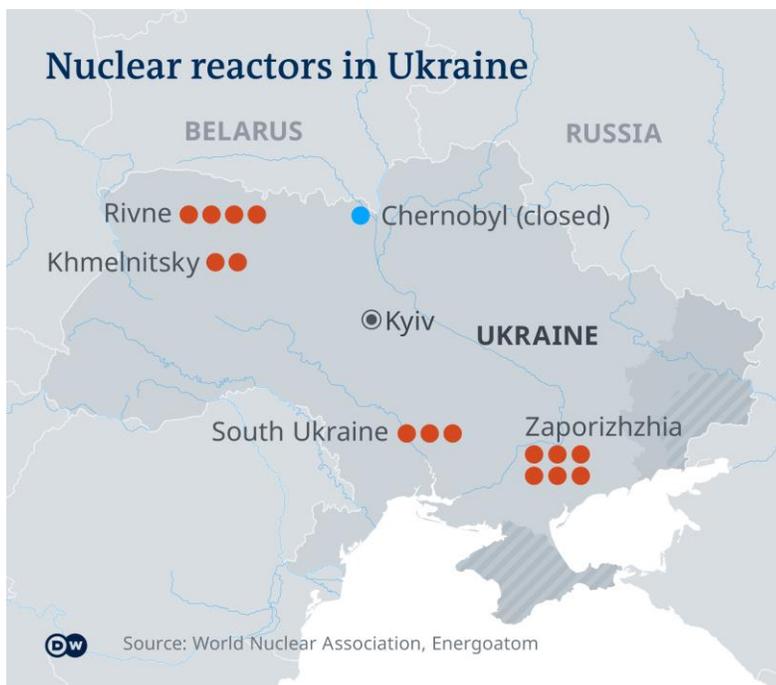
Ukraine operates four nuclear power plants with a total capacity of more than 14 gigawatts.

Comment – Now we perhaps know why Russia is intent on keeping the largest reactor – Zaporizhia - out of Ukrainian hands and operationally under their control – because it will undermine any manufactured shortages of natural gas and oil by Russia in its sanctions assault on the EU. (see following article).

Russia to keep key gas pipeline to EU closed - Russia's main gas pipeline to Europe will not reopen as planned on Saturday, adding to concerns about energy supplies this winter.

State energy firm Gazprom said it found a leak on Nord Stream 1, meaning it could be closed indefinitely.

The pipeline, which runs to Germany, has been shut for three days for what Gazprom described as maintenance work.



Europe accused Russia of using its gas supplies to blackmail Europe amid the Ukraine conflict, which Moscow denies.

Energy prices have soared since Russia invaded Ukraine and scarce supplies could push up costs even further.

There are growing fears families in the EU will be unable to afford the cost of heating this winter.

EU energy chief urges China and India to support a price cap on Russian oil - The EU today urged China and India to join the G-7 initiative to apply a cap on Russian oil prices, saying it is unfair for countries to pay excess revenues to Moscow amid the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

The G-7 nations announced yesterday agreement on a plan to impose a set price on Russian oil.

The policy is designed to reduce the profits that Russia makes from selling oil and acts as another punitive measure against the Kremlin over its onslaught in Ukraine.

Details of how the price cap will work are still being finalized, but energy analysts have raised concerns about this plan, in particular about whether key consumers such as China and India will join in.

China and India have increased their purchases of Russian oil following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, benefiting from discounted rates.

When asked whether the EU expects China and India to help with the proposed price cap, Europe's Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said: "I think that they should."

Russian banks lost \$25billion in first half of the year as Ukraine war and sanctions see them go into the red for first time in seven years - Russian banks lost \$25billion in the first half of the year as sanctions over the war in Ukraine caused them to go into the red for the first time in seven years.

Dmitry Tulin, First Deputy Chairman of the Central Bank, disclosed the banking sector earnings on Friday - the first time Russia has done so since February.

Since president Vladimir Putin's forces invaded Ukraine, the Kremlin has treated financial reports as closely guarded state secrets to avoid revealing the true scale of the economic damage caused by Western sanctions.

And while Russia has been able to deploy emergency capital controls to limit the damage to the ruble, analysts say this has only papered over the cracks.

Tulin said the country's banks had lost a combined 1.5 trillion rubles (\$24.86 billion) in the first six months of 2022, against the backdrop of the on-going invasion.

Around two-thirds of the losses seen by banks are related to foreign currency operations, he said in an interview with the RBC business daily.

There is a 'more than 50 percent chance' that losses for the year would exceed the 1.5 trillion rouble figure from the first term, he added.

Banking losses were concentrated among Russia's largest banks, the chairman said.

Loss-making institutions recorded a combined 1.9 trillion rouble (\$31.60 billion) loss, compared to profitable lenders that earned a combined 400 billion roubles (\$6.65 billion) - combining to make the net loss of 1.5 trillion roubles.

News of the Russian banking losses came as the Kremlin said Russia would stop selling oil to countries that impose price caps on Russia's energy resources - caps that Moscow said would lead to significant destabilization of the global oil market.

GeoMilitary

China warns of 'counter-measures' as US approves \$1.1bn arms sales to Taiwan - China has warned the US it will take "counter-measures" after the Biden administration approved more than \$1.1 billion in arms sales to Taiwan.

Chinese embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu said Saturday China was "firmly opposed" to the sales, which "severely jeopardize China-US relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," and called on Washington to "immediately revoke" them.

Liu's comments on Twitter came after the Biden administration on Friday formally notified Congress of the proposed sales, which include up to 60 anti-ship missiles and up to 100 air-to-air missiles.

The State Department said the sales are in line with a longstanding US policy of providing defensive weapons to the island and described the "swift provision" of such arms as being "essential for Taiwan's security."

China, however, has accused the US of interfering in what it sees as its internal affairs.

China's Communist Party claims Taiwan, a self-governing democracy, as part of its territory -- despite never having governed it -- and has long vowed to "reunify" the island with the Chinese mainland, by force if necessary.

Turkish, Greek tension places pressure on NATO alliance - Long-running tensions between Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean are ramping up pressure on NATO exactly at a time when the 30-country Euro-Atlantic military alliance must pull together to tackle the multiple destabilizing factors sparked by Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

A week ago, citing Turkish Defense Ministry sources, Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency reported that Greek surface-to-air missiles had locked on to Turkish F-16 fighter jets carrying out a reconnaissance mission in international airspace. Greek officials dismissed the account with a statement from the Defense Ministry saying that five Turkish jets appeared without prior notification to accompany a flight of U.S. B-52 bombers through an area subject to Greek flight control, the Associated Press reported.

The incident was only the latest in a series of claims by Turkey, and pushback from Greece that has prompted both countries to lodge complaints with NATO.

Endy Zemenides, executive director of the Hellenic American Leadership Council, likened Turkey's behavior to that of China, which has made sweeping claims of sovereignty over the sea and its natural resources, antagonizing neighboring countries, including Taiwan, and Vietnam.

"Turkey considers the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean in the same way that China considers the South China and the East China Seas, and the way China has been infringing on the area and making additional claims is what Turkey has been doing," he told Fox News Digital.

He added that a mix of internal and external factors had left Turkey feeling increasingly isolated and vulnerable, pushing Erdogan to focus on foreign policy and tensions with Greece to deflect from domestic problems.

Greece and Turkey have been locked in a maritime and territorial dispute for decades, but with shifting geopolitical alliances and the discoveries of natural gas and oil in regional waters, relations have deteriorated sharply not only impacting NATO, but also bilateral ties to the U.S. and other countries in the immediate region.

In 2020, the two states clashed over exploratory drilling rights in the sea where Greece and Cyprus claim exclusive economic zones. That incident led to a naval standoff between the two countries. More recently, Turkey has watched

with increasing suspicion and frustration as Greece has grown closer to regional allies such as Israel, Egypt and France, as well as the United States.

In May, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis addressed a joint session of Congress warning that in light of the war in Ukraine, NATO could not allow a "further source of instability on its south-eastern flank." Mitsotakis' visit to Washington, which finalized a Greek purchase of F-35 fighter jets, drew condemnation from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who charged that its neighbor was lobbying against U.S. arms sales to Turkey.

Ankara has faced sanctions from Washington over its ties with Russia, most notably a 2019 purchase of an advanced Russian missile defense system, but Turkey's powerful role in NATO has forced the Biden administration to walk back its approach. In June, when NATO leaders met in Madrid, the prospect of fighter jets for Turkey was raised by the president as he worked to secure Turkish support for Sweden and Finland's accession to the organization.

Turkey's initial opposition to those countries joining NATO, as well as its close ties with Russia, have put it at odds with the U.S. and other members, including Greece, whose role as a strategic security partner for the U.S. has only been growing. In recent months, the Greek port of Alexandroupolis, which sits adjacent to Turkey and Bulgaria in the northern Aegean Sea, has become a central focal point as the U.S. increases its military presence in Eastern Europe.

According to statistics collected by Zemenides' organization, this year has seen a dramatic increase in Turkish violations of Greek national airspace from 618 in the first half of 2021 to some 2,377 during the same period in 2022. In addition, Turkish jets have begun flying over inhabited islands belonging to Greece, coming very close to the mainland not too far from the Alexandroupolis port.

"It's not one project or another," said Zemenides, pointing to the EastMed Forum, which includes Greece but excludes Turkey, the Abraham Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, defense agreements between Greece and the U.S., and another with France.

"Turkey sees a picture with all these guys together and the other picture is of Erdogan with Putin and Iran holding hands," he said. "Turkey has bet on its Eurasia orientation, they have bet other partners and it is starting to boomerang as its economy suffers with high inflation, so now they're following the playbook of external tensions to distract everybody from domestic difficulties."

An official at NATO dismissed the tension, telling Fox News Digital on Monday that the two countries "have been committed Allies for decades" and that a "military de-conflicting mechanism" was in place to mediate between them.

"Every day, Greece and Turkey work together, sit with twenty-eight other Allies to work on our most pressing security challenges," said the official. "We are confident that Greece and Turkey can discuss any differences in a spirit of mutual trust and Allied solidarity."