

Conflict Update # 178

September 10th, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 52,250 (+350) soldiers killed, 2,136 (+14) enemy tanks, 4,594 (+9) armored combat vehicles, 1,259 (+22) artillery systems, 311 (+5) MLRS systems, 162 (+3) air defense systems, 239 (+0) warplanes, 212 (+1) helicopters, 898 (+10) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 215 (+1) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 3,426 (+27) trucks and tankers, 76 fuel bowsers and 114 (+7) units of specialized equipment.

Key takeaways

Russia announces troop pullback from Ukraine's Kharkiv area - Russia's Defense Ministry says it's pulling back forces from two areas in Ukraine's Kharkiv region where a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made significant advances in the past week (picture to right).

Russia's Defense Ministry announced earlier today it was pulling back troops from two areas in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region where a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made significant advances in the past week.

The news came after days of apparent advances by Ukraine south of Kharkiv, the country's second-

largest city, in what could become the biggest battlefield success for Ukrainian forces since they thwarted a Russian attempt to seize the capital, Kyiv, at the start of the nearly seven-month war.

"The Russian army in these days is demonstrating the best that it can do — showing its back," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video released by his office Saturday night. "And, of course, it's a good decision for them to run."

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said troops would be regrouped from the Balakliya and Izyum areas to the eastern Donetsk region. Izyum was a major base for Russian forces in the Kharkiv region, and earlier this week social media videos showed residents of Balakliya joyfully cheering as Ukrainian troops moved in.

Konashenkov said the Russian move was being made "in order to achieve the stated goals of the special military operation to liberate Donbas," an eastern area home to two separatist regions that Russia has declared sovereign.

Ukrainian army is surrounding 10,000 Russian troops in the east - Two days after punching through Russian defenses outside the city of Kharkiv, Ukrainian forces have fought all the way to Kupyansk, a critical node in Russia's supply lines in Kharkiv Oblast in northeastern Ukraine.

Separately, Ukrainian troops farther south around Izyum, the twin attacks are closing a noose around 10,000 or more undersupplied, demoralized Russian troops caught between Ukrainian brigades in the south, west and north and the Oskil River in the east.



According to Ukrainian estimates, the Russians are losing as many as 600 troops a day as the Ukrainian counteroffensives gain momentum—not just around Kharkiv, but also in the south around the Russian-occupied port of Kherson. The Russian army hasn't suffered losses this severe since the early weeks of Russia's wider war on Ukraine.

'Most consequential' days of Ukraine War just occurred and 'collapse' of Putin's forces 'doesn't seem a long way away,' says military expert - Russia's defense ministry today framed a troop withdrawal from two areas in Ukraine as a regrouping. A military expert called it a rout.

"It looks like the last few days have been the most consequential of the Ukraine War," military expert Mike Martin wrote in a Twitter thread Saturday. "After what we've seen over the last 72 hours the collapse of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine doesn't seem a long way away."

The Russian move—relocating troops from the Balakliya and Izyum areas of the eastern Kharkiv region to the Donetsk region—follows a lightning counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces.

"The Russians fled Izyum in what can only be described as a rout," wrote Martin, a former British army officer who served multiple tours in Afghanistan as a political officer. "The Ukrainians have just fought a brilliant piece of combined arms maneuver."



Ukraine's military prowess has taken a toll on Russian morale, according to the Institute for the Study of War, which wrote on Thursday: "Ukrainian successes on the Kharkiv City-Izyum line are creating fissures within the Russian information space and eroding confidence in Russian command to a degree not seen since a failed Russian river crossing in mid-May."

Igor Konashenkov, a spokesperson for the Russian defense ministry, said Saturday the move was made "to achieve the stated goals of the special military operation to liberate Donbas," according to the Associated Press. A similar claim, however, followed Russia's failure to capture the capital Kyiv earlier this year.

Earlier this morning the so-called First Deputy Minister of Information of the Donetsk People's Republic, Daniil Bezsonov, confirmed that the troops of the Russian Federation left the city of Izyum and some other settlements in Kharkiv region.

Russia gives up key northeast towns as Ukrainian forces advance - Moscow abandoned its main bastion in northeastern Ukraine on Saturday, in a sudden collapse of one of the war's principal front lines after Ukrainian forces made a rapid advance.

The swift fall of Izium in Kharkiv province was Moscow's worst defeat since its troops were forced back from the capital Kyiv in March. Ukraine hailed it as a turning point in the 6-month-old war, with thousands of Russian soldiers leaving behind ammunition stockpiles and equipment as they fled.

Russian forces used Izium as the logistics base for one of their main campaigns - a months-long assault from the north on the adjacent Donbas region comprised of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The state-run TASS news agency quoted Russia's defence ministry as saying it had ordered troops to leave the vicinity and reinforce operations elsewhere in Donetsk.

The head of Russia's administration in Kharkiv told residents to evacuate the province and flee to Russia to "save lives," TASS reported. Witnesses described traffic jams of cars with people leaving Russian-held territory.

If the reported gains are held, it would be a serious blow for Russia, which Western intelligence services say has suffered huge casualties. It would also be a big boost for Ukraine, which is keen to show Western nations supplying it with weapons it deserves their continued support.

Russia still occupies extensive territory in the Donbas and in the south near the Crimean Peninsula it seized in 2014.

Caution – Taking territory as opposed to holding it – is the crucial test for Ukraine. Kharkiv is right alongside Ukraine's main border with Russian, meaning re-supply by enemy forces is easier to achieve than in the south west area around Kherson.

As rapid as the collapse of Russian forces has been in the Kharkiv oblast. Putin and the Kremlin will throw everything they can at retaining Crimea – site of its now only warm-water port, and a major objective in 2014.

Retaking Crimea was met with rapturous applaud and support from Russian main street citizens. Crimea has been part of Ukraine since it was handed to them by Khrushchev.

Ukraine recaptures swath of land in 'breakthrough' offensive - Ukrainian forces have made a major breakthrough in the Kharkiv region, capturing strategically important cities, according to Ukrainian officials and military sources.

Ukrainian troops have advanced 70 kilometers in less than a week, resulting in part of Russia's front-line collapse in Ukraine's northeast, with large numbers of Russian troops forced to retreat.

In a major development today, Ukrainian forces appeared to have retaken the strategically important city of Izyum. This claim was made by multiple unconfirmed reports on social media and confirmed by a military source to ABC News. Russian military bloggers, some of whom are embedded with Russian troops in Ukraine, also said Russian forces had retreated from Izyum to avoid being encircled.

Ukraine's counteroffensive in the northeast began late last week and swiftly broke through Russia's line there. Since then Ukrainian forces had recaptured the city of Balakliya and on Saturday seized Kupiansk, a key logistics hub, according to Ukrainian officials as well as Russian pro-government journalists.

The rapid offensive in the northeast has seen Ukrainian forces recapture the cities of Balakliya and Kupiansk, according to Ukrainian officials.

Kupiansk is well-connected by rail and road -- making it a vital link in Russian supply lines in the area. By seizing the two cities, Ukrainian forces threatened to encircle completely thousands of Russian troops in Izyum, making its defense untenable and forcing Russia to withdraw them.

On Friday night, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy said his forces had liberated and gained control of 30 settlements in the northeast. The gains amounted to 2,500 square kilometers, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

Ukrainian forces also claim to have retaken several villages in the southern region of the country in recent days.

Unlike the offensive in the northeast, the southern offensive was widely publicized by Ukrainian officials, raising the possibility that the Russian military was distracted by events in the south, and caught off-guard when the Ukrainian military went on the offensive in the northeast.

Ukraine touts role of US HARM missiles in strikes on Russian defenses - Ukraine's Air Force says it's successfully using a U.S.-provided radar-targeting missile system to cut through Russian air defenses in carrying out strikes on the invading military.

Speaking on a national broadcast, Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat highlighted what he called the service branch's effective use of the high-speed, anti-radiation missile (HARM) against Russia. The weapon is designed to destroy radar-equipped air defense systems. Ihnat said they're bolstering support for Ukrainian ground forces as the Pentagon promised more HARM missiles for Ukraine.

Developed in the 1980s, the air-to-surface tactical missile is "designed to seek and destroy enemy radar-equipped air defense systems" and works by homing in on enemy radar, according to a U.S. Air Force fact sheet.

Ihnat said that "more than one such air defense system has been destroyed by these missiles," allowing the Ukrainian Air Force's strike planes, including the Su-25 attack aircraft and Su-24M bombers, to blitz Russian forces.

Russia makes a major retreat to 'regroup' after Ukrainian forces carried out a 'very sharp and rapid' advance that could lead to a collapse in Russia's positions - Russia has retreated from the Kharkiv region as Ukrainian forces have recaptured previously Russian-held territory in one of its fastest advances in months, several outlets reported.

A Russian-installed regional official said Ukraine's advance was "very sharp and rapid, Reuters reported.

"In order to achieve the goals of the special military operation, a decision was made to regroup troops in the areas of Balakliya and Izyum in order to build up efforts in the Donetsk direction," the Russian military statement said, The Washington Post reported.

Russia deploys helicopters to capture their own fleeing deserters - Russia has deployed helicopters and weapons in the occupied Ukrainian Kherson region in an effort to round up soldiers who had deserted their positions, according to Ukraine.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine wrote in a Facebook update Friday afternoon that "significant losses and the unwillingness to fight" were contributing to a deterioration in the "moral and psychological condition" of occupying Russian troops. The number of deserters is also increasing, it said.

"In the temporarily occupied territory of Kherson region, in the area of Babenkivka Second settlement, the enemy had to deploy helicopters and weapons to search for fugitives and return them to combat positions," the post read. "In addition, through Kalanchak, in the direction of temporarily occupied Crimea, intensive movement of unarmed Russian soldiers was noted." Kalanchak is also located in the Kherson region, where a Ukrainian counteroffensive is currently taking place.

Ukrainian Army advances several dozens of kilometers into the Russian-occupied south, says operational command - Ukrainian forces have advanced from two to several dozens of kilometers in some areas in southern Ukraine, head of the joint coordination press center of the Ukrainian military's Operational Command South, Natalia Humeniuk, earlier today said on Ukrainian national television.

Commenting on a report regarding the transfer of a unit of up to 1,300 fighters from the so-called "Kadyrovtsy" formation (see article "Russia moves reserves to Kherson" below), who are supposed to strengthen the Russian forces in Kherson Oblast, Humeniuk said Army Command had recorded this redeployment, but so far these troops were too far away to influence operations.

Humeniuk added that the military believes that the "Kadyrovtsy" realize that Ukraine's Armed Forces have fire control over large swathes of territory – completely covering the right and some parts of the left bank of the Dnipro River.

"Those reserves that are now deployed on the right bank and are being transferred by artificially created crossings – a barge, a tugboat, a boat – these are the 'LPR/DPR' fighters, aged 55-60."

Russia loses 350 troops in one day - Moscow's total personnel losses in the war have exceeded 52,250 troops, with 350 of them killed in the last 24 hours, Ukraine's General Staff said on Sept. 10.

Ukrainian forces destroy multiple Russian command posts and depots - Ukraine's Air Force carried out 33 strikes over the past day, destroying an ammunition depot, and 25 Russian strongholds and clusters of manpower and military equipment. Two UAVs and one guided air missile were destroyed in different areas.

Over the past 24 hours, Ukrainian ground and missile troops destroyed 18 enemy command and control points of various levels, clusters of manpower, means of anti-aircraft defense and electronic warfare, artillery units and more than 20 depots with ammunition, fuel and oil.

Ukraine counteroffensive eroding confidence in Russian Command: ISW - Ukraine's counterattack in the east and south of the country, and the Kremlin's silence over it, are eroding trust in the Russian command, according to a new report by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

In its daily report, the think tank said Ukrainian successes on the Kharkiv City-Izyum axis are rupturing the Russia information space and eroding confidence in the Russian command "to a degree not seen since a failed Russian river crossing in mid-May."

An example it gave was Ukrainian officials announcing on Thursday that forces were 50 kilometers (31 miles) deep into Russian defensive positions north of Izyum in the Kharkiv Oblast – but the Russian side didn't issue any comment on their progress.

Russian state media struggles to convey news of Russia losing ground in Ukraine: 'pray for our guys' – Russian state-media channels are struggling to convey news of Russia's military losing ground in the wake of a counteroffensive from Ukraine retaking crucial areas.

During his nightly address on Friday, Ukraine announced that more than 30 settlements had been liberated in the Kharkiv region. A Ukrainian general claimed Thursday that troops had advanced 31 miles into previously occupied land.

Although Insider could not verify the claims independently, even the presenters and guests on Russia's tightly-controlled state media appeared to take them seriously, seeking ways to manage news of military setbacks.

Clips from shows reviewed by Insider showed a rare admission of bad news despite Russia's insistence that reporting follow the official narrative, including referring to the war euphemistically as a "special military operation."

"I just wanted to say that everyone who is a believer should pray for our guys," said Anton Anisimov, the host of Russia's sports channel Match TV's political talk show, on Friday.

AFU raise Ukrainian flag over Kupyansk City Council - Kharkiv Regional Council - The Ukrainian military entered Kupyansk, Kharkiv region and raised a yellow and blue flag over the city council.

The adviser to the chairman of the Kharkiv Regional Council Natalia Popova announced this on Facebook, Ukrainian News Agency reports.

"Kupyansk is Ukraine! Glory to the Armed Forces of Ukraine!" wrote Natalia Popova under a photo attached to the post, which shows the military from the 92nd separate mechanized brigade standing with a battle flag near the city council building.

Other Telegram channels also report that the Armed Forces of Ukraine are already in Kupyansk, distributing relevant photos.



Russia moves reserves to Kherson - The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has said that due to the Ukrainian counteroffensive, the troops of the Russian Federation sent additional reserves to maintain control over the occupied city of Kherson and the region.

This is stated in the evening operational update of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

"Because of the approach of units of the Defense Forces, in Kherson region, the command of the Russian forces is trying to strengthen the city of Kherson by moving reserves. So, in the regional center, new enemy units are recorded, whose servicemen are poorly oriented in the city.

Russian forces are trying to restore traffic across the bridge of the Kakhovska hydroelectric station, a section of which is under control of Ukraine. In Nova Kakhovka, Russia strengthened filtration measures with the participation of FSB officers of the Russian Federation - checking mobile devices, looking for citizens who help the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The situation is similar in Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia region," the General Staff stated.

A unit of up to 1,300 fighters from the so-called "Kadyrovtsy" formation, the personal troops of Chechen warlord Kadyrov, has arrived in the temporarily occupied territories of Kherson Oblast to strengthen Russian forces there, Ukraine's General Staff said in a Facebook post earlier today.

Putin

Putin reinforcing Kharkiv region at 'huge' cost to Russia's future - Putin sending soldiers into Ukraine's Kharkiv region will have long-term negative effects on his own country, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken said Friday.

Ukraine's counterattack in Kharkiv has shown promise in recent days, according to a report by the Institute for the Study of War, a U.S. think tank. Ukrainian troops captured up to 150 square miles in the eastern region on Tuesday and Wednesday, advancing a minimum of 13 miles into Russian-controlled territory north of Izyum toward Kupyanskisk.

"There are a huge number of Russian forces that are in Ukraine and unfortunately, tragically, horrifically President Putin has demonstrated that he will throw a lot of people into this at huge cost to Russia, at huge cost to its future," Blinken said, according to The Moscow Times, an independent online newspaper based in Amsterdam.

Putin's war has exposed weakness of Russian military: CIA Director - CIA Director Bill Burns has said that Putin's invasion of Ukraine had highlighted the shortcomings of Russia's military.

Burns told a cybersecurity conference in Washington, D.C, on Thursday how it was "hard to see the record of the war— Putin's record—as anything other than a failure so far."

"Not only has the weakness of the Russian military been exposed, but there's going to be long-term damage done to the Russian economy and to generations of Russians as a result of this," he said.

Putin allies admit to making 'mistakes' and are 'worried' in light of Ukrainian military gains - Putin is reportedly facing growing dissent from his allies as the Ukraine war continues for the seventh month in a row with no end in sight.

What Happened: Vladimir Solovyov, a top Russian news presenter and a staunch supporter of the country's leader, said, "I'm worried. Naturally, we want for our guys to crush [the other side] and only to advance, but life doesn't work that way," The Daily Beast reported. Solovyov has even been dubbed "Putin's Voice" during his Wednesday radio show, Full Contact.

Another Putin ally Andrey Gurulyov, who is a retired member of the Russian military and a deputy of the 8th State Duma, in a nightly program, The Evening With Vladimir Solovyov, said, "Today, there is a difficult situation on one of our fronts. Yes, Ukrainians concentrated their assault troops there and started to advance."

"We'll need some time to bring things back to order. Yes, the situation isn't easy," he said, while accepting the mistakes made in the war. "You can't avoid mistakes in life or in war."

In response, Solovyov said that no matter what happens, there would be no peace deal with Ukraine. "There won't be a Minsk-3... The frontline can breathe, there can be local failures, there could be excited screams coming from Kharkiv and Kyiv. That won't change our general hard line... we'll suffocate this serpent. There are no other options... We'll bury as many of them as we need to," he said.

Impact

Russian 'fear of failure' helps Ukraine offensive, ex-Defense Minister says - Uncertainty among Russia's top military leaders is helping Ukrainian troops push their recent advances deeper into enemy-held territory and is hindering Moscow's response, a former Ukrainian defense minister has said.

Andriy Zagorodnyuk—minister of defense from 2019 to 2020 and now the chair of the Centre for Defense Strategies thinktank in Kyiv—said on Saturday he has "absolutely no doubt" that Ukraine will emerge from the ongoing war victorious, as Kyiv's forces drive deep behind Russian lines on multiple fronts.

Speaking at the Yalta European Strategy summit—organized by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation—in Kyiv, Zagorodnyuk said occupying Russian forces are exhausted and incapable of responding to Ukraine's escalating offensives.

"Fear of failure is one of the biggest drivers for the Russians in this war," Zagorodnyuk said. "They were certain of their superiority over Ukraine, they were so certain that they were going to win, that any mistake they make is much harder for them than it would be for us or for any other nation."

Moscow professor warns of rising social tensions without victory soon – A Moscow professor was recently heard saying that "social tensions" could increase in Russia if a victory in the war with Ukraine is not reached soon.

In a video posted to Twitter by Julia Davis, a reporter for the Daily Beast and creator of the Russian Media Monitor, Moscow State University professor Vitaly Tretyakov is seen discussing the ongoing war with Ukraine and said that some Russian citizens may soon ask, "Where is our victory?"

"Not everyone realizes the paradox of this situation, there is an enormous confidence in our victory, but in response there should be real achievements, when you're certain that we have to win, when you're certain that our pursuit is righteous," Tretyakov said in the video, according to a translation. "Social tensions could rise up, not because of the masses opposing the military operation, but because they might ask why isn't it more active. Where is our victory? Where is the advancement?"

Containment

Ukraine: we have shown we can defeat Russians, we need more weapons - The success of a counter-offensive against Russia shows Ukraine can beat Moscow's forces but Kyiv needs more weapons from its partners, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on this morning.

Earlier today Moscow abandoned its main bastion in northeastern Ukraine in a sudden collapse of one of the war's principal front lines after Ukrainian forces made a rapid advance.

Kuleba, speaking at a news conference with visiting German counterpart Annalena Baerbock, said some allies had initially been hesitant to send weapons, citing the risk of antagonizing Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Now, thank God, we are no longer hearing this argument ... we have demonstrated we are capable of defeating the Russian army. We are doing that with weapons given to us," he said.

"And so I reiterate: the more weapons we receive, the faster we will win, and the faster this war will end."

Although Germany has sent self-propelled howitzers to Ukraine, Kyiv also wants Leopard main battle tanks, Marder infantry fighting vehicles and Gepard anti-aircraft tanks.

Kuleba, who in the past has criticized Germany for what he says is its slowness in sending weapons, complained Ukraine was paying the price for internal debates.

"Every day, while someone in Berlin is considering, taking advice, or consulting on whether to give tanks or not ... someone dies in Ukraine, due to the fact that the tank didn't arrive," he said.

Baerbock promised further military aid and did not rule out the delivery of Western-style main battle tanks.

"I know that time is of the essence," she said. "The next few weeks and months will be crucial."

"Hundreds of 'Kamikaze' drones have been sent to Ukraine, but few have glimpsed them in action - U.S. military aid has been key to Ukraine's effective defense against Russia's renewed invasion.

Most of those weapons have come from U.S. military stocks, but some are coming straight from the design table. The Phoenix Ghost tactical unmanned aerial system is one of them.

The limited information that the Pentagon has provided about the Phoenix Ghost suggests that it is a loitering munition designed for a single attack. Often launched by soldiers who are very close to the frontlines, loitering munitions are designed for relatively short flights that end with them crashing into their target.

In April, John Kirby, chief Pentagon spokesman at the time, said the Phoenix Ghost was "akin" to the Switchblade tactical unmanned aerial system that the U.S. military started sending to Ukraine in March.

The Switchblade-300 and -600 are loitering munitions for use against infantry and armored targets, respectively. They are "basically a one-way drone," Kirby said at the time.

The Phoenix Ghost has optics and sensors but is "designed for tactical operations," Kirby added. "In other words, largely and but not exclusively to attack targets."

As of September, the Pentagon has sent some 700 Phoenix Ghost drones to Ukraine. However, despite the hundreds of drones in use in Ukraine and the world's close observation of battlefields there, there have been few glimpses of the drone in action against Russian forces.

Thus far, the U.S. military has sent or committed to sending Ukrainian forces four strategic or tactical unmanned aerial systems, each designed for different purposes.

Those drones are the AeroVironment RQ-20 Puma, a small UAV designed for tactical reconnaissance; the Switchblade, also made by AeroVironment; the Boeing Insitu Scan Eagle, a long-endurance, low-altitude drone; and the Phoenix Ghost, which was designed by Aevex Aerospace as part of a secretive U.S. Air Force program.

All in all, the U.S. military has committed to provide the Ukrainian military with about 2,000 drones to launch attacks and perform intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions.

EU ministers back 5-bln-euro loan to Ukraine - Finance and economy ministers of EU member states discussed yesterday ways to protect citizens from high energy prices and financial support for Ukraine.

"The current situation on energy markets requires an immediate EU-wide solution," Czech Finance Minister Stanjura said after the first day of an informal meeting of the member states' ministers and central bank governors.

"Personally, I consider it reasonable to cap prices at European level for electricity from sources other than gas, which generates huge profits -- and also to separate electricity prices from gas prices," he said.

Stanjura said that his country is aiming to present a new set of measures next week, which it expects would work alongside any EU-level solution to be agreed by the member states.

The ministers also discussed the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the European economies and agreed to support the swift adoption of additional financial assistance to Ukraine to the tune of 5 billion euros (5 billion U.S. dollars), according to the statement.

"The new loan of 5 billion euros will be used for the day-to-day running of the state and to ensure the operation of the country's critical infrastructure, such as offices, schools and hospitals," Stanjura said, adding that he would also push for "a swift agreement on the provision of the remaining 3 billion euros."

US concludes contracts for \$1.2 bln to replenish stocks of weapons sent to Ukraine - About \$1.2 billion in contracts are underway to replenish U.S. military stocks for weapons sent to Ukraine, Bill LaPlante, the US undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, said during a briefing at the Pentagon on Sept. 9.

According to LaPlante, this includes about \$352 million in funding for replacement Javelin missiles, \$624 million for replacement Stinger missiles, and \$33 million for replacement HIMARS systems.

He said that another \$1.2 billion in contracts are underway now for equipment promised to Ukraine under USAI (Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative), including for things like 155mm ammunition, Switchblade unmanned aerial systems, radar systems, and tactical vehicles.

Sanctions

Superyacht linked to Vladimir Putin was a Christmas present from oligarchs, Russian opposition website claims - The hundreds of millions needed to build a superyacht linked with Vladimir Putin were given by oligarchs to the Russian president as a Christmas gift in 2014, a Russian opposition website has claimed.

Dossier Center, which "tracks the criminal activity of various people associated with the Kremlin", said a group of Russian business figures led by Gennady Timchenko collected the €583 million needed to construct the 459ft Scheherazade. It was built in a German shipyard and launched in July 2019.

The Dossier Center is connected with Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a key Russian opposition figure and founder of the Open Russia movement.

The superyacht, thought to be worth \$700 million, was seized by Italian authorities in May after their investigation found significant connections between it and the Russian government. It had been undergoing repairs since June 2020 in the Italian port of Marina di Carrara.



Humanitarian

Bodies of tortured victims of Russian occupation found in Kharkiv Oblast - Police have exhumed bodies of two men, tortured and killed by Russian troops in the recently-liberated village of Hrakove, Kharkiv Oblast, Ukrainian broadcaster Suspilne reported on Sept. 9. A Hrakove resident said that Russian troops made him bury the bodies.

Kharkiv police chief Volodymyr Tymoshko said the murdered victims were not from Hrakove. Their bodies bear signs of torture and gunshot wounds.

Hrakove resident Serhiy Lutsan alerted law enforcement of the burial site, once the village was liberated from Russian forces. "This was in mid- or late March," said Lutsan.

Lutsan added that Russian troops brought destruction to Hrakove and prevented locals from fleeing to Ukraine-controlled territory.

Police will examine two more sites in Hrakove, where Russians reportedly engaged in atrocities – once the area is swept for landmines, chief police detective of Kharkiv Oblast, Serhiy Bolvinov said.

Hrakove fell to invading Russian forces on Feb. 25. Around 40 people remain in the village; they are receiving humanitarian assistance.

Ukrainian forces have liberated more than 30 settlements in Kharkiv Oblast, as Russian lines in the area around the town of Izyum are apparently collapsing.

According to Ukraine's General Staff, Ukrainian law enforcers are now recording numerous crimes by Russians in the liberated territories, while mine clearance is underway, and the population is being provided with assistance.

Comment – Until Ukraine reaches Mariupol – which may be too far a bridge to cross – the full extent of Russian atrocities will remain undisclosed.

GeoPolitics

Greece warns allies of Turkey conflict danger amid tension - Greece's government has written to its NATO and European Union partners and the U.N. chief, urging the formal condemnation of increasingly aggressive rhetoric from neighboring Turkey.

Greece's government has written to the country's NATO and European Union partners and the head of the United Nations, asking them to formally condemn increasingly aggressive talk by officials in neighboring Turkey and suggesting that current bilateral tensions could escalate into a second open conflict on European soil.

In the letters, copies of which were seen Wednesday by The Associated Press, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said the behavior of his country's historic regional rival — and NATO ally — should be censured by the three bodies.

"By not doing so in time or by underestimating the seriousness of the matter, we risk witnessing again a situation similar to that currently unfolding in some other part of our continent," he wrote, in an allusion to the war in Ukraine. "This is something none of us would really wish to see."

The letters dated Monday and Tuesday come at a low point in relations between the two neighbors, who are separated by centuries-long enmity and contemporary disputes, including Aegean Sea boundaries and immigration. Greece and Turkey have come close to war three times in the last half-century.

On Tuesday Turkey's president reiterated a thinly veiled invasion threat made over the weekend. Athens responded that it's ready to defend its sovereignty.