

# Conflict Update # 159

August 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2022

## Conflict Assessment

**Russian losses** – 45,400 (+200) soldiers killed and 135,600 injured, 1,919 (+7) enemy tanks, 4,230 (+6) armored combat vehicles, 1,035 (+7) artillery systems, 266 (+0) RSCV systems, 145 (+4) air defense systems, 234 (+0) warplanes, 198 (+1) helicopters, 815 (+9) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 190 (+0) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 3,149 (+6) trucks and tankers, 76 fuel bowsers and 99 (+6) units of specialized equipment.

**Ukrainian losses** - Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief Valeriy Zaluzhniy says nearly 9,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in the war so far.

## Key takeaways

**Explosions rock Donbas as Russian ammo dump goes up in flames in fresh blow** - Explosions lit up the early morning sky over Russian-occupied Donbas this morning as another of Putin's ammo dumps went up in flames.

Videos captured on the eastern outskirts of the city of Donetsk showed smoke and flames engulfing a set of badly-damaged buildings as the sun came up Monday, with multiple blasts caught on camera.

It is just the latest arms depot to go up in flames after blasts at bases across occupied Crimea that Ukraine says has badly-damaged Russia's ability to fight.

Analysts at the Institute for the Study of War say Putin's 'exhausted' forces are now struggling to make any ground and believe his invasion will soon ground to a halt.

Meanwhile Ukrainian commanders are confident in their ability to wear down Russia's army and force it to retreat, as what was supposed to be a days-long 'special military operation' has dragged out into a nearly six-month war.

Blasts have also destroyed or damaged three bases in Crimea - two airfields and an ammo dump - and have also severed bridges across the wider Kherson region.

These have been blamed on Ukrainian saboteurs working behind Russian lines, because they are out of range of Kyiv's missile forces.

Monday's blasts took place hundreds of miles to the east, in Donetsk, where heavy fighting was reported along the frontline at the weekend.

**'The biggest movement in the history' — Ukraine evacuates the front line** - More than 12 million Ukrainians have been displaced by the war, most of them within the country. The government says it expects another 220,000 to evacuate from Donetsk region in east Ukraine before winter. Vereshchuk, who is also the minister for reintegration of temporarily occupied territories, says the evacuation order will be extended to another 500,000 people in areas occupied by Russia or at risk of being so in the regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv.

The mandatory evacuation order marks a departure for Kyiv. Since Russia first invaded eastern Ukraine in 2014, residents of occupied or threatened regions were given little instructions or support to leave, or support for the delivery of essential services like water and transport. "People were left alone with their problems," said Volodymyr Yavorsky from the Centre for Civil Liberties, a human rights watchdog.

But the shift in policy is controversial, particularly in light of forced deportations of Ukrainians by Russia. Under international law, governments are obliged to do their best to provide essential services during war time; inform citizens of potential dangers; and only move populations if forced by security or military reasons.

**Losing a war because of logistics** - Retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, a former commander of the U.S. Army in Europe, said Russia's logistics system is 'exhausted' because it was not designed 'to sustain a long conflict outside of Russia'.

Unlike most other modern militaries, Russia is heavily reliant on trains to supply the large amounts of ammunition its forces use to bulldoze through enemy lines so its troops can capture the ruins left behind.

Cutting rail lines and destroying ammo dumps near the front forces Putin's commanders to rely on long-distance truck convoys to move ammo around, hampering its ability to fight.

Maj. Gen. Edward Dorman, the former director of logistics and engineering for U.S. Central Command, added: 'If you can't keep the required inflow of supplies, at some point you have to give ground.'

'Wars have been lost because of logistics.'

Natalia Humeniuk, a spokeswoman for the Ukrainian military's Southern Command, suggested that vulnerability is at the heart of Kyiv's plans to recapture territory seized since the start of the invasion - and as far back as the last war in 2014.

Ukraine will not be able to out-match Russia in terms of raw troops numbers, vehicles or firepower - despite mobilizing its population and getting supplies from the West, she conceded.

But, by using the weapons and troops it does have to maximum effect, she believes it is possible to defeat the superior enemy.

'There are more of them. They have more weapons. They're more powerful in the air,' Ms. Humeniuk told WSJ.

'So we have to find a way to beat them under these conditions. It's not easy, but it's doable.'

**Russian vacationers inadvertently Expose air defenses** - Russian vacationers in Crimea inadvertently exposed Moscow's air defenses after they posted pictures on social media, recent research suggested.

According to independent OSINT researcher Benjamin Pittet, a user of Russia's social media platform VKontakte uploaded a photograph of Russian S-400 air defense systems "during a stroll along the beach" in July.

Those images contained geographic coordinates that showed they were taken near the village of Molochnoye, in Crimea, the Russian service of Radio Free



Europe/Radio Liberty reported.

These weapons were struck by Ukrainian HIMARS missiles a short while later.

In another example highlighted by Ukraine's armed forces on Telegram, a Russian woman shared an image on Instagram that purportedly revealed the location of Russian anti-aircraft missile defense systems near Yevpatoria.

**Soldiers are refusing to take part in Russia's latest offensive against Ukraine, says UK** - Soldiers are refusing to join Russia's latest offensive operation against Ukraine.

Soldiers from Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia are refusing to join in with Moscow's latest offensive, UK officials claim.

The Ministry of Defence revealed that clips on Ukrainian social media channels show parts of a military unit from the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic "delivering a declaration outlining their refusal to be deployed as part of offensive operations in Donetsk Oblast."

The MoD explained: "The fighters claimed they had fulfilled their duty in securing the LPR's control over all of Luhansk Oblast, which was secured in July 2022, and were unwilling to fight in Donetsk Oblast despite threats and intimidation by senior commanders."

The Ministry of Defence added: "Russia is likely increasingly struggling to motivate the auxiliary forces it is using to augment its regular troops in the Donbas.

**Russia forcibly conscripts over 400 mine workers for Ukraine War: Governor** - Approximately 430 miners from the Luhansk region in Eastern Ukraine have been forcibly conscripted into the Russian infantry, according to the region's governor, Serhiy Haidai, in a post to his Telegram account on Sunday.

"The mass media of the so-called ['Luhansk People's Republic'] start to teach the population to be proud of this fact," Haidai said. "The report says that '...as in the years of the great patriotic war, women and pensioners replace in fields, factories, and mines the men who went to the front... Women stayed, and they successfully perform their duties even in extremely difficult jobs...' 430 miners of the once leading coal mining enterprise of Donbas were mobilized."

**Russia conscripting civilians from occupied areas** - Reports emerged earlier in August that the Russian military had begun conscripting civilians from Luhansk, which came under full Russian control early last month, and was dubbed the "Luhansk People's Republic." Portions of the region had been recognized as a breakaway state by Russia since 2014. At the time, Haidai also said that the need for conscriptions had become so dire, that even miners, who were key to the region's economy, were being swept up.

"They don't bother counting the casualties, because mostly it's the residents of the occupied territories who die," Haidai said in an August 4 Telegram post. "The Russians don't need them in the future, because for eight years the population of the so-called 'LPR' has been a burden on the Russian state budget. Now the men are 'working off' these financial losses... Everyone who can be mobilized has already been mobilized on the territories that have been occupied since 2014...now even irreplaceable miners are being taken away."

**Cash, jails, 'stealth': Putin's bid to bolster Russian forces in Ukraine** - As Russia continues to suffer losses six months into its invasion of Ukraine, commanders are resorting to providing cash incentives to encourage troops to fight, U.K. defense officials said.

In an update on Monday, the British Ministry of Defence said Russia is "increasingly struggling to motivate the auxiliary forces it is using to augment its regular troops" in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

"Commanders are resorting to direct financial incentives, while some combat units are deemed unreliable for offensive operations," the ministry said.

With losses mounting and reports that many Russian soldiers are refusing to fight, Russian authorities have reportedly been using a series of covert tactics to bring in new recruits.

The Russian Defense Ministry has denied that any "mobilization activities" are taking place, it was reported earlier in August. Newsweek has contacted the ministry for comment.

**Will Belarus restore and repair jet fighters for Russia?** - Russia has reportedly been pulling old military equipment held in long-term storage to replace losses suffered during its invasion of Ukraine.

Russian aviation equipment will be repaired and restored by the Belarusian Defense Ministry for service in the Russia-Ukraine War, according to claims by the Ukrainian intelligence Directorate made Saturday about a new contract between the two governments.

GUR, the Ukrainian Intelligence body, claims that the 558th aircraft repair plant works mainly on MiG-29 type aircraft and its derivatives. They claimed that these aircraft were being taken out of storage for use in the Russia-Ukraine War.

Russia has reportedly been pulling old military equipment held in long-term storage to replace losses suffered during its invasion of Ukraine. However, according to Ukrainian claims it has encountered difficulty in doing so because of corruption and the poor condition of the equipment.

"Optical devices and electronics containing precious metals were stolen from the combat vehicles," said GUR. The intelligence body reported that many of the 4th Tank Division's stored tanks were "completely dismantled," and that some did not have engines.

## Impacts

**Russia insists Ukrainian forces are behind the weekend death of a 29-year-old nationalist TV personality, Daria Dugina**, who perished Saturday when her Toyota Land Cruiser exploded mysteriously while traveling in an affluent suburb of Moscow. According to Russia's state-run TASS, "a citizen of Ukraine identified as Natalia Vovk" was allegedly behind the apparent attack, and Russia's domestic spy service, the FSB, says she fled to Estonia afterward.

The FSB says a "remote-controlled" bomb detonated on Dugina's Land Cruiser, and shortly afterward the accused and her daughter crossed the border into Estonia. She allegedly drove a Mini Cooper with a license plate from "the Donetsk People's Republic—E982XH," before changing to Kazakh plates while in Moscow, and then to a Ukrainian license plate on the way out of Russia, TASS says.

Dugina was the daughter of a prominent Russian nationalist named Alexander Dugin, and some suspect the 60-year-old Dugin was the intended target of the apparent bombing—since he reportedly changed cars at the "last minute" ahead of the bombing Saturday, according to Russian newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

The BBC reports Dugin is thought to be close to Russia's autocratic leader, Vladimir Putin; but exactly how close is unclear—despite breathless headlines and tweets claiming he is "Putin's brain" and "author of Putin's Ukraine strategy," and more.

Ukrainian officials deny any involvement in the apparent bombing. "Ukraine definitely has nothing to do with this, because we are not a criminal state, which the Russian Federation is," said Mykhailo Podolyak, who is an advisor to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy.

**Ukraine war unsettles proxies in Russia's backyard** – Russia's invasion of Ukraine has unsettled surrounding "proxy" countries in two ways, (i) fear of suffering similar aggression by Russian pursuit of a reformed Soviet Union and (ii) lack of fear in the circumstance of Russian might being tested and found severely lacking in its Ukrainian exercise.

Regarding the former, countries like Moldova, impoverished, having a 11,5% Russian population and subject to the presence of 1,500 of its soldiers in the breakaway province of Transnistria, are watching closely Ukrainian developments and Putin's continued statements surrounding a resurgent Soviet Union.

For the latter, countries such as Kazakhstan, they see Russian suffering in Ukraine as an opportunity to exercise long-held and dormant desires of stepping out from under Russian influence and control.

The Caucasus, Balkans and Central Asia are areas where international focus will be focused given the rumblings of discontent and geopolitical desire, coupled with Putin's intent on emulating Peter the Great.

See a following article under "GeoPolitical" regarding Armenia.

**Loitering munitions evoke new era for missile defence** - The conflict in Ukraine has seen significant use of loitering munitions against armored vehicles and personnel. Their autonomous capabilities and ease of use means that they can be used at a tactical level and eliminate the need to rely on the resource heavy infrastructure needed for Uncrewed Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs).

GlobalData's report, 'Thematic Research: Loitering Munitions,' notes that loitering munitions are capable of staying in the air while they search for a target, with some capable of returning to base in the case of an unsuccessful target identification.

Apart from holding several domestically developed models, Ukraine has received loitering munitions from the US, including the 'Phoenix Ghost,' designed in part to meet key Ukrainian needs.

Although loitering munitions found notoriety during the Nagorno-Karabakh War, western militaries had 'dabbled' in funding the new systems much earlier, said William Davies, associate analyst at GlobalData. "In 2010, the Royal Navy sought to procure loitering munitions for their Type 45 destroyers but cancelled the programme in 2017 after having spent £207m on the project.

"There could be some element of concern that loitering munitions may be viewed as a magic bullet by defence planners, potentially drawing funds away from other programs."

"AeroVironment Switchblades have also been part of the loitering munitions provided by the US to Ukraine. These inexpensive systems have equipped Ukraine's forces with surveillance and offensive capabilities to strike against Russian armour and personnel.

"The proliferation of these systems will continue to grow, with the likelihood of smaller militaries fielding variants in the future. But it is too soon to say if their use will be fully adopted by larger militaries who may still see them as a novel solution to a problem, they themselves are not suffering from."

**Comment** – it appears that the Ukrainian strike against Russia's Sevastopol Naval HQ was with a "Kamikaze" loitering drone, it crashed into the roof of the building and exploded. Russia claimed to have shot it down, but this hasn't see verification of any sort.

**Another US official arrives in Taiwan, escalating tensions with China** - The Republican governor of Indiana, Eric Holcomb, has landed in Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), becoming the latest US official to visit the self-ruled island amid rising tensions between Washington and Beijing.

Holcomb announced in a Twitter thread on Sunday that he arrived in Taiwan along with a delegation for a trip to strengthen the business ties between his Midwestern state and Taipei.

"I appreciate the warm welcome to Taiwan from Douglas Hsu, Taiwan Director of North American Affairs," the governor said. He said that his delegation would meet with "government officials, business leaders and academic institutions" to build new relationships and reinforce existing ones.

### **Taiwan's 'porcupine strategy' to fight a potential Chinese invasion is learning lessons from Ukraine -**

Taiwan is learning lessons from Ukraine on how it could defend itself against a possible Chinese invasion, according to a report by The Wall Street Journal.

Since Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in February, it has effectively used smaller weapons to fight back and humiliate Russia's larger army.

This method of defense aligns with Taiwan's "porcupine strategy," also known as asymmetrical warfare, which it uses to prepare for a possible Chinese invasion. The strategy was first introduced by then-chief of the Taiwanese military forces Lee Hsi-Ming in 2017 and involved stocking up on anti-air, anti-tank, and anti-ship weapons rather than larger equipment.

"The porcupine strategy is really when a smaller military tries to defend itself from a larger military, which is the attacker, and it uses lots of smaller weapons," Alastair Gale, the Wall Street Journal's Asia security correspondent, said in a video.

"Much like the animal, it tries to inflict so much pain on the larger rival that it stops the attacker," he said.

Taiwan has been considering increasing training in the use of portable missiles, according to The Journal. Even Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has been pictured posing with the Taiwan-made shoulder-launched Kestrel anti-armor rocket.

The smaller anti-aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles have limitations in their reach, with the Javelin only having a 2.5-mile operating range.

Ukraine has also recently had a string of success with US-supplied HIMARS, which has a much more extensive operating range of 53 miles. The US approved the first sale of HIMARS to Taiwan in 2020.

Taiwan is also looking to expand its drone arsenal. It's developing indigenous weapons like the Teng Yun, and the US has also agreed to sell Taiwan its MQ-9 Reaper drones.

The Taiwanese government has also pledged to spend an extra \$8.7 billion on military equipment, per the report.

Military experts say that China is also taking note of the Russian invasion, learning that they will need to use overwhelming force if they wish to succeed, the report says.

### **Conflict in South China Sea would threaten 90% of Australia's fuel imports -** China's sabre-rattling about Taiwan underlines the need for Australia to be prepared for conflict in the South China Sea.

With its growing navy and air force, and the bases it has built throughout the area, China is increasingly capable of disrupting shipping lanes crucial to Australia's exports and imports.

Of particular concern is reliance on liquid fuels imported via South China Sea shipping routes, more pronounced over the past few decades as all but two local refineries have closed. So even while Australia exports crude oil, it imports roughly 90% of refined fuels.

In 2018 just five Asian nations supplied 87% of fuel imports: South Korea (27%), Singapore (26%), Japan (15%) and Malaysia (10%) and Taiwan (9%). The balance came from India (6%), the Middle East (1%) and the rest of the world including Vietnam and the Philippines (6%).

**The war in Ukraine may dent the Su-35's reputation as a top-tier Russian fighter jet** - Brig. Gen. Oleksiy Gromov, a deputy chief attached to the Ukrainian General Staff, commented about the Russian aviation industry in a briefing to the Ukrainian Media Center on August 11.

Reporting that Russia was resorting to using older, retired Sukhoi Su-24M bombers due to combat losses of newer jets, Gromov threw more shade at manufacturer Sukhoi by claiming in passing that only nine of 24 Su-35S twin-engine fighter jets purchased by China for \$2.5 billion in 2015 arrived in operational condition due to unspecified defects in their "onboard systems" ie. avionics.

Gromov's claims pile on to other troubling developments for the Su-35 (codenamed Flanker-E by NATO) over the last year, with no less than three clients refusing or canceling Su-35 exports.

He claimed 24 Su-35s had been downed in combat by Ukrainian forces.

Ukraine's defense industry also has a significant relationship with China — both the PLA Navy's first aircraft carrier, and its J-15 Flying Shark carrier-based jets are based on hardware transferred from Ukraine. It's, therefore, possible Ukraine's industry learned some scuttlebutt about the Su-35's condition through these connections.

## China

**India's challenge to Belt and Road in Asia** - Over the past few years, and most notably during recent border clashes in Ladakh's Galwan valley, China-India relations have been visibly more acrimonious, confusing, and inimical in diplomatic and military domains, despite their huge mutual business interests.

In 2021, trade between the two neighbors grew by 44%. India's imports from China grew from \$67b in 2020 to \$98b, and during the same period, the volume of Indian exports to China jumped to \$28b, displaying hefty growth of 35%.

But ironically, this gigantic volume of bilateral trade has not been able to muffle the ever-growing mutual suspicion and distrust between Beijing and New Delhi. Particularly, after the launch of China's third and most advanced indigenously-built carrier Fujian on June 17, India's deliberate attempts to increase its sphere of activities in the South China Sea and Asia Pacific are now becoming more rancorous.

India hastily completed the fourth phase of sea trials of its indigenously built INS Vikrant on July 10, with a target of its commissioning on August 15 to commemorate Independence Day celebrations, dubbed "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav."

Frictions between Beijing and New Delhi have been intensified further ever since China started working on its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India, which also has historic business and security interest in this region, is quite wary of the Chinese plan to keep enhancing its maritime power in the East China Sea and South China Sea to facilitate commercial traffic between the Pacific and Indian oceans, and at the same time, keep spreading its network of rail and road connectivity throughout the southeast to ensure a smooth flow of trade between regional countries and mainland China.

Coupled with the Chinese intention of creating a "Digital Silk Route," the BRI has generated anxiety in New Delhi, leading to a collaborative approach – with the support of Washington – intended to find ways to respond to and even disrupt the Chinese plan.



India has adopted the strategy of establishing two parallel networks of connectivity to counterbalance the BRI, focused on sea routes as well as land routes. Under the banner of its Act East Policy, it is aggressively trying to foster relations with ASEAN countries. In mid-June, it co-hosted the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in New Delhi with a clear intention to rekindle its involvement in multiple initiatives and joint ventures in the region, ranging from public health, IT infrastructure, agriculture, defense, and trade. Currently there are 30 dialogue mechanisms between India and ASEAN, involving various sectors.

India is fervidly working on the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, a 1,400 kilometers-long project that will connect the northeastern states of India with the ASEAN region, with a future plan to extend it further eastward to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

This Trilateral Highway is being built with a sole purpose of establishing “parallel” structure to the BRI in this region.

Indians are now eager for the completion and operationalization of this road link, which will enable smooth land access all the way through to Vietnam – a country that remains a strong bilateral partner in many joint oil and gas exploration projects in the South China Sea.

Simultaneously India is working on a second ambitious project, Chabahar Port, which is located on Iran’s southern coast in the Sistan-Baluchistan province. In the last few years, thanks to generous investment by India, the port has become a reality, handling almost 5 million tons of cargo annually. The project also includes a free trade zone, the 628-km Chabahar- Zahedan railway track, and a 1,000-km track to Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan. India invested in this project with two reasons in mind, to (i) provide direct trading connectivity with Iran as well as an alternate route to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan and (ii) create a strategic counter to CPEC (the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), an important branch of Belt and Road in South Asia which starts from Pakistan’s Gwadar Port just 170 km away from Chabahar.

Thus, India has established a parallel corridor to connect the Indian Ocean with Russia and Europe through Central Asia.

In addition to competing with Beijing via a parallel roads and rail tracks in the region, New Delhi has also intensified its presence through oil and gas exploration projects with ASEAN neighbors in the South China Sea. Being a very active member of the QUAD, New Delhi feels that it has some room to “disturb” the Chinese presence in the region due to its backing from the US, Japan, and Australia under the umbrella of this strategic Geomilitary association.

India is also part of many regional and subregional defense agreement and frameworks, including ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

Although the Indians also know all too well that their pockets are not deep enough to challenge and emulate China’s development projects and infrastructure, they deliberately want to keep a “simmering friction” alive with China, in order to have their footprints in the South China Sea and Southeast Asia. They want to at least establish their status as an “authentic” middle power in the Indo-Pacific region as well as to create some sort of balance of power to keep the Chinese presence within an “acceptable” level – of course, under the tutelage of the Pentagon, which has recently dubbed China a “threat” in recent NATO documents.

India is simultaneously a member of BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which is making noises in others areas of international impact. BRICS is increasingly falling under a Chinese leadership direction, which may not suit Indian objectives at large.

## Peace talks

**Russia’s UN envoy Gennady Gatilov says Moscow sees no diplomatic solution to end conflict** - Gennady Gatilov, Russia’s permanent representative to the UN in Geneva warned the longer the war goes on the more difficult it

will be to end. A Ukrainian battalion's deputy Commander informed his soldiers that the conflict 'could drag on for years'

**Ukraine says no peace talks if trials go ahead** - Any effort to hold talks with Russia will be destroyed if Moscow organizes show trials of captured Ukrainian prisoners of war, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy warned.

"Now there are enough reports in the media that in Mariupol the scenery is being prepared for an absolutely disgusting and absurd show trial of Ukrainian defenders, of our warriors who are captives of the occupiers," Zelenskyy said in a national address late Sunday, adding if that happens, Kyiv's reaction will be "absolutely clear."

"If this despicable show trial takes place, if our people are brought into this scenery in violation of all agreements, all international rules, if there is abuse ... This will be the line beyond which any negotiations are impossible," he said.

## Containment

**Developing: The EU may soon authorize a "major training operation"** for Ukrainian troops in neighboring countries, but only if it's approved after a debate, according to foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

The Pentagon announced another \$775 million in U.S. weapons to Ukraine on Friday. This latest batch included more rounds for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and howitzer artillery; more High-speed Anti-radiation (aka, "HARM") missiles often used to target Russian radars; 1,500 Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (aka, "TOW") missiles; 1,000 more Javelin anti-tank systems; 2,000 anti-armor rounds; as well as optics, night-vision equipment, and laser rangefinders.

A large collection of vehicles are also on the way, including 40 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles with mine rollers; 50 Humvees; 15 ScanEagle drones to help with targeting and surveillance; and some mine-clearing equipment.

New equipment includes MRAPs, the ScanEagles, the TOW missiles, and about 2,000 anti-armor rounds for use with Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles.

**Denmark's F-16 aircraft to support NATO air policing mission in Iceland** - The Royal Danish Air Force has deployed its F-16 fighter jets to support the NATO's Air Policing mission in Iceland.

They will perform the exercises together with the Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) from Keflavik Air Base.

The deployed F-16 aircraft have already started flying the Air Policing sorties from 17 August.

The mission will be controlled by NATO's Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) in Keflavik and NATO's northern Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Uedem, Germany.

This is the fifth deployment of RDAF's fighter jets. It marks the sustainability and continuity of Denmark in supporting allied mission in Iceland.

German Air Force CAOC certification team lead colonel Wilhelm May said: "For the third time in 2022, CAOC team has conducted certification of Nato fighters to conduct Air Policing in High North above Iceland.

**Air defence system ambitions** - Providing Starstreak anti-aircraft missiles has highlighted the need for UK air defence systems that are cheaper and faster to produce. As early as 21 February this year the UK government made the announcement that it would provide Ukraine with StarStreak high-velocity man-portable anti-air missiles to allow the Ukrainian force to better defend the skies.

“Starstreak missiles...are expensive, difficult to use, and require weeks of training to operate effectively,” said Madeline Wild, aerospace, defense & security analyst at GlobalData.

“This isn’t ideal in times of crisis, as we have seen in Ukraine, as the production of these weapons must be faster and cheaper so that reserves can be replenished quickly.”

On 5 August, UK MoD announced intentions to improve its Land Ground Based Air Defence (Land GBAD) programme. Set to be delivered in ten years, it offers the country a necessary capability boost.

**B-21 Raider Bomber** - Work started on the secretive stealth bomber in 2014 and Air Force watchers have depended upon artist renderings to chart its path to its first unveiling. Senator Mike Rounds of South Dakota toured the B-21 plant in Palmdale, California in July. Rounds believes the B-21 could make its maiden flight in 2023.

### Will It Be the Best Bomber Ever?

“The B-21 is one of the most advanced aircraft to ever be developed,” said Rounds in a news release. “We are getting closer to bringing this state-of-the-art platform home to Ellsworth Air Force Base.



While much of the information I received on my visit is classified, I am pleased to report the B-21 is on time and on budget. The public can expect the B-21 to be revealed later this year. This aircraft will play a crucial role in the defense of our nation and will have a significant economic impact on the Rapid City area for generations to come.” Rounds also said a real photo of the B-21 will be shown soon.

## Sanctions

**FBI traced the location and raided the \$120 million superyacht ‘Alfa Nero’ of sanctioned oligarch Andrey Guryev** - After many quiet months, the \$120 million Alfa Nero luxury yacht finally witnessed some action aboard. The 279-foot luxury vessel was moored and motionless with a skeleton crew in Antigua for several months.



The pleasure craft of sanctioned Russian billionaire businessman Andrey Guryev, and his namesake son was searched yesterday by the Antigua and Barbuda government and American FBI agents.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department Of The Treasury included the names of Andrey Guryev, both father, and son, along with their 269-foot steel and aluminum superyacht Alfa Nero in a fresh round of sanctions. Andrey Guryev, the father, is a well-known associate of Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and previously served in the Government of the Russian Federation.

The Guryevs managed to save their \$120 million superyacht from being seized by turning off the location transponders. However, the investigation hints at the 279-footer being in deeper waters than what meets the eye.

**Technology controls can strangle Russia—just like the Soviet Union** - Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Western countries imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Kremlin. Much has been said about the impact of asset

seizures, flight bans, and financial restrictions, but it is export controls that are the untold story of the West's latest attempt to contain Russia.

In highly coordinated fashion, the US and 37 other countries imposed a novel and complex regime of export controls against Russia. These controls severely restrict the export of strategic technologies, including semiconductors, microelectronics, navigation equipment, and aircraft components, to Russia—harking back to the highly successful Western export restrictions that helped isolate, contain, and ultimately defeat the Soviet Union.

Given time to work, export controls will play a crucial role in undermining Russia's defense industry and eroding its military capabilities to wage the war. Russian manufacturing companies' dependence on foreign components and machinery remains high, despite Moscow's attempts to increase domestic self-sufficiency, such as the import substitution program it launched in 2015. With only limited domestic production of key technologies, Russia's lifeline on the battlefield is to source these critical items from elsewhere. Export controls are thus a powerful tool to impede Russia's ability to replenish its depleting stockpiles of weapons and ammunition.

Usually bundled together by non-specialists, sanctions and export controls have a very different logic of operation. Unlike sanctions, which can halt trade and banking relations almost instantly, export controls are a softer tool directed at curtailing the target's access to commodities and technologies. Export controls are almost never successful in completely suppressing technology transfers and do not permanently bar the target from catching up by other means—by achieving domestic production, evading controls via third countries, or getting help from controls-busting Western companies.

Success of export controls depends on the tightness of restrictions, uniqueness of each technology, and concentration of supply chains. As long as there are alternative suppliers in non-sanctioning countries, such as China and India, the impact of export controls will be weakened. Unilateral export controls are rarely effective, so international coordination is of the essence.

**A grim winter will test Europe's support for Ukraine** - Six months since Russia invaded Ukraine, the West's response to the crisis has remained strong and largely united -- to the surprise of many.

Despite years of fractured relations and the Covid-19 pandemic, the trans-Atlantic alliance has managed to pull together and reach agreements on financial support and the donation of weapons to Kyiv, agreements to stop using Russian energy as well as sanctions designed to hit President Vladimir Putin and his cronies.

However, as the crisis reaches its half-year anniversary, officials across Europe are worried that the consensus could fall apart as the continent enters a bleak winter of rising food prices, limited energy to heat homes and the real possibility of recession.

Western officials and diplomats spoke to CNN on the condition of anonymity to candidly describe sensitive conversations among governments.

In a possible taste of more draconian measures to come, German capital Berlin turned off the lights illuminating monuments in order to save electricity, while French shops have been told to keep their doors shut while the air conditioning is on, or else face a fine.

Ukrainian President Zelensky, who has captured the West's imagination and put heat on countries to support his war effort, might find it harder to get the attention of his fellow European leaders as the conflict drags on.

"The challenge for Ukraine is the same as it was on day one: keeping the West on side as the costs of supporting Kyiv hit home -- not just Putin's gas and grain blackmail but also the cost of economic and humanitarian support," says Keir Giles, a senior consulting fellow at think tank Chatham House.

"That may well be why Zelensky said he wanted the war over before Christmas, because the real issues will be getting the West to stick to its promises in the long run."

The winter fuel crisis is something that European officials and diplomats are thinking about daily, with Russia accounting for about 55% of Europe's total gas imports in 2021.

European countries also have a thirst for Russian oil, with almost half of Russian oil exports going to the continent. The EU reportedly imported 2.2 million barrels of crude oil per day in 2021.

**EU countries ponder visa ban for Russians over Ukraine war** - Among EU members, the Baltic states and Finland have taken up the call. That's mainly motivated by their proximity, which make them a popular first destination for Russian tourists traveling to Europe, all the more so as major airlines have cut nearly all flights to Russia.

Estonia's prime minister on August 9 called for a ban on tourist visas for Russians. Latvia has suspended the issuance of tourist visas for Russians, and Finland's foreign minister announced this week that the country would cut the number it hands out by 90%.

"It's not right that at the same time as Russia is waging an aggressive, brutal war of aggression in Europe, Russians can live a normal life, travel in Europe, be tourists. It's not right," Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin told public broadcaster Yle News.

Denmark's foreign minister said he would favor a joint effort but also signaled a willingness to go it alone.

"I consider it shameful that Russian tourists can sunbathe and live in luxury in the south of Europe, while Ukrainian cities are bombed beyond recognition," Jeppe Kofod was quoted as telling the Danish news agency Ritzau.

The proposal has been met with a lukewarm response from bigger EU members, most notably Germany, which has been loath to take more aggressive action against Moscow in response to the invasion of Ukraine. EU foreign ministers are planning to discuss the idea at a meeting in Prague later this month.

## Putin

**What is Russia's anti-Putin 'National Republican Army'?** - The NRA said that its goal is to "overthrow" and "destroy Putin," and warned Russian officials that if they do not resign, they will be "destroyed."

The organization also declared its readiness to attack military facilities in Russia and called on Russia's security forces and the military to lay down their arms and refuse to carry out criminal orders.

The NRA called on all Russians to join their ranks and raise the "white, blue and white flag of the new Russia instead of the disgraced tricolor."

**The weaponization of minority rights and Russia's invasion of Ukraine** - The respect for minority rights remains of fundamental importance and may be regarded as a yardstick pertaining to the degree to which a country is committed to the observance of human rights as a whole. In fact, the persistence of negative trends with regard to the compliance with the rights of racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic minorities could be a worrisome harbinger of democratic failure.

However, while historically there have been a few instances of largely morally justifiable humanitarian interventions for the sake of upholding minority rights, Russia's actions fall short of such standards and may even have far-reaching negative consequences for the international minority rights regime. Notably, on 23 May 2022 the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities explicitly lamented the use of the minority rights angle as a pretext for the war in Ukraine.

One of the Putin regime's main publicly stated justifications for the invasion of Ukraine is the protection of the minority rights of the Russophone Ukrainians, with the Russian president even appearing to invoke the "Responsibility to Protect" global political commitment in the context of the need to stop a supposed genocide in its tracks. Not only is the latter statement at odds with the expert consensus regarding the situation in eastern Ukraine prior to the beginning of the war, but Putin's Russia itself exhibits plenty of flaws when it comes to ensuring adherence to international recommendations on minority rights.

In March 2022, while bestowing Dagestani lieutenant Gadzhimagomedov with a posthumous Hero of Russia award, Putin extolled the benefits of living in a multiethnic Russia, praising the non-titular ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation, juxtaposing the latter country against the supposedly ethnically exclusionary and Neo-Nazi Ukraine.

In reality, there are persisting issues with ethnic discrimination within Russia itself compounded by a lack of consistency when it comes to Russian legislation in the minority rights realm. Violence directed at ethnic and racial minorities remains a major problem, but the topic of inter-racial and inter-ethnic polarization in contemporary Russia is nevertheless only rarely touched upon in official discourses. Thus, despite Russia itself not being a standard-bearer with regard to the collective rights accorded to national minorities, the Russian government's policymaking elites appear to expect Ukraine to meet the benchmarks of fully-fledged Western democracies with regard to the degree of its compliance with minority rights guidelines.

Another downside of "humanitarian interventions" or "special military operations" of dubious merits emerges clearly by examining the case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which has often drawn parallels with the current invasion of Ukraine. The similarities are due to what has been labeled as Europe's first 21st century war seeing Russia make similar accusations to those leveled at Ukraine (in that instance alleging that the Ossetians were subjected to genocide) and "breakaway provinces" (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) being at the roots of the conflict. The war's aftermath resulted in a worsening of the situation for ethnic minorities in Georgia in terms of human rights violations being committed against them and an increased hostility directed at them by members of the majority. When it comes to the ongoing war in Ukraine, a similar scenario is already playing out, with a hardening of attitudes in Ukraine toward visible minorities, at least on the official level.

Weaponization of minority rights by Putin may cause a ripple effect across Europe, increasing the general public's mistrust of minority groups concentrated in specific regions, especially if the latter insist on special rights and a higher level of economic, cultural, and political autonomy from the central state, even if such demands are intellectually valid.

An analysis of past precedents in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) following instances of belligerent policies pursued by the Russian state suggests that a rise in nationalism in CEE states may be expected. For instance, after Russia formally annexed Crimea in March 2014, there was an increase in national sentiment in CEE countries such as Poland and Romania, believed to be a counter-reaction to the nationalism displayed by Russia. A similar effect is even more likely now due to the elevated threat perceptions when it comes to Russia, as the current military operations are on an immeasurably larger scale than what occurred in Crimea. In countries that are imbued with a spirit of ethnic nationalism, especially if they are not fully consolidated democracies, minority rights are more likely to be violated or at least any concerns pertaining to the plight of minority groups may be swept under the carpet.

**Putin's 'deluded' Ukraine war approach shows autocracies' weakness** - Sir Lawrence Freedman, an emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London, said Russian President Vladimir Putin's strategy in Ukraine is "deluded," adding that his actions demonstrate the weakness of autocracies.

The Russian president's "approach to the current Ukraine conflict has clearly been deluded. You have to assume he didn't realize the gamble he was taking. He genuinely thought Ukraine would crumble quite quickly, and it's hard to know why," Freedman told The Guardian in comments published in a Sunday article.

Freedman added that autocracies, like Putin's Russia, are prone to bad decision-making.

"Autocracies don't have the feedback mechanism and dig themselves in by believing that the advantage of autocracy is bold and decisive decision-making," he said. "While in certain circumstances you can tolerate quite a lot of bad decision-making and come out all right, because you have superior numbers, where it is very tight, one poor decision or bit of bad luck can put you out completely."

## Geopolitical

**Armenia: Geography as geopolitical kryptonite** - Armenia is a country still recuperating from the disastrous 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, a conflict that illustrated its precarious geopolitical position. Wedged between two hostile nations in Turkey and Azerbaijan, it has had little choice but to rely on the protection and vassalage of Russia.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Armenia finds itself in an even more precarious situation. Facing potential new military aggression with Azerbaijan, growing normalization talks with Turkey, and a drift away from the Kremlin, Armenia finds itself in one of the most fraught geopolitical standoffs existing in the world today—and the wrong move against one of the three authoritative leaders of these countries could spell disaster.

It has historically been used as a battleground between world powers due to its strategic location in the Caucasus.

Between Romans and Persians fighting over control of the country to Arabs, Turks, and Russians—Armenians persisted and continued to survive endless conflicts and even genocide. The country's winds of change blew once again during the Bolshevik Revolution where the 'Wilsonian Armenia' idea died, and the Soviets annexed the country into the USSR. Ever since then, Armenia has found itself under the boot of the Kremlin.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia engaged in a years-long war with Azerbaijan over the region known as Karabakh. The war saw several massacres on both sides and mass displacement of refugees, with the origins of the conflict tracing back to border manipulations created by Moscow. The region, which has had an Armenian majority for over a thousand years, was transferred to Azerbaijan by Josef Stalin, a Soviet dictator who was not averse to deporting millions of people out from their homelands to "conform" to the Soviet lifestyle.

Despite the early nineties war ending with a decisive Armenian victory, the region is still internationally recognized as Azerbaijan and the war created a refugee crisis that is still not resolved to this day.

After years of pro-Kremlin prime ministers, many of which were shrouded in controversy stemming from either corruption or negligence, the Armenian military and Artsakh Defense Forces were left in a hollowed-out state.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan quietly built up its own military following the disaster of the 1994 war. Ilham Aliyev, president of Azerbaijan since 2003, used his country's oil wealth to his advantage, signing defense contracts with Turkey, Israel, and Russia—the same nation that promised to protect Armenia and incorporated it into the CSTO collective security framework, which effectively tied Armenia's ongoing security to its willingness to appease the Kremlin.

In 2018, Armenians took to the streets to protest decades of corruption, deposing a leadership structure rife with oligarchs and other Kremlin-linked figures. This was known as the Velvet Revolution, which has created consequences felt to this day.

Under the administration of Nikol Pashinyan, there have been several OSCE Minsk Group conferences to press the issue of the peace process between Baku and Yerevan, only to quickly falter each time. Aliyev had continued to build up his military while the inexperienced Pashinyan focused more on corruption from past administrations rather than bolstering defenses for the inevitable war to come. The first major clashes took place between Pashinyan's Armenia

and Aliyev's Azerbaijan in the Tavush region of Armenia in July 2020, lasting several days. A quick ceasefire was established, though in retrospect the fighting was likely a combat test for the wider clashes to come later in the year.

Using the most opportunistic time during the United Nations General Assembly, Azerbaijan launched a war against Armenia and the Artsakh Defense Forces in September 2020, an operation that actually changed the face of conventional warfare forever. Using the now-infamous Baykar Bayraktar TB2 advanced drone platform from Turkey, the Azerbaijani military hit Armenian logistical supply chains, convoys, and troops in open territory, resulting in stunning success on the battlefield and, subsequently, serious psychological blows as the footage was quickly disseminated across the Internet.

Armenia suffered from its reliance on Soviet-era military doctrines and weaponry that a conventional military could not manage against a more well-armed conventional force. Toward the end of the war, Armenia could have used its geography to embark on a war of attrition against Azerbaijan akin to the Taliban's methods of holding out against NATO forces, but the country's leader signaled for capitulation, giving way to an unpredictable future.

The capitulation of Armenia was met by a trilateral agreement between Yerevan and Baku, mediated by Moscow. Though Azerbaijan had won the war, many people have mused that Russia was the true winner. The Kremlin, which stayed idle most of the war, showed Armenia that it had to depend on Russia to survive, and expects complete loyalty from here on out. They also gained a near permanent foothold in the Karabakh region, solidifying Russia's influence in the lower Caucasus.

The 2020 war was a hard lesson for Armenia—not only did it learn the error of its ways in not investing in defense after decades of stagnation and reliance on Soviet-era weaponry, but it also learned first-hand what would happen to states that broke ranks with Russia. Such lessons have also been learned by countries like Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine, all of which have had to respond in various ways when their citizens pushed back against pervasive Russian influence.

Now the trilateral agreement faces increasing uncertainty, and "Russian peacekeepers" are clearly not living up to their name. Numerous ceasefire violations have taken place, primarily faulted to Azerbaijan, and all with little enforcement of the peace deal by Russia.

Against the backdrop of the Ukraine war, Putin solidified an alliance with Ilham Aliyev on February 24th, causing new concerns in Yerevan. Armenia has taken an extremely neutral approach thus far, though fake news rumors at one point put the country on the international radar when, early in the war, NATO officials visited Armenia on rumors that they had sent their fixed wing aircraft to reinforce Russia's invasion – an allegation that was proven false. Armenia has also seen a mass influx of Russian citizens and oligarchs who are bent on circumventing sanctions, putting a strain on their already vulnerable economy.

As the European Union has looked to divest away from Russian gas, Azerbaijan took full advantage, setting a landmark deal with the EU to supply gas to the continent until 2027. This has come with skepticism as EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called Aliyev "trustworthy" on her official Twitter. By effectively placating one dictatorship for another, Armenia once again has received the short end of the stick. This was further reinforced when Aliyev emphasized Armenians in Karabakh would not have special status under Azerbaijani authority, dismissing any autonomy for them and fueling more mutual antagonism between both nations.

Armenia is now a centerpiece on a chessboard between Turkey, Russia, and Azerbaijan, and with few allies and minor strategic importance to the wider international community, any wrong move could spell another humanitarian disaster right under the nose of the United Nations.

**Serbia warns NATO over safety of Kosovo Serbs** - Serbia's president has called on NATO peacekeepers to "do their job" in protecting the Serb minority in the breakaway province. The West fears that Russia is trying to encourage Belgrade to destabilize the region.

Ethnic Serbs working in Kosovo will leave their jobs unless a deal is reached to end their "persecution," Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic warned on Sunday.

In a fiery TV address after meeting Kosovo Serbs, Vucic called on NATO peacekeepers to "do their job" or Belgrade would move to protect the Serb minority in the breakaway province.

The comments follow the collapse of political talks between Serbian and Kosovo leaders earlier this week, mediated by the European Union in Brussels.

**Russian war in Ukraine bruises Baltics' relations with China** - China's refusal to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine played a role in Estonia's decision to quit an Eastern European initiative that aimed to enhance relations with Beijing, the Baltic nation's top diplomat said.

"It was definitely a factor that we kept in mind when making the decision. Before that, we consulted with a series of allies," Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in an interview in Paide, Estonia, on Saturday.

Estonia and Latvia this week joined Lithuania in abandoning the so-called 16+1, a loosely organized alliance formed in 2012 as a way to cooperate on infrastructure and development projects.

**Philippines resets relations with Russia as Ukraine war sours ties across Southeast Asia** - Manila's U-turn on a major defence deal with Moscow leaves few links between the formerly friendly nations.

The break-up is a sign of Russia's waning influence in a region where most nations are wary of Western sanctions and generally uneasy about Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte once described his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, as "my favorite hero." During his tenure, Duterte oversaw a new era in bilateral relations with Moscow, one that was driven by both personal and strategic motives.

Amid escalating tensions with the West over human rights issues, Duterte found in the Kremlin a sympathetic and powerful patron. As a long-standing US treaty ally, the Philippines represented a major strategic prize for Putin. After six years of flirtation with Russia, however, the Philippines seems to have soured on the burgeoning partnership.