

# Conflict Update # 29

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Conflict Assessment

**Estimated Russian losses** - A Ukrainian publication, The Kyiv Independent, also published an update on how much the Ukrainian Armed Forces believe Russia has lost since the war began in February:

- Around 19,900 troops killed
- Around 60,000 troops injured
- 160 planes
- 144 helicopters
- 753 tanks
- 366 artillery pieces
- 1,968 armored personnel carriers
- 4 mobile SRBM systems
- 122 MLRs
- 7 boats
- 1,437 vehicles
- 76 fuel tanks
- 134 UAV
- 64 anti-aircraft warcraft
- 25 special equipment

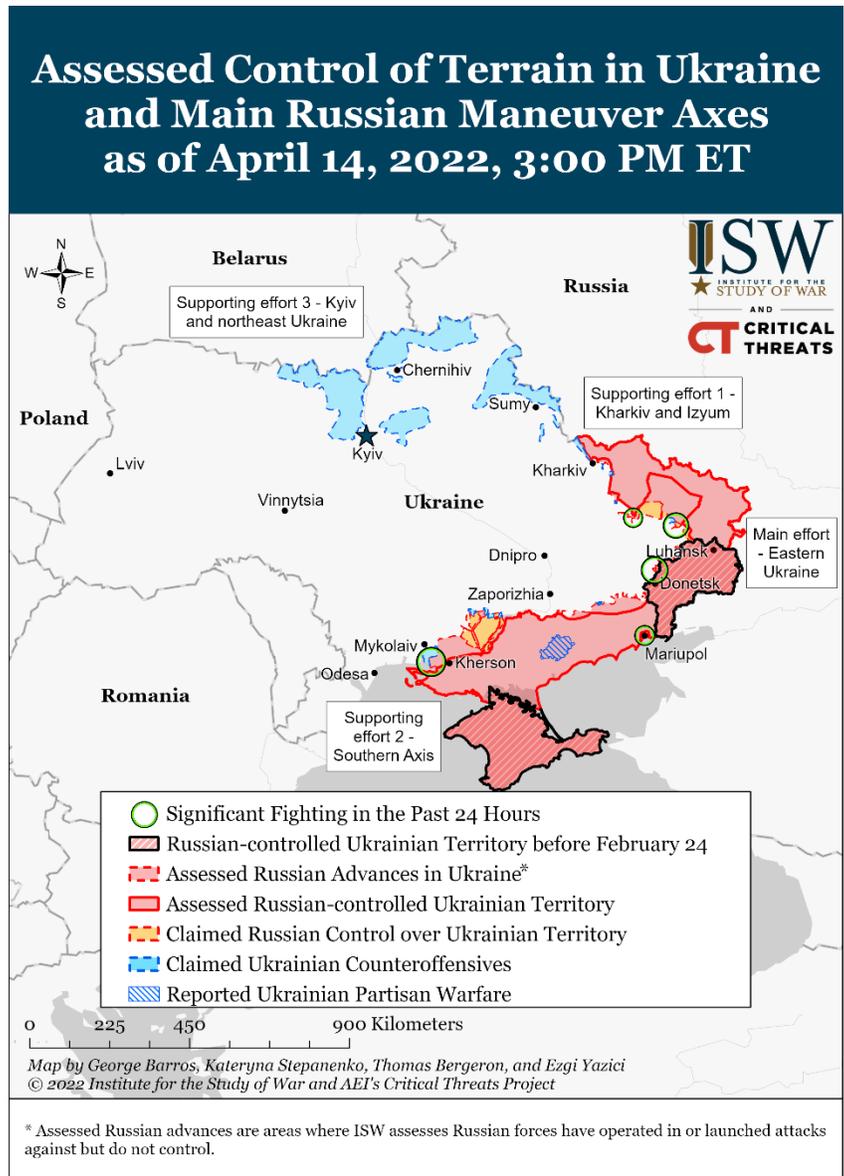
Russian troops killed in the six weeks since starting Ukraine invasion exceed the total killed in the Afghanistan war. (BBC).

**Ukrainian officials admitted** Russian forces captured “some” personnel from Ukraine’s 36th Marine Brigade in Mariupol despite initial denials, though Ukrainian defenders predominantly continued to hold out against Russian assaults. They ran out of ammunition and supplies.

**Russian forces may have committed damaged units** withdrawn from northeastern Ukraine to combat operations in eastern Ukraine for the first time on April 14. Continued daily Russian attacks in eastern Ukraine are failing to take any territory.

**Ukrainian partisans** have likely been active in the Melitopol region since at least mid-March.

**Russian forces continued to redeploy** from Belarus to Russia for further deployment to eastern Ukraine.



**Russian recruitment efforts** - Ukrainian General Staff reported Russian conscription measures in Donbas have been largely unsuccessful, reporting Russia sought to mobilize 60-70,000 personnel by an unspecified date and has only recruited 20% of its goal. ISW cannot independently confirm these reports, though they are consistent with the demoralization observed among Russian and proxy personnel. The Ukrainian General Staff additionally reported that unspecified elements of Russia's Northern Fleet and 8th Combined Arms Army are preparing to deploy to Ukraine, though the Russian military likely has little effective combat power remaining to send to Ukraine.

Reports are being received of Russian soldiers killing their own commanders, blaming them for the high casualty rate, a lack of food and provisions, and for misleading them about the war.

**Main effort—Eastern Ukraine** - Russian forces continued assaults against Ukrainian defenses in southwestern and eastern Mariupol on April 13, though ISW cannot confirm any territorial changes.

**Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts** - Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 14 that elements of Russia's 2nd Combined Arms Army—which was previously withdrawn from the Chernihiv axis—are deploying around Severodonetsk. If confirmed, this is the first Russian unit withdrawn from fighting in northeastern Ukraine to be recommitted to eastern Ukraine. These units likely remain degraded, and Russian forces will face challenges integrating units from several military districts into a cohesive fighting force.

Russian forces continued unsuccessful daily attacks against Rubizhne, Popasna, and Marinka and did not make any territorial advances on April 14.

**Kharkiv and Izyum** - Local social media reports confirmed Ukrainian claims that Ukrainian Special Forces destroyed a bridge near Izyum while a Russian military convoy was crossing it on April 13.

**Southern axis** - Fighting continued west of Kherson city on April 14, though ISW cannot confirm any specific Ukrainian or Russian attacks. Russian forces conducted minor attacks against Ukrainian positions in Oleksandrivka, 30 km west of Kherson city, on April 14. Ukraine's Airborne Forces command claimed on April 14th that the 80th Airmobile Brigade (previously operating in Mykolayiv) liberated unspecified villages in southern Ukraine but declined to name them for operational security reasons.

Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian supply depot in Kherson on April 13.

**Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine** - Russian forces continued to redeploy from Belarus to Russia for further deployment to eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian General Staff reported several Central Military District units are redeploying from Bryansk and Kursk Oblasts (near Chernihiv and Sumy) to Belgorod and Voronezh Oblasts (along the Kharkiv axis) but have not been recommitted to combat operations as of April 14.

**Entire Russian Column Destroyed By Drone-Guided Artillery** – Ukraine today filmed an entire Russian convoy being destroyed. Ukrainian fire from a BM-21 'Grad' battery was directed via a Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The BM-21 'Grad' is a truck-mounted 122-mm multiple rocket launcher that was designed in the Soviet era.

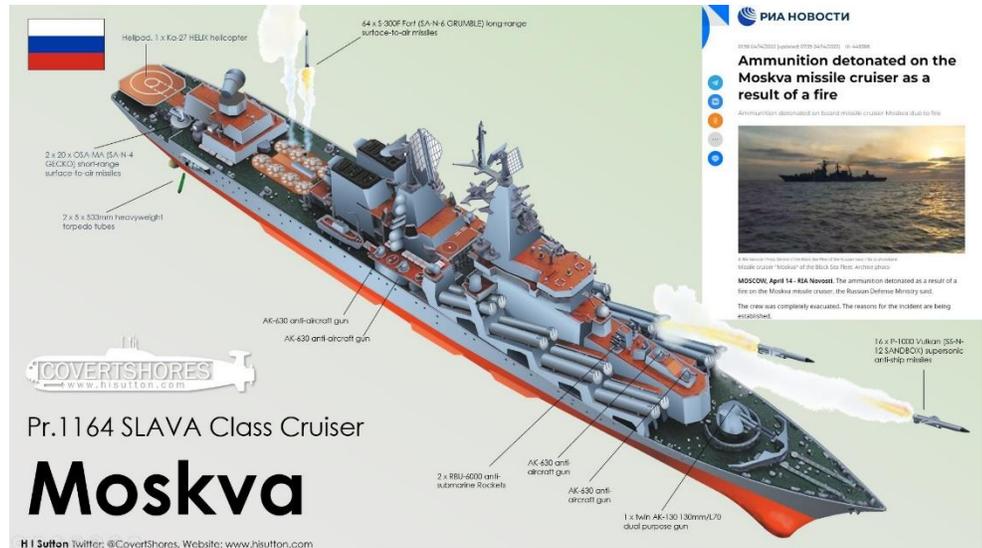


**Ukraine Claims to Have Struck the Flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet** - Multiple Ukrainian sources have claimed that the nation's armed forces have hit the Russian cruiser Moskva in a guided-missile attack in the Black Sea.

"It has been confirmed that the missile cruiser Moskva today went exactly where it was sent by our border guards on Snake Island!" claimed governor of Odesa Maksym Marchenko, referring to the cruiser's involvement in an attack on a Ukrainian border post. "Neptune missiles guarding the Black Sea caused very serious damage to the Russian ship."

Separately, Ukrainian presidential spokesman Oleksiy Arestovych claimed that there was a fire aboard the Moskva and that other Russian vessels were attempting to assist.

If the claim is true, the attack might be the most audacious strike yet attempted by Ukraine's coastal-defense forces. A previous Ukrainian strike at the port of Berdyansk damaged one Russian tank landing ship and sank another, resulting in an apparent loss of a shipment of munitions. But Moskva is an entirely different kind of warship: she is the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, a Slava-class guided missile cruiser. All crew were evacuated from the vessel before Russia attempted to tow the ship back to port.



Ukrainian government sources reported the strike on the Moskva ahead of reports from the Russian Navy regarding a fire on board. It appears that Ukrainian reports hold credence as to the cause of the ship's sinking earlier today.

If the strike is confirmed, it would suggest that Ukraine's anti-ship missile inventory is capable of penetrating heavy air defenses. Among Soviet-era vessels, Moskva is the hardest of targets, possessing three fire-control radars, two search radars, two heavy anti-aircraft cannons, six 30mm CIWS cannons, 20 short-range surface-to-air missiles and 64 long-range air defense missiles.

Reports suggest the strike was via a Neptune missile, a Ukrainian-developed land-to-sea missile. Further attacks may be pending as British-supplied anti-ship missiles have been received by Ukrainian forces together with training.

The Russian fleet has been bombarding Mariupol constantly from behind the horizon and had commenced strikes against Odessa.

It was confirmed late today by the Russian Navy that the vessel, while being towed back to port, has sunk.

## Sanctions

**Russian oil sales have gone up — not down — after massive sanctions from the West** The US, UK, and European Union all slapped Russia's energy sector with historic sanctions in hopes of curbing the country's invasion of Ukraine.

Despite those moves, Russia is selling more oil and gas today than it did before the war began.

The Russian government expects to rake in roughly \$9.6 billion from energy sales in April, according to estimates from the country's finance ministry. The sum beat Russia's initial projections largely due to soaring prices for crude oil and

natural gas. Russia is now projected to earn about \$321 billion from energy exports in 2022, Bloomberg reported, up more than a third from 2021.

**Medvedchuk** - Ukraine has seized the assets of captured Putin ally Viktor Medvedchuk, including 50 homes, 26 cars, 30 plots of land, and one yacht. Medvedchuk is a very close ally of Putin who is godfather to his daughter.

He was captured by Ukrainian forces on Tuesday, after having been previously charged with treason and put under house arrest from when he escaped in February.

Medvedchuk was one of the richest people in Ukraine and worth an estimated \$620 million, Forbes Ukraine reported last year. He owned three Ukrainian TV stations that were blocked in 2021 when Zelenskyy said they were spreading Russian propaganda and moved to freeze his assets.

Earlier this week, Ukrainian media reported a \$200 million dollar yacht belonging to Medvedchuk was seized by government officials after having been docked in Croatia.

**U.K. Freezes Up To \$13 Billion Of Assets Of Two Business Partners Of Roman Abramovich** - The UK sanctioned two longtime business associates of Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich on Thursday, freezing up to \$13 billion in assets connected to the pair, as countries continue to crack down on the Russian elite.

Abramovich, worth about \$8.3 billion by Forbes' estimates, has faced sanctions over his ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Though Abramovich has denied that he's close to Putin's inner circle, he attended peace talks between Russia and Ukraine last month, where he was reportedly poisoned.

Strange assertion from someone who personally recommended Putin for President of Russia after President Yeltsin. Abramovich stood as guarantor for Putin in the years before he became President of Russia.

## NATO

**Finland** - Finland's former prime minister says Russia could retaliate against his country for joining NATO, but it's well prepared.

**Russia warns of nuclear weapons in Baltic if Sweden and Finland join NATO** - Moscow has said it will be forced to strengthen its defences in the Baltic if Finland and Sweden join NATO, including by deploying nuclear weapons, as the war in Ukraine entered its seventh week and the country braced for a major attack in the east.

However, the Lithuanian defense minister, Arvydas Anušauskas, claimed on Thursday that Russia already had nuclear weapons stored in its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad, which borders Lithuania and Poland. That claim has not been independently verified, but the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) reported in 2018 that nuclear weapon storage bunkers in Kaliningrad had been upgraded.

The Russian former president Dmitry Medvedev, a senior member of Russia's security council, said on Thursday that all its forces in the region would be bolstered if the two Nordic countries joined the US-led alliance.

Medvedev's threat is the latest of many instances of nuclear sabre-rattling from the Kremlin aimed at deterring western military intervention on behalf of Ukraine.

## Impacts

**150,000 inactive wagons create chaos on Russian railways** - 150,000 rail bogies - wagons - are currently stranded and remaining inactive on the Russian railway network. The situation is illustrative of the sanctions' effect on Russia,

which also creates a “hard operational environment for rail freight making it difficult to move loaded wagons,” explains a governmental document.

“Changes in freight traffic directions caused by sanctions restrictions and rapidly changing market conditions create an accumulation of unclaimed railcars. More than 150,000 empty wagons are currently idle on the Russian Railways network without freight operations. This negatively affects the operational situation and makes it difficult to move loaded railcars,” underlined the governmental document.

However, things could get even more complex. As the document emphasizes, the possibility to provide public tracks to the Russian Railways for the accommodation of unclaimed wagons could become quite problematic. According to Russian authorities, this rolling stock unnecessarily occupies track space from the railway network and could lead to increased financial losses. “In case a moratorium is introduced on charging fees for using railway infrastructure by unclaimed empty cars, Russian Railways will lose about 1 billion rubles (11,4 million euros) a year.

**In Southern Ukraine, Russian Occupation Policy Takes Shape** - Removing officials loyal to Ukraine from local administrations and replacing them with nominees of the occupation authorities is a high priority of Russia’s occupation policy in southern Ukraine.

Incumbent mayors and municipal councils in the Kherson and Zaporozhzhia provinces were elected in 2020 as part of Ukraine’s country-wide local elections that year, with the support of Ukraine-wide parties (first and foremost the pro-presidential Servant of the People party) or local party lists. These elected office holders are loyal to Ukraine in their overwhelming majority and have refused any political cooperation with Russian occupation authorities, who seek to replace the legitimately elected bodies with unrepresentative collaborators.

Occupation authorities have brutally abducted dozens of mayors and other local office-holders, holding them incommunicado. Some have been intimidated into moving to Ukrainian-controlled territory upon their release; while others are still being held under arrest.

Russian “re-education agents” are scouring libraries, schools and all other facilities to find and destroy any non-Russian literature and books.

School itineraries are being re-written to provide Russian-leaning language and education. Schoolteachers, public officials and professors are being removed from their posts and sent to the far east of Russia and Siberia.

Russia is proceeding to purge Ukrainian sources of history and information in captured areas. They have also indicated that they will shortly be replacing the Ukrainian with Russian currency.

Russia is in short, aiming to erase any Ukrainian history and culture in areas they have occupied.

**Returning Russian soldiers, a problem** – When veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan—the so-called “Afgantsy”—and veterans of the two Russian campaigns in Chechnya returned to their homes, many had a difficult time fitting back into a peaceful life. Some used the military skills they had acquired to engage in various kinds of crime. And often, these veterans took to drink to the point of becoming burdens on Russian social services.

The horrific scenes coming out of Bucha, Irpen and other Ukrainian cities “not only make [Russian President Vladimir] Putin a war criminal,” Russian economist Vladislav Inozemtsev says, but “show ‘the quality’ of the Russian army.” The soldiers who serve in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are so undisciplined and prone to criminal actions that they will pose a serious threat to the country itself once hundreds of thousands of war veterans return home, Inozemtsev argues. The behavior of the Russian military is not that surprising in one sense, the expert writes. After all, it was sent to fight by an organized criminal group, the Putin regime; and “if one such group steals, why should the other not specialize in murders?” (Kasparov.ru, April 5).

This is where the saying “burn the boats” arises. When the English sent Scottish, Welsh and Irish soldiers to war in foreign fields, they trained and equipped them before dispatching them abroad.

When wars ended, soldiers returned to the homeland where in most cases unemployment was very high. In Scotland, particularly after the clearances saw thousands migrate to cities such as Glasgow, returning soldiers added to the misery and disruption of an unsettled and overpopulated citizenry. The English didn’t view this very favorably as fully trained militia, if unemployed and consuming alcohol on a daily basis, are a recipe for trouble and revolution.

They came up with the idea to incentivize de-mobbed Scots soldiers by inviting them to stay in the countries where they had been fighting, providing cash and land options if they did, to be followed by the Crown sending their families out to later join them – and then “burn the boats” so as to prevent them returning to the UK.

**Kremlin’s War Against Ukraine Divides Russians in the Baltics** - Ethnic Russians today compose around a quarter of the population of Estonia and Latvia and about 5 percent in Lithuania. For the most part, these communities are made up of the descendants of migrants to the Baltics after the Second World War, whom the Soviet authorities deliberately compelled to move there. But in the post-Soviet era, the situation changed significantly. Many grandchildren of those first settlers began to consider these countries as their homeland.

Many local Russians prefer to send their children to regular Estonian and Latvian schools rather than Russian-speaking ones to ease their future studies and careers. Therefore, in the Baltic States, there is no longer so much an ethnic split to speak of, but a generational one. Russian youth in the Baltic countries mostly feel “European” and consume daily news from the internet. Whereas the older generation is used to television; they mostly watch Russian channels and so are strongly influenced by Kremlin propaganda.

A March poll in Latvia about the attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war was, thus, quite indicative. If 90 percent of all ethnic Latvians expressed support for Ukraine, the opinion of the Russian respondents was divided almost in half: 22 percent of them (mostly young people) also backed Ukraine in the conflict, while 21 percent supported Russia; the rest preferred to remain neutral (LSM, March 10).

**DOJ charges 3 Russians with running ‘foreign influence and disinformation network’ in U.S.** - The Department of Justice charged a high-ranking Russian legislator and two of his staffers with running a yearslong scheme to influence U.S. officials by peddling disinformation to advance the Kremlin’s interests, according to court documents made public today.

The three Russians, who have previously been sanctioned by the U.S., worked to undermine America’s international alliances and policies and “promote Russia’s illicit actions designed to destroy the sovereignty of Ukraine,” alleged an indictment filed in federal court in Manhattan.

Their scheme included “staged events, paid propaganda, and the recruitment of at least one American citizen to do their bidding in unofficial capacities,” the indictment alleged.

Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Babakov, 59, Aleksandr Nikolayevich Vorobev, 52, and Mikhail Alekseyevich Plisyuk, 58, are charged with conspiring to act as Russian agents in the U.S. without notifying the attorney general and conspiring to commit visa fraud. Those counts each carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

The three men also are charged with one count each of conspiring to violate and evade U.S. sanctions in violation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a crime with a 20-year maximum prison sentence.

**Ukrainian Immigrants into US** - In the last two months, US border officials have processed about 10,000 undocumented Ukrainians at the US-Mexico border.

**Revenge on the US?** - The United States and its NATO allies have thus far tried to prevent a direct confrontation with Russia, but while they may avoid military battle in Ukraine, other clashes are almost certain to follow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is keenly aware that the West, led by the US, has become the arsenal for Ukraine's defense against the Russian invasion. That defense has so far turned Putin's "special military operation" into a humiliating experience for the Russian strongman who, like other authoritarian leaders, doesn't take well to humiliation.

That's why there's a very good chance that Putin will seek to exact revenge on the US.

American intelligence officials believe Putin is now willing to act more aggressively against the US, possibly taking riskier actions toward American democracy. That information comes from interviews by CNN and other news organizations with multiple sources familiar with US intelligence assessments.

The intelligence assessment hasn't concluded that Putin has made a decision or ordered an operation yet. But the White House has been warning private businesses to bolster their security against Russian hacking. Of course, that's only one area Russia could attack.

**Putin purging the ranks (sic)** - Putin's defense minister Sergei Shoigu has had a 'massive heart attack not from natural causes' and 20 generals 'have been arrested' over the bungled Ukrainian invasion.

Russian-Israeli businessman Leonid Nevzlin has claimed Russia's defense minister Sergei Shoigu has suffered a heart attack, which he suspects was caused by foul play. Nevzlin, a former media mogul and top oil executive, is one of several Russian businessmen forced to flee when they were targeted by the Kremlin in 2003, after Putin decided to seize the Yukos oil company.

"Rumor has it that a heart attack could have occurred not due to natural causes."

He went on to say that 20 Russian generals have been arrested in Russia and charged with embezzling up to 10 billion dollars allocated to the war effort in Ukraine.

Nevzlin alleged that 'all the headquarters' had been arrested and had been syphoning funds destined to prop up Ukraine's 'Russian liberators' since 2014, after the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of conflict in the Donbas.

'Everything is clear here - the total embezzlement of funds for the preparation of [taking over the leadership of Ukraine]. Since 2014, about \$10 billion (USD) allocated by Putin for the preparation of the blitzkrieg has been stolen.'

**UN says Ukraine war threatens to devastate many poor nations** - Russia's war on Ukraine threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries that are now facing even higher food and energy costs and increasingly difficult financial conditions, a U.N. task force warned Wednesday.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres released the report saying that the war is "supercharging" a crisis in food, energy and finance in poorer countries that were already struggling to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and a lack of access to adequate funding for economic recovery.

"We are now facing a perfect storm that threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries," Guterres said at a news conference. "As many as 1.7 billion people -- one-third of whom are already living in poverty -- are now highly exposed to disruptions in food, energy and finance systems that are triggering increases in poverty and hunger."

## Widening of war front

**In Brussels, Armenia and Azerbaijan Make Progress in Peace Talks** - Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian, met in Brussels—their first and, so far, only physical meeting this year.

The four-hour talks resulted in the announcement of two critical decisions. First, Aliyev and Pashinian agreed to convene a bilateral commission to handle the delimitation and demarcation of their countries' interstate border by the end of April. Although Baku and Yerevan had previously approved this during their Russia-mediated summit on November 26, they had failed to establish the commission by the end of 2021, as Russian President Vladimir Putin declared would happen (see EDM, December 1, 2021). Optimism exists in the region that this time it will be possible.

The Brussels summit additionally, as President Michel put it, launched preparations for an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty (APA, April 7).

These developments are not welcome by revanchist forces in Armenia, separatist groups in Azerbaijani Karabakh, or, to some extent, by Russia. Three days after the Brussels summit, on April 9, in his meeting with Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoian in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov clearly expressed his displeasure toward the West's refusal to cooperate with Moscow in the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process.

## Containment

**The US is sending Ukraine a further \$800m worth of equipment** - This list is a serious commitment to taking on the second Russian offensive, including:

- 18 155 mm Howitzer long-range guns with 40,000 rounds of ammunition, which can destroy Russian strongpoints out to ten miles away.
- Firefinder radars pinpoint Russian artillery sites based on incoming shelling.
- Sentinel radar that tracks drones, cruise missiles, helicopters and planes for short-range air defense – in fact, it's used to defend Washington, D.C., and it can get after Russian drones.
- 100 Humvees and 200 armored personnel carriers will help Ukraine's forces reposition in the block-to-block war for cities and highways
- Eleven ex-Soviet Mi-17 helicopters (probably from U.S. special forces or CIA inventory) will let Ukraine move people and equipment
- Claymore mines
- More Javelin anti-tank weapons
- More Switchblade attack drones

In open-field warfare, it is those who can outfire and outrange the other that succeed. The US equipment being provided is geared to providing improved tactical support to Ukrainian forces in the looming battle.

Watch this space for transfer of the Polish Mig 29's to Ukraine.