

# Conflict Update # 35

April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Conflict Assessment

**Russia's Offensive Faltering in East** - Ukraine Presidential advisor Oleksiy Arestovych says Russian troops have been checked in their attempt to advance from Izyum, a key staging point for their Donbas offensive, towards the nearby city of Slovyansk. "They have focused their forces there, that is where they are trying to advance, but so far they are not succeeding," Arestovych said in a video address.

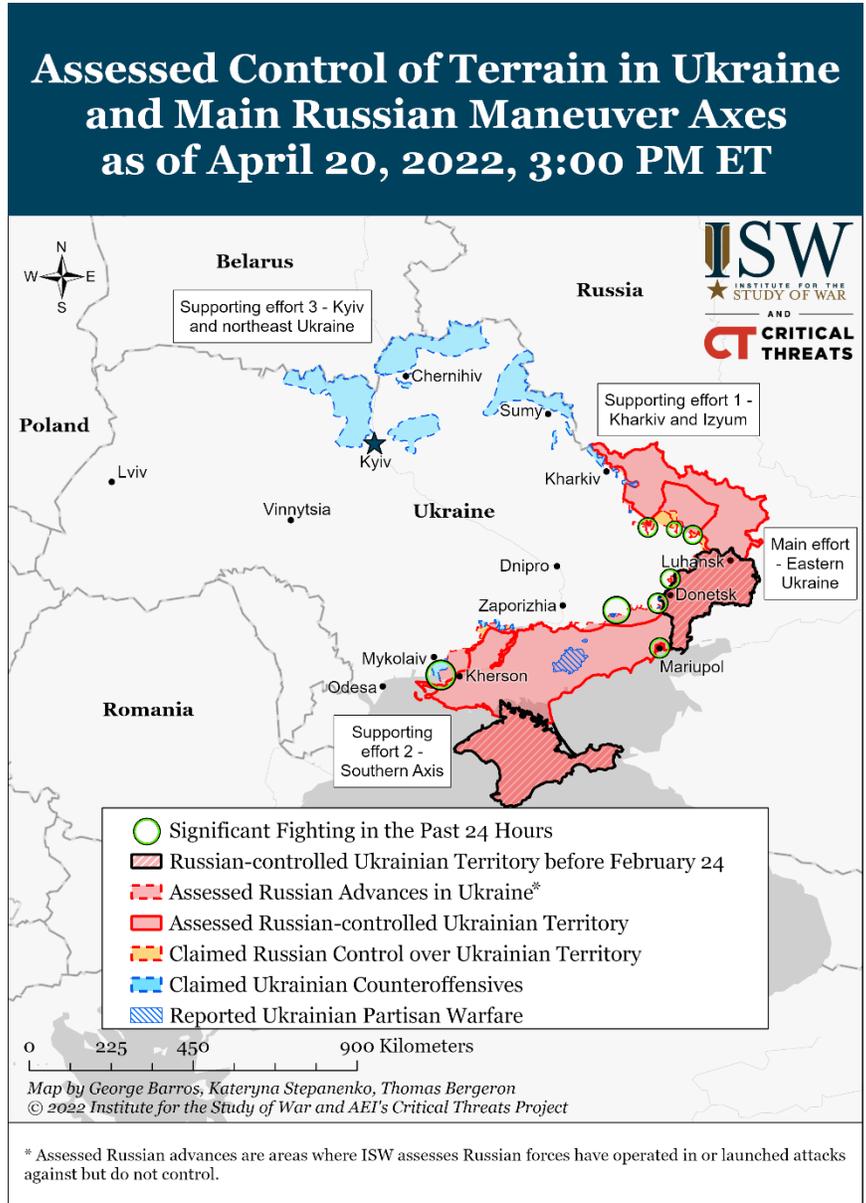
British intelligence assessing that while Russian shelling and strikes continue to increase on the frontline in the Donbas, Moscow's troops are again hampered by logistical and technological problems.

Those problems were a major reason for the failure of Vladimir Putin's "Plan A", the quick occupation of Ukrainian cities such as the capital Kyiv with the capture and possible killing of Ukraine's leaders such as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

**Russian forces** made minor advances in the ongoing offensive in eastern Ukraine on April 19, seizing several small towns and advancing into the key frontline towns of Rubizhne and Popasna.

**Russia may be preparing to conscript Ukrainian citizens** amid continuing recruitment challenges. The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on April 20 that Russian occupation forces are planning to hold pseudo-referendums in occupied Zaporizhia and Kherson Oblasts to declare a forced mobilization and "throw 'mobilized' Ukrainians to the hottest parts of the front." If confirmed, this effort is highly unlikely to generate meaningful combat power and will provoke an uptick in protests and partisan actions against Russian forces in these regions.

**Rubizhne, Popasna, and Malinka** Russian forces continued offensive operations concentrated on these areas and likely captured several outlying suburbs of Severodonetsk on April 20.



**Mariupol** – it appears that Mariupol will fall shortly. Ukraine has offered to enter talks about the people and soldiers still caught in this area, and to do so without any conditions.

**Russia deploys up to 20,000 mercenaries in battle for Ukraine's Donbas region** - Russia has deployed up to 20,000 mercenaries from Syria, Libya and elsewhere in its new offensive in Ukraine's Donbas region, sent into battle with no heavy equipment or armoured vehicles, according to a European official.

The official said the estimates of mercenary involvement on the ground in eastern Ukraine range from 10,000 to 20,000 and that it was hard to break down that figure between Syrians, Libyans and other fighters recruited by the Russian mercenary company, the Wagner Group.

"What I can tell you is that we did see some transfer from these areas, Syria and Libya, to the eastern Donbas region, and these guys are mainly used as a mass against the Ukrainian resistance," the official said. "It's infantry. They don't have any heavy equipment or vehicles."

**Mothers Of The Moskva: For Relatives Of Missing Sailors, A Lack Of Information Fuels Grief** - When news that the guided-missile cruiser Moskva had sunk off Crimea reached Tamara Grudinina, nearly 9,000 kilometers to the east, she immediately sent a text message to a number belonging to the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet asking about the whereabouts of her son, 21-year-old Sergei, a sailor serving on the fleet's flagship.

She said she received a response: "Your son has gone missing. We are sorry."

Grudinina still doesn't know what happened to her son. And she's far from the only parent wondering exactly what happened aboard the Moskva on April 14.

Six days after the Moskva sank, there is still little clarity about what is the worst disaster for the Russian Navy since the sinking of the ballistic missile submarine Kursk in 2000.

For the families of conscripts, the draft-age men who are required to do military service, the questions may be particularly acute. Despite Russian law forbidding them from being sent to active combat zones, some have been sent to Ukraine on land or sea -- in some cases without their knowledge or consent.

Another woman who spoke to Schemes, the investigative program of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, said that she spoke to her son aboard the Moskva on the evening of April 14.

"My son called me...in tears and said, 'Mom, do you understand what happened? We were hit by three missiles! Some of the guys were evacuated.... All survivors were taken to Sevastopol,'" she recalled.

"He told me, 'No, Mom, that's not true. There's no fire,'" she said. "He goes on telling me what's happening and he's crying out of terror. He wouldn't just make that up, right? And this isn't just some wooden dinghy that would just catch fire. Nobody explains anything. I just don't understand why the radar that this famous cruiser was equipped with didn't recognize these Neptune missiles."

The woman also insisted to RFE/RL that the warship her son was serving on was on a "peaceful" mission, a remark that may reflect the Russian state narrative that Russia is not at war in Ukraine but merely conducting a "special military operation."

Dmitry Shkrebet, whose son Yegor served as a cook on the Moskva, received contradictory information about the whereabouts of his son.

"My son is a conscript and as I was informed by the direct commanders of the Moskva, he is not among the dead and wounded and is listed as missing," Shkrebets wrote. "A conscript who was not supposed to take part in hostilities is listed as missing. Guys! He is missing on the high seas?!!!"

**Russia is looting Ukraine** – aside from war crimes and atrocities, Russian soldiers loot wherever they stop in Ukraine. Returning tanks and vehicles are laden with TV's, refrigerators, washing machines – anything the soldiers can lift up and steal, even 30-year old carpets.

Pictures are emerging showing vehicles packed like 3<sup>rd</sup> World caravans with looted goods. These are taken to Belarussian and Russian post offices and sent to their homes.

One Ukrainian tracked his Apple iPods back into Russia via electronic monitoring. Everything that is liftable, is being lifted out of Ukraine.

This should raise questions in Russian home towns when these goods start arriving back from the war front. Are Russian families raising questions or rubbing their hands in glee?

Or Is this symptomatic of the wider Russian aim to obliterate Ukraine? – towns are emptied of Ukrainian citizens, deported into Russian back water communities, houses are emptied of possessions and buildings are flattened.

In another article in this Update, Russian soldiers report in intercepted telephone calls that they are instructed to kill civilians.

All these meet the description of genocide – Russia is destroying a culture and its people.

**Chechen Fighters Executed Russian Troops Who Rebelled in Ukraine, Official Says** - The Russian military tried to rebel against their military commanders in an occupied part of southeastern Ukraine, but three of them were killed in response by Chechen fighters, according to Ukrainian intelligence. .

Ivan Arefyev, spokesman for the Zaporizhzhia regional military government, detailed the incident in a statement on Telegram early Wednesday. "According to Ukrainian intelligence, yesterday in the Pologovsky district the Russian army began to rebel: Russian soldiers did not want to fight because they had not received the promised money. [Ramzan] Kadyrov's men brutally killed three of the instigators of the riot, who were ready to lay down their weapons and return home," Arefyev wrote.

In the other audio clip Announced Wednesday of what is believed to be a intercepted call, a man identified as a Russian soldier can be heard telling his mother that conscripts have been "shocked" by what they have seen in Ukraine and they are calling their relatives back home to get them out of duty with the help of local prosecutors.

**Russia has lost 25% of the combat force it deployed to Ukraine** - Russia is assaulting cities and towns across Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland in what both sides call a new phase of the war after losing about 25% of the combat power it sent into Ukraine, according to Pentagon estimates.

**The volunteer army fighting back against Putin and Russia in Ukraine** - There are tens of thousands of Ukrainian shopkeepers, teachers, farmers and others who have dropped their old work and are now counted among the ranks of the resistance. And for a nation defending itself against one of the world's largest militaries, this is no small matter.

**Ukraine's 5th Tank Brigade Could Roll Into Battle Any Day Now** - The destruction of at least two Russian ships—and damage to several others—makes a Russian amphibious assault on Odessa even less likely. And that could free up Ukrainian forces currently defending the strategic port. In particular, a fresh tank brigade.

On or before March 22, Ukrainian troops under siege in Mariupol fired two old Konkurs anti-tank missiles at a range of several hundred yards and scored at least one hit on a Russian Raptor-class patrol boat.

On March 24, an apparent strike by a Ukrainian Tochka ballistic missile set ablaze the Russian landing ship Saratov in the occupied port of Berdyansk. The 370-foot ship, one of a dozen vessels in the Black Sea Fleet's amphibious flotilla, later sank. Those losses seriously degraded the Black Sea Fleet. And it's possible the fleet has lost additional vessels. The apparent Ukrainian rocket strike on Berdyansk also damaged two other landing ships that were moored alongside the doomed Saratov.

Help isn't coming. Turkey controls the Bosphorous Strait—the only channel into the Black Sea—and won't allow Russia to send in fresh ships to replace the Black Sea Fleet's losses.

As the Black Sea Fleet reels, Kyiv could shift some units from Odessa's garrison to reinforce Ukrainian troops along the main line-of-contact in southern Ukraine. There's at least one really good candidate: the reserve 5th Tank Brigade.

The Ukrainian army began the current war with just two active tank brigades. The 1st Tank Brigade with its 100 or so T-64 tanks successfully defended Chernihiv, northeast of Kyiv, until Russia's northern invasion force collapsed starting in late March. The 17th Tank Brigade has been fighting along the eastern front outside Kharkiv.

Then there are the reserve tank brigades—four of them. No sooner had the first Russian invader stepped deeper into Ukraine on the morning of Feb. 24 than the reservists began mobilizing. Today the reserve 4th Tank Brigade is fighting alongside the 17th outside Kharkiv.

The 5th Tank Brigade, overseeing three battalions each with at least 30 T-72 tanks, rolled into Odessa to bolster the city's garrison, which also includes a marine brigade and assorted territorials.

## Nuclear Tactic

Two of Ukraine's nuclear power plants are cause for concern. Chernobyl, north of Kyiv and scene of the devastating meltdown in 1986 was captured by Russian troops in the early days of the war, followed by the Zaporizhzhya plant in eastern Ukraine.

Chernobyl was evacuated but Zaporizhzhya remains in Russian hands.

Maybe Putin believes he can achieve a "nuclear" attack without resorting to missiles. All he may have to do is release radiation from either of these plants. What the Russians were up to in the Chernobyl plant is anyone's guess, they dug trenches, drove tanks over the area and laced it with mines as they departed.

What they are doing in the Zaporizhzhya plant is also anyone's guess. But the question remains as to what have they planned, if they have, with respect to using these plants as weapons against Ukraine?

## Peace Talks

**Will Russia's Huge Donbas Offensive Kill Peace Talks?** said it was hard to predict when peace talks might resume because of the Mariupol siege and the new military offensive.

**Kyiv's First Wartime Prime Minister Says Ukraine Must Win Or 'Be Exterminated'** - Post-Soviet Ukraine's first wartime leader has cited monumental stakes for Europe in the "bloody, difficult, and dramatic" suffering his country is enduring from Russia's all-out invasion.

Ex-Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk also welcomed a crucial shift among Western political mindsets since he came to office in the shadow of Russia's initial aggression eight years ago -- one that he thinks "has turned the tide" in favor of Ukraine and democratic forces in Europe.

In a wide-ranging interview from an undisclosed location in Ukraine with RFE/RL's Georgian Service, Yatsenyuk, who served as prime minister between 2014 and 2016, warned of "very bloody and severe battles" as Russian forces seek control over Donetsk, Luhansk, and other parts of eastern Ukraine seven weeks into the war.

The 47-year-old political veteran also noted that Germany is paying a price for its misguided policies on Russia and said that if Russian President Vladimir Putin succeeds in Ukraine, "Georgia and Moldova will be next."

Yatsenyuk credited a staunch Ukrainian military resilience, a united Western response, and the failings of a "completely corrupted and outdated...so-called modernized Russian military" for thwarting Moscow's initial war plans.

But he warned of terrible suffering still to come for Ukrainians. "We have just two options: to win or to lose; to survive or to be exterminated by Russians," Yatsenyuk said.

"In the Kyiv suburbs, in Mariupol, in Chernihiv, in Kharkiv -- the tactics of the Russian military are very clear: to kill everyone and to destroy everything," Yatsenyuk said. "So that's the reason why a supply of lethal defensive and offensive weapons -- and I want to...[emphasize] offensive weapons -- is desperately needed for the Ukrainian military."

## Post-Conflict

**Ukraine War: A Reshuffling of the Global Monetary Order?** The Donbas offensive is bad news for the beleaguered peace negotiations, which have been ongoing since shortly after the invasion began on February 24. Talks recently stalled amid accusations of Russian war crimes in occupied areas, and in expectation of the Donbas offensive which may hand either side additional leverage.

Russia's new offensive in the east could bring more of the alleged abuses that have threatened to torpedo the peace talks entirely. Evidence of war crimes in the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and others have horrified the world and enraged the Ukrainians.

## Humanitarian

**Ukraine's prosecutor general: 'I expect to find evidence of genocide in Mariupol'** - In an interview with FRANCE 24, Ukraine's Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova discussed the alleged war crimes committed by the Russian military in Ukraine. Venediktova warned that she expects to find "evidence of genocide" in the besieged eastern city of Mariupol. She also warned that "huge numbers of people" are being deported to Russia, including children. The prosecutor general said that "sexual crimes" have taken place in all occupied areas of Ukraine and have targeted women, including even elderly women, but also men and children. Venediktova explained that more than 7,000 war crimes investigations have already been opened.

**Mykyta Poturayev**, the head of the Ukraine Parliament's Humanitarian Committee, has told the European Parliament, "Half a million of Ukrainian citizens were deported from Ukraine to the Russian Federation without agreement from their side."

We know about so-called filtration camps for Ukrainian citizens. That's one of the possible directions of Red Cross activity, at least to find these deported people and to understand what is going [on] with them on the territory of the Russian Federation.

**Czech prosecutors probe war crimes in Ukraine** - Czech authorities have launched a preliminary investigation into possible war crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, The Associated Press reports.

## Impacts

**Cyberattacks On Russian Targets Jumped 5X After Invasion Of Ukraine** - Russia is now the most-attacked country in the world and Russian citizens, who make up less than 2% of the global population, now constitute almost a fifth of all cyberattack victims. In fact, five times more Russian accounts were breached in March than in January as cyberattacks have ramped up significantly in 2022.

**A growing number of Kremlin insiders** are questioning Putin's war in Ukraine and believe it will set Russia back decades: report - as coronavirus, lockdown pressures weigh on.

A small but growing number of Kremlin insiders are questioning President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and have serious concerns about its potentially devastating economic and political impact, Bloomberg reported.

Bloomberg cited ten sources with direct knowledge of the situation in its report, and described the critics as being spread across senior positions in government and state run businesses.

According to the report, the Kremlin insiders regard the invasion as a catastrophic mistake that will set the country back decades. Bloomberg's sources reportedly share the concerns of US intelligence officials that Putin could resort to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

**China won't be an economic lifeline** for Russia as it grapples with Western sanctions from its invasion of Ukraine. While ties remain strong at the top between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, they look far different on the ground in more rural parts of Russia.

RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir Service found a litany of projects green lit over the years that exist only on paper and are currently derailed by a range of setbacks -- from budget issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic to local protests over lax environmental standards for investments to sweeping Western sanctions against Russia following the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.

In fact, as a recent report from RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir Service found, fallout from the war could see Chinese investment all but disappear from large parts of the country.

Beijing has been quietly enforcing Western sanctions and moving cautiously to avoid any violations.

But while China is unlikely to prop up the Russian economy, it is expected to make opportunistic moves -- such as buying up discount oil and acquiring new market space left by Western companies who have withdrawn from the country -- once it becomes clear how to better comply with the sanctions.

Beijing believes that the war in Ukraine serves as a welcome diversion for the United States, which would otherwise have its attention set fully on China, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told the Financial Times.

"Central Asia is already seeing Russia's actions in Ukraine as proof that Moscow is not the source of stability that it was for years, and is instead, a source of risk for the region. So, these governments will try their best to diversify their ties and distance themselves as much as possible from Russia, especially when it comes to economics.

"When it comes to more sensitive areas, like security and political ties, China is the main alternative that comes to mind, so China will definitely be able to increase its influence and better pursue its interests.

**The International Monetary Fund (IMF)** downgraded its growth forecast for China this year to 4.4 percent, well below what Beijing aims to achieve, as widespread lockdowns from COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine increase pressure on the world's second-largest economy.

This is the second time that the IMF has slashed its forecast for China in three months and it means that Beijing won't meet its 2022 growth target of 5.5 percent, which could create further challenges for China's leadership in a year when Xi is seeking a third term in office.

**Ukraine war shows America could be outgunned without investing in energetics** - Energetic materials — critical chemicals that help determine the range, size, and explosive power of missiles and rockets — are in dangerously short supply for American interests, write Nadia Schadlow and Brady Helwig of the Hudson Institute.

Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has been a wake-up call. Footage of missile strikes, and burned-out tanks reminds us that control of territory still matters, and that the explosive power behind munitions like missiles, rockets, and artillery is key to asserting control of the battlefield.

What these munitions have in common is that they rely on energetic materials — critical chemicals that help determine the range, size, and explosive power of missiles and rockets. Unfortunately, since the end of the Cold War, the United States has underinvested in energetics and now faces serious supply chain vulnerabilities. If the United States is pulled into a protracted war, it could find itself outgunned, fast.

Energetics come in three main forms: explosives; propellants, which produce thrust; and pyrotechnics (think flares or fireworks). This means that better energetics offer major advantages in combat. In some cases, depending on the system, they can boost the range of missiles by 40 percent or more — allowing the targeting of an adversary from a safer distance — while also improving lethality, upping the likelihood a target is destroyed on the first try. Improved energetics can help the Department of Defense build smaller munitions that still pack a punch. At the operational level, defending allies and partners such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan from Chinese aggression will require an ample supply of munitions powered by energetic materials.

Yet the supply chain for a broad range of energetics has badly eroded, which could limit US access to munitions during a crisis.

According to a 2018 DoD study, China is “the sole source or a primary supplier for a number of critical energetic materials used in munitions and missiles.” The munitions supply chain also features an alarmingly high number of single points of failure: of 198 second- and third-tier suppliers in the industrial base, 98 percent rely on a single or sole source. And the materials that are produced in the United States tend to be made in a handful of outdated, government-owned facilities using 20th century equipment.

Even worse, the United States has fallen behind our adversaries in deploying advanced energetics. Both Russia and China employ CL-20, the most powerful non-nuclear explosive in the world.

In the 1980's in the South African defense industry imported red oxide, an energetic agent, to provide increased distance for their G5 and G6 howitzer guns. Addition of the oxide saw range extend from 35 miles to 55 miles.

**A Turkish layover for Russia's brain drain** - Turkey has become a popular pit stop for young Russians hoping to escape their government since the invasion of Ukraine. Not only are the oligarchs docking their yachts on Turkey's coasts, but an army of young people is also making its way to Turkish shores.

With most flights from Russia to Europe canceled, Istanbul International Airport has become the easiest destination for Russians to flee to. So far, Turkey is admitting Russian passport holders with no restrictions, just like before the war. Russians can stay in Turkey without a visa for up to 90 days.

This immigration leniency has made Turkey the perfect respite for those who harbor anti-war sentiments and disagree with Russian President Vladimir Putin's policies. Many of Russia's highly skilled professionals, writers, artists and performers are taking temporary refuge in Turkey to plan what comes next.

**China Imports 13% Less Crude Oil From Saudi in March, 14% Less From Russia -Customs** - The lower supplies from these two exporters came as China's overall crude imports last month fell 14% on year as independent refiners curbed purchases amid shrinking margins, and as large state-owned plants underwent maintenance.

As in yesterday's article regarding Chinese economic slowdown, is this a further sign of this happening?

**Saudi Cabinet Affirms Kingdom's Support for Political Solution to Russia-Ukraine Crisis** - The Saudi Cabinet on Tuesday affirmed the Kingdom's support for efforts that led to a political solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis to achieve security and stability.

It reiterated standing by needy people around the world and alleviating their suffering, including providing urgent medical and shelter aid worth \$10 million for Ukrainian refugees to neighboring countries in coordination with the UN.

**China looks to learn from Russian failures in Ukraine** - With its ground troops forced to pull back in Ukraine and regroup, and its Black Sea flagship sunk, Russia's military failings are mounting. No country is paying closer attention than China to how a smaller and outgunned force has badly bloodied what was thought to be one of the world's most powerful armies.

China, like Russia, has been ambitiously reforming its Soviet-style military and experts say leader Xi Jinping will be carefully parsing the weaknesses exposed by the invasion of Ukraine as they might apply to his own People's Liberation Army and his designs on the self-governed island of Taiwan.

"The big question Xi and the PLA leadership must be asking in light of Russian operations in Ukraine is whether a military that has undergone extensive reform and modernization will be able to execute operations that are far more complex than those Russia has undertaken during its invasion of Ukraine," said M. Taylor Fravel, director of the security studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## Containment

**Norwegians pledge more aid** - The Norwegian Ministry of Defense has announced today that they will Donate almost their entire Stock of 100 French-Designed "Mistral" Maritime Surface-to-Air Missile Systems to the Ukrainian Military, the Systems have reportedly already left Norway on the way to Ukraine.

**US Preparing To Send Ukraine Another Set Of Military Assistance Worth \$800 Million** - In a bid to help Ukraine combat Russia, the United States is planning to unveil another significant military aid deal for the war-torn nation this week.

In a bid to help Ukraine combat the Russian war, the United States is planning to unveil another significant military aid deal for the war-torn nation this week, five



US officials told NBC News. Among the sources, three people revealed that the package would be similar in size to the \$800 million aid package which has been announced by the Biden administration last week.

More artillery, weaponry as well as thousands more artillery shells are expected to be included in the package, according to two officials, which will be important in the war in Ukraine's eastern Donbas area.

In addition to this, the US officials further highlighted that President Joe Biden has not yet signed the revised deal. However, when questioned if he would send more artillery to Ukraine on Tuesday, Biden responded, "Yes."

**Kyiv receives fighter jets, spare parts amid Russian invasion** - The Pentagon on Tuesday said that Ukraine received fighter jets and spare parts to strengthen its air force. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby did not specify the number of aircraft provided to Ukraine.

Ukraine received fighter jets and spare parts to strengthen its air force amid the Russian invasion. The announcement in this regard was made by the Pentagon on Tuesday. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters, "Ukrainian forces right now have available to them more fixed-wing fighter aircraft than they did two weeks ago."

However, Kirby did not specify the number of aircraft provided to Ukraine. The Kirby spokesperson said, "Without getting into what other nations are providing, they (Ukrainian forces) have received additional platforms and parts to be able to increase their fleet size."

**Bayraktar Combat Drone Played Role In Sinking Russian Warship** - Russia is offering a 50,000 ruble reward for each destroyed Bayraktar TB2 combat drone, according to social media reports. A 1,500-pound combat drone was an integral part of an operation that allowed Ukrainian forces to sink the Soviet-era missile destroyer Moskva, Russia's Black Sea flagship, last week, according to reports.

At least one Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drone operated by Ukrainian forces was involved in the operation when it was used to distract the Russian war ship's air defenses, Forbes reported.

The TB2 drones have played a critical role in Ukraine's fight against the invasion of Russian ground forces. The drones are capable of carrying up to four laser-guided munitions that have a reputation for being effective against ground-based targets, such as Russian tanks and mobile air defense systems. The drones have a flight range of up to around 186 sm and can fly up to 27 hours and at a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet. Taking off, landing, and flight control are all fully automated.

**Canadian heavy artillery for Ukraine as Russia steps up attacks** - With Russian forces pushing forward in a new offensive in Ukraine, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada would have news in the coming days about the provision of heavy artillery to the country.

**Russia accuses US, West of stalling Ukraine war by sending weapons** - Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu is accusing the United States and other Western countries Tuesday of trying to "delay" the course of the war in Ukraine by sending shipments of weapons to Kyiv's military.

**Lockheed will ramp up production to keep up with defensive weapons demand** - Jim Taiclet, Lockheed Martin CEO, joins 'The Exchange' to discuss the company's earnings and supplying weapons for the war in Ukraine.

**Russian tycoon denounces 'Moscow's crazy war'** - "I don't see a single beneficiary of this crazy war! Innocent people and soldiers are dying," Tinkov, who founded Tinkoff Bank, Russia's second-biggest credit card issuer, wrote in an Instagram post.

Wealthy Russian businessman Oleg Tinkov on Tuesday condemned what he called Moscow's "crazy war" in Ukraine, saying 90% of his countrymen did not support it and calling on the West to offer Vladimir Putin a dignified way to withdraw.

"I don't see a single beneficiary of this crazy war! Innocent people and soldiers are dying," Tinkov, who founded Tinkoff Bank, Russia's second-biggest credit card issuer, wrote in an Instagram post, one of the most outspoken broadsides against the conflict by a Russian tycoon.

**Boris Johnson to hand Stormer armored missile launchers to Ukraine to unleash hell on Putin's army** - Boris Johnson will hand Stormer armored missile launchers to Ukraine to unleash hell on Mad Vlad Putin's army. Their 17 Starstreak missiles can blitz low-flying jets and helicopters.

Experts hailed them "the best kit" yet sent by any Western power.

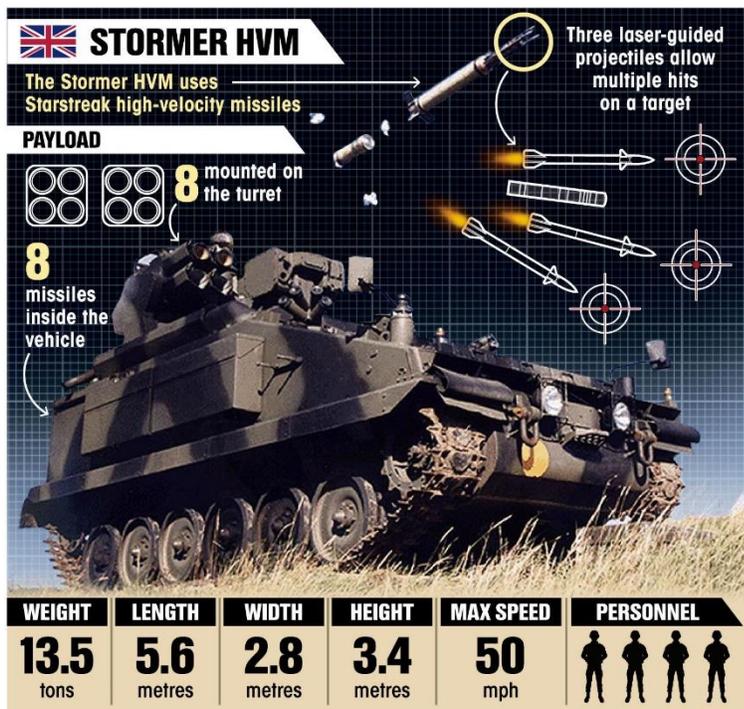
Sources say the MoD showed off the Stormers' punch to Ukrainians at a display on Salisbury Plain two weeks ago.

The 13-ton, high-tech launchers can be loaded on to C-17 transport planes and flown to the war in days.

They only need a crew of three — a driver, commander and gunner. And they will allow President Volodymyr Zelensky's army to speed into positions at 50mph, fire, then get away fast.

The deployment of "a handful of Stormers" alongside 120 personnel carriers already pledged marks a significant increase in heavy weaponry from Britain.

So far Western powers have only provided shoulder-mounted weapons. A source said: "It is no secret that the UK has committed to helping Ukraine with its anti-air capabilities.



Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of British troops in Afghanistan, said: "The Stormer/Starstreak combination will be a huge boost to Ukraine's fighting capability.

"It is an extremely effective, highly mobile combat vehicle that will do severe damage to any attempts at low-level attack by Putin's air force."

Defense analyst Nicholas Drummond said the Stormers' low ground pressure make them ideal for crossing wet ground in Ukraine this month and next month. The Army's 7 Air Defense Group recently showcased the missile systems in Poland.

Bombardier Robin Hearn, Stormer detachment commander, told Forces News: "It's easy to drive and command. "And if you've got a decent crew it takes about a minute to employ the weapon system."

**US to train Ukrainians on howitzer artillery systems** - The United States plans to begin training Ukrainians on how to operate howitzer artillery systems in the coming days, a senior US defense official has said, as the Biden administration seeks to bolster Ukraine's defences against an expected Russian offensive in the east. Speaking on condition of anonymity on Monday, the official said the howitzer training would take place outside Ukraine.

**Belgium plans to deliver more heavy weapons to Ukraine** - Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said his country will work with other partners to deliver more heavy weapons to Ukraine.

**Netherlands to send heavy equipment to Ukraine** - Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the Netherlands will send Ukraine heavy equipment, including armored vehicles.

## Sanctions

**Israeli exporters face real difficulties shipping produce to Russia and Ukraine** - Israeli exporters are still able to send some produce to Russia and Ukraine, but they face severe logistical difficulties, and they are not sure if they will be paid. Russia is a major market for Israeli exports but like the rest of the world, they are desperately searching for alternative markets for produce such as citrus, avocados and carrots.

**White House stops asking Saudi Arabia to pump more oil** - The White House has given up asking Saudi Arabia to pump more oil after being repeatedly rebuffed by the kingdom, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday, the latest sign of a growing rift between the two nations.

**U.K. Plans to Impose Further Russia Defense Sanctions This Week** - Person says measures to target defense companies, military. Further Russian tycoons, associates also likely to be targeted

**'They're a disgrace'** EU fury as bloc 'directly funding' Putin's horror war just DAYS ago - An EU embargo on weapons exports to Russia was not enforced until April 8, according to website Facts4EU.org. It alleges that the closure of a loophole was carried out 43 days after Russia invaded Ukraine.

"It took five waves of voting before this loophole was closed. It just goes to show the European Union puts profit before principles at every juncture. They talk tough, they puff up their chests and then on the back hand they're selling weapons to Putin, directly funding and empowering his tyrannical invasion."

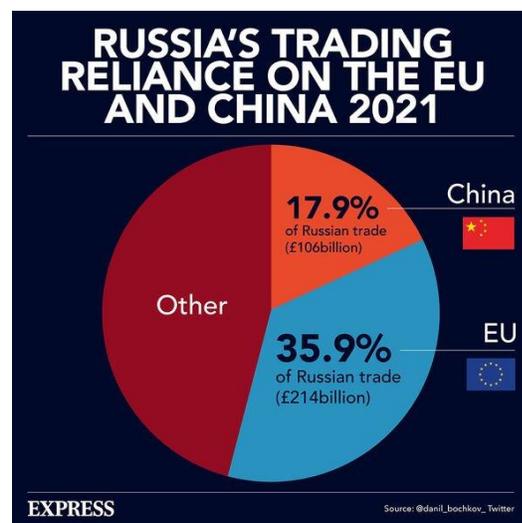
According to Facts4EU.org, this resulted in £292.5million (€352.4million) worth of military equipment and ammunition sales to Russia between 2014-20. Of the total, France accounted for £193.9million (€233.7million) while the UK sold Russia nothing.

It says arms export licenses were still issued by France and Austria as recently as 2020. French exports have included thermal imaging cameras for Russian tanks as well as infrared detectors for fighter jets and combat helicopters, according to investigative news organization Disclose.

Mr Daubney said: "[The EU] wanted to run a European army. They've been proven they are arming the enemies of Europe, in the form of Putin.

**The head of Russia's central bank** has warned that the full impact of sanctions is yet to be felt, and Moscow's mayor said that up to 200,000 jobs will likely be lost in the Russian capital.

**Japan formally revokes Russia's 'most favored nation' status** - Japan formally revoked Russia's "most favored nation" trade status Wednesday over its invasion of Ukraine, as Tokyo steps up sanctions amid revelations of Russian military atrocities against civilians.



The stripping of Russia's trade status is Japan's latest move against Moscow and is part of a list of sanction measures Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced last month that also include a decision to expel eight Russian diplomats and trade officials.

**SWIFT** - Russia says it will no longer disclose the names of organizations that use its alternative to the SWIFT payment system. It has been touting its alternative payment system — the System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS), which was set up in 2014.

**Putin signs decree to remove Russian stocks from overseas exchanges** in huge blow to the nation's billionaires - In a blow to Russia's richest businesspeople, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on April 16 that requires Russian companies to remove their listings from overseas stock exchanges.

That means Russian billionaires who own the companies listed abroad won't be able to collect foreign-currency dividends from the depository receipts. In addition, the decree that Putin signed means foreign holders of the canceled receipts must receive normal shares placed in non-resident accounts in Russia. The ban on overseas listings is the latest blow to Russian billionaires, who have already been targeted by Western sanctions as well as Moscow's own capital controls that restrict the ability to move money abroad.

**Russian Space industry suffers** - Amid a flurry of sanctions against Russia's economy, its space industry is also suffering as it is cut off from vital foreign-made components. This could lead to a greater dependence on China, which is already pulling ahead of Russia when it comes to space, Konstantin Sergeev from RFE/RL's Russian Service reports.

**Japan's Toshiba Suspends Business Operations In Russia** In Retaliation To Ukraine War - Amid mounting sanctions against Russia, Japanese electronics company Toshiba Corporation announced it is halting new orders and investments in Moscow.

**China Buys Cheap Russian Coking Coal** as World Shuns Moscow - Steel-making coal imports in March doubled from last year. Russian coal sold at discount as other nations ban imports

**War Hits Europe Car Sales Recovery, Undermines Manufacturers** - Vehicle sales plunge 19% in March, forecaster cuts outlook. VW, Siemens Energy warn of worsening prospects on war fallout.

**Russian Oil Shipments Drop 25% in a Week** - Crude oil shipments from Russia fell 25% in a single week as the economic consequences of Moscow's war in Ukraine continue to mount, Bloomberg reported Tuesday.

Russia shipped 3.12 million barrels of crude oil in the week of April 8-April 15, the seventh week of Russia's invasion. Bloomberg said the volume marked a 25% drop from the previous week.

**Chinese ambassador to US warns** against using Ukraine crisis to mess up US-China relations - Chinese Ambassador to the United States Qin Gang has warned against using the Ukraine crisis as an excuse to mess up U.S.-China relations, saying that doing so serves no good to anyone now or in the future.

**Sanctions Are Strangling Russia's Weapons Supply Chain** – A senior U.S. defense official confirmed to The War Zone something Ukrainian officials have been saying for a while now about Russia's weapons supplies. Not only is Russia suffering tremendous losses on the battlefield, but its ability to resupply its forces has taken a beating thanks to punishing economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and its allies.

Since the start of its war on Ukraine Feb. 24, Russia has lost thousands of major weapons systems, like tanks, armored personnel carriers, air defense systems, helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, ships and many other weapons that have been destroyed, damaged or captured, according to Oryxspioenkop, an independent open-source investigator.

“There has been an effect on Putin's ability to restock and resupply, particularly in the realm of components to some of his systems and his precision-guided munitions,” the official said in response to a question from The War Zone. “They've already faced an issue in terms of replenishing their inventory because of components to some of those systems. And that's already had a practical effect on Putin.”

One example, according to Russian media, is the next-generation airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft, the A-100 Premier. Its progress has been stalled due to delays in the delivery of electronic components like microchips, thanks to sanctions imposed on Russia.

Russia is exhausting its stocks of missiles, according to the April 16 “War Bulletin” produced by the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and shared with The War Zone. “Its military-industrial complex has to work 24/7 to replenish them.”

That issue of the War Bulletin claimed, “over 20 Russian military enterprises were forced to suspend their activities in whole or in part due to shortage of parts and components, as well as rising prices due to sanctions.” Those companies include the research and production enterprise Vimpel, which produces aircraft missiles, and the only Russian company that makes tanks, Uralvagonzavod, the largest such firm in the world.

## Sponsor of Terrorism State

**Evidence is mounting to push for adding Russia to the state sponsor of terrorism list**, which only includes four countries. Apartments and civilian homes in Ukraine have been shelled beyond recognition.

Russian bombs have exploded near hospitals and schools. There are mass graves, body bags and possible orders that German intelligence surfaced for Russian soldiers to kill civilians.

Now there are new calls for a stronger action to blunt the Russian aggression.

“Legally the case is pretty strong for adding Russia to the state sponsor of terrorism list,” Jason Blazakis said.

Blazakis ran the State Department office that oversaw adding and removing countries from the infamous state sponsor of terrorism list, which includes only four countries: Iran, North Korea, Syria and Cuba. Blazakis calls this list “the nuclear economic” option, but he believes it is appropriate now and says the impact would be multi-fold.

Russian assets in the U.S. would be frozen and countries that deal with Russia could be penalized.

“It would essentially make Putin a pariah and making it hard for him, I think, to recover his reputation,” Blazakis said.

But Blazakis says the justification for the label goes far beyond Russia's current actions in Ukraine. He points to reporting from the podcast Verified, The Next Threat and Newsy, which unearthed new evidence about Russia's support for a designated terrorist group.

The Russian Imperial Movement operates freely from St. Petersburg as the only white supremacist group designated as terrorists by the U.S. government. The Russian government allows the group to continue to operate paramilitary training camps tied to attacks in Sweden and the training of other European extremists.

Its leader, also a designated terrorist, told Newsy almost anyone can still come for weapons training today. Those who make the trip learn to use a firearm and undergo medical and tactical training, the group's leader Stanislav Vorobyev said. Vorobyev also said his group is working to unite the world's white nationalists, including those in the U.S.

When a congressman asked if Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism, the State Department Undersecretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland said, "... we had not put it that way before, but I have to tell you that every day that goes by as they commit these egregious, brutal acts on the ground, it's something we should look at."

**Putin's War In Ukraine About Creating 'An All-Fascist Non-Ethnic Russian Nation'** - Behind Putin's war in Ukraine is his broader goal to keep all the peoples living under Moscow's rule from becoming political nations and having any rights of their own, Kharun Sidorov says. And that is why Ukraine must be destroyed because its very existence challenges that notion of "an all-fascist non-ethnic Russian nation."

Putin began his war in Ukraine nominally in defense of "the Russian world," but he has made it clear that he expects all the peoples of the Russian Federation to bear the burdens of that because he views them as having responsibilities but in no case having rights of their own, the Prague-based commentator says ([idelreal.org/a/31790144.html](http://idelreal.org/a/31790144.html)).

"The active involvement in the militarist mobilization of representatives of many national and religious circles in Russia serves as a basis for concluding that Vladimir Putin has achieved real successes in constructing 'a common civic non-ethnic Russian nation.'" But there is an important reason to think that he hasn't because that is not his goal.

He isn't interested in creating a civic nation but rather one that is more properly defined as a fascist nation in which none of the component parts, including the largest, have any rights but only responsibilities to the state to which they are subordinate, exactly the vision of Benito Mussolini a century ago, Sidorov continues.

Putin draws these ideas not from the Italian fascists or any other foreigners but rather from Russian fascists in the 1920s to 1940s, including Konstantin Rodzayevsky of the All-Russian Fascist Party who at the end of his life concluded that Stalin in fact was the chief Russian fascist.

The existence of Ukraine with its independent political nation is an offense to those who hold such views and therefore it must be destroyed because those behind Russian aggression in Ukraine know, Sidorov says, that were Ukraine to win out, "the fasces" or "bonds" holding Russia's various peoples together would come apart.

## Widening of War

**Special Delivery** - Serbia received a semisecret delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft system amid growing Western concerns about an arms buildup in the Balkans, Mila Durdevic from RFE/RL's Balkan Service reported.

What It Means: The arrival of the FK-3 medium range anti-aircraft systems from China comes at a time of high tensions in the region following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Belgrade has close relations with both Moscow and Beijing and looks to also balance its ties with the United States and the European Union.

But there are fears in the West that the arming of Serbia by Russia and China could encourage the Balkan country toward another war, especially against its former province of Kosovo, which proclaimed independence in 2008.

Serbia is treading carefully amid the war in Ukraine. Belgrade voted in favor of UN resolutions that condemn Russian attacks, but it has refused to join international sanctions against Moscow.

**It's Time To Shift To Guerrilla Warfare** - Moscow's military power is overwhelming — no matter how clumsily its invasion was planned. Even if Germany were to supply all the weapons it possesses to Kyiv, the Ukrainian army would not be able to defeat the Russians.

At least not in the sense in which European kingdoms defeated one another in the past, imposing humiliations and cessions of territory on the defeated, or at least demanding reparations for the endless suffering and damage the defeated unilaterally inflicted on them.

None of this is possible against the nuclear power of Moscow with its formidable conventional firepower as well.

But this realization that it can't win does not necessarily mean that Ukraine will lose the war. What Ukrainians can achieve is to spoil the invader's attacks and make it impossible for him to exploit their own conventional-military inferiority and weakness to subjugate them.

One of those lessons is: know when to fight and when not to. A second: stubbornly dodge every decision as long as the enemy remains stronger and accept no decision as final until a counterattack is successfully won. A third: appear weak when you are strong and strong when you are weak.

This strategy has the confusing property that the seemingly weaker side always wins, and the apparent superiority turns out to be powerlessness; to the repeated dismay and embarrassment of the conventionally trained military and military policy experts.

Last week we saw the lesson of the Ukrainian missile attack on the Russian warship "Moskva," where there was no need for another warship to sink the enemy's great asset.

In this case, the Ukrainians used the strategy of guerrilla warfare. It will not lead to a Ukrainian victory parade in Moscow, but, hopefully, it will throw off every laid plan of the invader. (Worldcrunch).

**Japanese pilots rose in near-record numbers to meet challenges by Chinese aircraft** - Japanese fighter pilots responded to challenges by Chinese military aircraft during fiscal year 2021 at a pace second only to a record set five years earlier, according to data from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Japan scrambled fighters into its air defense identification zone 1,004 times, including 722 sorties to intercept approaching Chinese drones, fighters, bombers and surveillance planes, according to data released Friday.

Another 266 sorties responded to Russian aircraft and 16 to miscellaneous aircraft, the data said. The identification zone is the buffer used to identify aircraft before they reach a country's territorial airspace.

In the third quarter, from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, Japanese pilots flew more intercepts than in any quarter since before 2014. The fiscal year in Japan runs from April 1 to March 31.

**The war in Ukraine and its reverberations in Kosovo** - Kosovo temporarily removed broadcasting channels originating in Russia. For more than two decades, Kosovo has been a contentious issue between the West and Russia. During the 1990s, Russia openly supported Serbia against Kosovo independence despite the fact that the Serbian state had launched and waged a number of wars in the Balkans, including the last war in Kosovo.

NATO military humanitarian intervention in Serbia and Montenegro in 1999 caused the biggest rift between the West and Russia. Since then, Russia has not ceased opposing developments in Kosovo, especially since Kosovo declared its independence. Blocking every initiative in the Security Council (where Russia is a permanent member) to amend Resolution 1244 is the clearest evidence of the Russian state's opposition to Kosovo. Russia's position was further cemented with regard to initiatives for Kosovo's membership in international organizations, such as the Council of Europe, Interpol, UNESCO, etc.

Kosovo was not immune to Russia's hybrid war after the latter launched its large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The recurring tensions have resulted in Kosovo being viewed as a country with the potential for destabilization through poor neighborly relations with Serbia. In an interview with the "Russia Today" channel, Lavrov said that there was information that the countries of the Western Balkans were "recruiting mercenaries for US-instigated military conflicts." Meanwhile, the Russian News Agency (TASS) quoted Lavrov as saying, "Kosovo and some other parts of the Western Balkans are becoming a fertile ground for crime. There are terrorists and drug dealers there.

Putin reinforced his subordinate's statements after the talks with Scholz, when he said that the number of "mercenaries from Kosovo" was increasing in Ukraine. "Russia is registering a growing number of mercenaries from third countries, in particular from Albania and Croatia, militants from Kosovo and even jihadists with war experience from Syria," the Kremlin said in a statement.

However, these allegations were denied by Kosovo institutions as misinformation by Russian officials. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that Kosovo citizens are denied by law from participating in foreign wars, with severe penalties. The MFA has described the news coming from Russia as a fierce campaign against Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries with the goal of escalating the situation, through Serbia.

**Russia Needs to Prepare as NATO Reinforces Its Borders, TASS Reports** - A senior Russian official said on Tuesday that NATO's reinforcement of its borders with Russia was no longer a figure of speech and Moscow should be prepared for possible aggressive action, Russia's TASS news agency reported. The agency was quoting Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council.

Medvedev, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, warned NATO last week that if Sweden and Finland joined the U.S.-led military alliance then Russia would deploy nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles in a European exclave.