

Conflict Update Day 389

March 19th, 2023

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 164,910 (+710) soldiers killed, 3,532 (+21) enemy tanks, 6,853 (+23) armored combat vehicles, 2,568 (+8) artillery systems, 507 (1) MLRS systems, 268 (+3) air defense systems, 305 (+0) warplanes, 290 (+0) helicopters, 2,159 (+0) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 907 (+0) cruise missiles, 18 (+0) warships/cutters, 5,408 (+4) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 239 fuel bowsers (+0) and 262 (+3) units of equipment.

Key Takeaways

Note regarding reporting – When using blogger and websites from Russia or from Russian-led sites elsewhere, such as in Latvia, the news seems to trend slightly behind everyday sites and other “underground” information sources who tend to be more contemporary in reporting.

The updates and news are also inclined to be of local events, resistance or internal situations such as mobilization.

But when combining these, it makes for a more flavorful and complete cycle of information and fullness.

Russia yesterday attempted a number of offensives – Which were all repelled by Ukrainian defending forces in the Adviiivka region, eliminating an entire division within minutes. One can see from the number above the amount of armored vehicles destroyed over the past 24 hours, boosted by the failed Russian attacks.

225 Russians killed in last 24 hours in Bakhmut - Ukrainian forces have killed 225 Russian fighters and injured another 306 in the past 24 hours in the Bakhmut area, according to Serhiy Cherevaty, the spokesman for the Eastern Group of Forces of the Ukraine army.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a brutal battle for the city in eastern Ukraine for months, with both sides seeing high rates of casualties.

Cherevaty said that in the last day, the occupiers in the area of Bakhmut and nearby villages -- including Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Bohdanivka and Ivanivskoho -- tried to attack Ukrainian positions 42 times. There were 24 combat clashes in the Bakhmut area alone.

In total, in the Bakhmut direction, the occupiers shelled Ukrainian positions 256 times with various types of artillery and multiple launch rocket systems, Cherevaty said. Of them, 53 shelling's were in the area of Bakhmut itself.

NATO fighter jets intercept Russian aircraft near Estonian airspace - British and German fighter jets intercepted a Russian aircraft close to Estonian airspace Friday, according to a statement from the UK's RAF.

It was the second such encounter this week, as NATO carries out joint air policing efforts in the region.

The two Typhoon jets intercepted “a Russian military Tu-134 passenger jet, known by the NATO name Crusty, that was being escorted by two Sukhoi Su-27 Flanker fighter jets, and an AN-12 Cub military transport aircraft,” the RAF said.

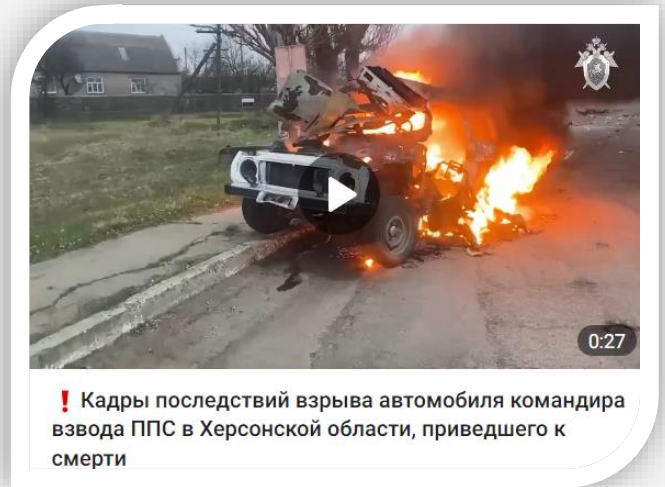
Comment – This is not unusual, both in these airspaces as well as in and around Taiwan with Chinese flights constantly “testing” Taiwanese defense capabilities, often three to four times daily.

Police officer's personal car explodes in Russia-occupied Nova Kakhovka, officer killed

- A commander of the police patrol and checkpoint service in Nova Kakhovka, a city occupied by Russia in Ukraine's Kherson region, has been killed in a car explosion, the Russian Investigative Committee reported.

According to the investigation team, an unidentified person planted an explosive device under the police officer's car on 17 March. The device was activated when the officer was travelling in the car with his family.

The blast killed the man, his wife and daughter were injured.



A fire broke out near Moscow at one of the largest plants of the chemical industry - One worker was injured as a result of the fire. A fire broke out again in the suburbs of Moscow. This time, the fire occurred on the territory of one of the largest enterprises of the Russian chemical industry, "Thin Organic Synthesis", located in Dolgoprudny. RosZMI writes about this plant, which supplies the Russian defense industry with raw materials.

All children evacuated from the city of Chasiv Yar in Donetsk region - All children were evacuated from the town of Chasiv Yar, Donetsk region, located approximately ten kilometers west of Bakhmut.

"There are no children in Chasiv Yar, the last children were taken out the day before yesterday. With the joint efforts of the military administration, the police, the White Angels, we did this work. It was difficult, painful, but we did it," said Serhiy Chauc, head of the Chasovoyarsk MBA. 16,000 people used to live in Chasovoy Yar and surrounding settlements.

Currently, there are about 2,000 people left there..

Comment – Chasiv Yar lies to the west of Bakhmut and has been the subject of indiscriminate shelling by Russian artillery. As mentioned previously, Russia is prepared to kill everyone, men, women, children and the infirm without recourse to common decency and respect for human life.

The Kremlin intends to subject every Ukrainian city, town and center it can to sheer destruction and annihilation in order to obliterate the country from the map. To Russians this is not only a means to an end, but their way for complete subjugation of Ukraine - genocide and a modern Holocaust in the making.

Witness the killing of innocent civilians, execution of prisoners of war, raping and pillaging wherever they go, utter destruction of civilian infrastructure and life. Aside from being "all they know," it is also per command from on high in Moscow.

Moscow, the Kremlin and Putin have to be stopped, otherwise they will continue to plunder their way forward.

A modern-day scourge of humanity.

Ukrainian troops hit 7 Russian personnel concentration areas - UGS shared the information in its report yesterday. Ukrainian Defense Forces launched 6 aerial strikes on Russian personnel concentrations, in addition to shooting down a Russian Shahed-136 UAV.

Russia continues to launch offensive operations in Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Mariinka and Shakhtarsk directions. Bakhmut remains the epicenter of the fighting. (**Comment** – Avdiivka is where they lost an entire division within minutes as reported above).

"The enemy launched 5 missile attacks over the last day, 4 of them were aimed at civilian infrastructure in Zaporizhzhia, with another 12 air strikes and more than 20 MLRS attacks," the report said.

Ukraine struck the enemy air defense system "Tor" and 2 areas of Russian concentration – it was reported that Ukrainian artillery successfully struck two Russian TOR missile sites earlier this morning.

Comment – Russian TOR missiles reportedly stymied the American advance into Iraq in its war there.

Israel entered Lebanon in order to eliminate Hamas and Hezbollah soldiers capable of firing anti-aircraft missiles at US planes flying overhead.

This was a joint decision by Israeli and US commands in preparation for the Iraq invasion against Saddam Hussein. One of America's intended strike fronts was from the north, requiring airborne refueling of jet attack fighter bombers.

The danger was anti-aircraft fire whilst overflying Lebanon, so Israel entered under the guise of anti-terrorism actions.

The problem though was that both Hamas and Hezbollah had been equipped with the latest TOR anti-tank missile weapons, routed from Iran, through Syria and into Lebanon.

Once in Lebanon, Israeli armor was hit with barrage after barrage of these weapons, reportedly losing more tanks and APCs than since the 6-Day War in 1967.

It was reported at the time that Israel and the US had no counter to this new "TOR" weapon from Russia, that they believed it be some 20 years ahead of their technology.

This development prevented an American assault from that front, reportedly elongating the Iraqi war.

It is obvious that this technological shortfall, if then reports are true, has been overcome in the modern day, as otherwise Russia would have a higher success rate in Ukraine.

Ukrainian intelligence published an interception in which a Russian soldier said that one of the occupants shot his own head due to poor morale - The interception was published by the GUR.

"Yes, we live our lives. Oh, someone is shooting, one boy shot his head. He came from the outfit, took the machine gun on the **y, his head was s**ed and that's it," the occupier complains and confirms that the suicide simply "could not stand" the situation at the front.

He also said that the commander hid the fact of suicide so that the occupier's family would receive payment.

"It's a good commander in us, fair. He wrote off, as if in battle, so that the family would be paid 5 million for death. They won't pay for self-shot," he said.

Note – Translation as per the website.

Russian T-90 Proryv Tank Obliterated in Ukrainian Strike - A video clip purporting to show one of Russia's advanced tanks being blown up by Ukrainian forces has gone viral.

"Soldiers of the special squad Code 9.2. together with 3027 National Guards brigade tracked down and destroyed the pride of Russian defense industry—the T90 Proryv tank," tweeted Ukrainian internal affairs advisor Anton Gerashchenko next to the video.

To the soundtrack of Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World", the video lasting one minute and 17 seconds shows a tank being targeted from the air. The clip, which as of Saturday had received 142,000 views, ends with a montage of a Russian news report touting tank deliveries to Ukraine, and the aftermath of the exploded T-90.



Russia has touted its T-90M as one of the best main battle tanks (MBTs) in the world. Also referred to as "Proryv-3" (Breakthrough-3), the MBT is an improved version of the T-90 tank and was first publicly revealed in 2017.

Both models, of which the army has several hundred, are superior to the Soviet tanks that both Russian and Ukrainian forces are using in the war.

Comments, Updates, Developments and Reports

Russia says Black Sea drone 'confirms' the direct implication of US in the war - US drone flights over the Black Sea are a sign of direct US involvement in conflict with Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying earlier this morning.

"It is quite obvious what these drones are doing, and their mission is not at all a peaceful mission to ensure the safety of shipping in international waters," Interfax news agency quoted Peskov as saying in a TV interview.

"And in fact, we are talking about direct involvement of the operators of these drones in the conflict, and against us."

Putin says effort underway to increase weapons production - Russia is working to increase its weapons production amid an "urgent" need, Putin said Wednesday.

"Prosecutors should supervise the modernization of defense industry enterprises, including building up capacities for the production of an additional volume of weapons. A lot of effort is underway here," Putin said at a meeting of the Collegium of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation.

Putin added that the weapons, equipment and ammunition are "urgently" needed.

Moldova plans to impose sanctions on a number of persons involved in the invasion of Ukraine - The Moldovan government plans to impose sanctions on 25 people involved in a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Among them are citizens of Russia as stated in an interview with Europa Liberă by Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu.

"It is mainly about a ban on entering Moldova, blocking bank accounts or assets of those persons who are involved in the aggression against Ukraine in one way or another," he said.

According to Popescu, the decision has already been made. However, it takes time to complete "all legal steps". At the same time, he did not name those who will be banned from entering Molodova, but clarified that this list will include about 25 people. Among them, half are Russian citizens.

Containment

Poland to deliver MiG-29 jets to Ukraine 'in the coming days' - Poland plans to deliver four MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine "in the coming days," Polish President Andrzej Duda said at a press conference on Thursday.

The move will make Poland the first NATO member to supply fighter planes to Ukraine, the Associated Press reported.

The latest news shortens the timeline announced earlier this week by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who had said they might send the Soviet-designed fighter jets to Ukraine in the next four to six weeks.

NATO wants to strengthen borders with Russia with 300,000 troops, but there may be problems - NATO plans to strengthen its grouping of troops on the eastern flank, deploying up to 300,000 soldiers there, but doing so is not so easy.

To implement such plans, the Alliance needs to convince individual member states to provide various elements: soldiers, training, infrastructure improvements and, most importantly, large quantities of expensive weapons, equipment and ammunition.

"Since countries are already concerned about their own stockpiles of ammunition, and Ukraine is in dire need of more ammunition and weapons from allies, there is a risk that not all NATO allies will fulfill their promises to contribute to the new plans of the Alliance," Politico said.

Comment – This plan is with conventional and existing troop battalions, weaponry and technology.

Coming out of the Ukrainian conflict will be a whole new version and format of warfare, tactics, broadband fronts and mobile capabilities, among others.

Tanks, drones, communications, Intelligence and everything else will transform to revised and reconfigured tactics and military maneuvering. We can expect large-scale change ahead.

As always, war is a wasteful exercise that delivers death and destruction, but so long as autocrats and dictators are prevalent and threatening peaceful countries, there remains the need to not only defend oneself, but also to gain the upper hand.

The "free" world can be thankful for the US in its position of the courageous grand quartermaster and its "Great Game" leadership, coupled with courage from further countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and others warding off the repeat invader such as is Russia.

Putin & Russia

Chinese visit to Moscow – Chinese President Xi is in Moscow tomorrow for a state visit.

What a difference since the days of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, when China was distinctly the outranked party of the two, seeking recognition together with military and financial aid from the Kremlin.

Today it is the polar opposite with Moscow the clear subordinate in the modern Sino/Russo relationship.

Putin is absolutely desperate for Xi's favor and support, if he can muster this under current threats of US and EU sanctions for any lethal aid provided Moscow by Beijing.

Sans Xi moral support, or at the very least, silence on international outrage over his invasion of his neighbor, Putin is extremely vulnerable.

But the bigger picture here is whether this is a link in the chain and flurry of diplomacy by and between China, Russia, Belarus, Iran, Syria and North Korea?

What is the “chain,” and to where does it lead? - is the crucial question.

It is my sense that Putin is on his heels, more so in coming days than at present, if that is at all possible, and this is realized in Beijing, now reacting to bolster his position and a Russian ability to stay the course given the promise that success brings to their mutually desired new bi-polar world order.

Russia failing in Ukraine and the fallout from such a failure, torpedoed this global desire, and with it China’s aspirations of leading a 21st Century international order of geopolitical substance.

For Xi, Putin’s and Russia’s survival is an absolute “must” for both his and Chinese future plans.

Losing him opens China’s entire northern, eastern and western fronts, weakens them diplomatically and extends their cost in pursuing their global dream.

For Beijing there is no alternative, Putin needs to stay afloat, and in line.

Xi Jinping feels that Putin has been defeated – Piontkovsky - Washington-based political scientist Andrey Piontkovsky believes China is trying to ensure Russia's so-called soft defeat. He shared his opinions with Espresso TV.

"Xi Jinping feels that the Russian horde has been defeated. And the very fact of Russia's defeat does not bother China. China sees Russia as a territory for absorption. It is worried that if Russia is defeated, the likelihood of Putin losing power increases. Beijing sees Putin as the leader of a pro-Chinese party in Russia. In the event of an obvious crushing defeat for Russia and Putin's loss of power, whatever government comes to power will not be as pleasing to China. And one of the charges that will be brought against former President Putin is that he betrayed Russia's economic and geopolitical interests in the Far East," Piontkovsky explained.

Piontkovsky added China's strategy is to ensure a “soft defeat” for Russia. A defeat that Putin would be able to sell to his core people as an honorable draw. Something like the option of returning to the borders of February 23, 2022.

"Xi Jinping and Putin will impose some restrictions on Ukraine's sovereignty, but this is long gone. The truth about the horrific crimes of Russian aggression against humanity has been revealed, and these are already official characteristics of the leading Western powers, and the first proceedings have already been launched. A special tribunal is being prepared for the military and political leadership to consider the crimes of the Russian Federation as aggression against an independent state," Piontkovsky said.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zakharova announced the "peace plan" of the Russian Federation: what the occupiers want - Yesterday Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said cancellation of all anti-Russian sanctions and lawsuits against Moscow in international courts should be an integral part of a peaceful settlement in Ukraine.

Russian propagandists quote the published statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

According to Zakharova, for "sustainable peace" it is necessary to seek an end to the supply of weapons to Ukraine.

"Ukraine must be demilitarized and de-Nazified, all threats emanating from its territory must be eliminated, its status as a nuclear-free state must be ensured, the rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities must be guaranteed," sang an old song that echoes from The Kremlin from the first days of the invasion, spokeswoman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition, Zakharova's "peace plan" provides for the "cancellation of all illegal sanctions and lawsuits against Russia in international courts."

She criticized Zelenskyy's peace formula, calling it a set of "ultimate demands detached from reality" to Russia, including the withdrawal of troops from Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, payment of reparations and, in her words, "appearance at international tribunals."

According to the Russian diplomat, the Ukrainian peace formula aims to achieve the surrender of the Russian Federation with the help of the West.

Comment – One can read what Russia is concerned about in her communiqué – sanctions, lawsuits, western arms supplies to Ukraine, international tribunals on war crimes and retaining occupied territory. The cynicism is amazing, but neither unforeseen nor unexpected.

Putin arrives in Mariupol - Putin visited Mariupol to inspect a number of locations in the city and talk to local residents, the Kremlin press service said on Sunday.

He travelled by helicopter to the Ukrainian city, which has been occupied since last year by Russians. He drove a vehicle along the city's streets, making stops at several locations. The visit was his first to newly annexed territories. (**Comment** – Right ahead of tomorrow's visit by President Xi of China).

He also visited Crimea on this trip, celebrating Russia's illegal annexation of the peninsula nine years ago, hoping to bolster morale and support with Ukrainian missile and long-range artillery strikes all the more frequent of late.



Putin's visit to Mariupol signals that the occupiers are preparing to retreat - an expert's explanation - Russian troops are preparing to retreat from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The visit of Putin to occupied Mariupol testifies to this - military expert Ivan Kyrychevskyi said on Espresso.

In his opinion, the campaign with Putin's visits to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is more aimed at the Russian generals and has a propaganda purpose.

"It is quite likely that Putin's visit to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine was also intended to show his authority in the Russian army, which will have to make difficult decisions again very soon. Therefore, to have the courage to retreat, you need a figure you can rely on. Putin's visit to the occupied territories and should have given [*sic*] the Russian army more courage to retreat from the Ukrainian territories," Kyrychevsky explained.

He believes disorganization in the Russian army is one of the advantages for the Ukrainian Armed Forces to conduct a successful counteroffensive.

"Now Russia is forced to save resources and concentrate them on certain areas of the frontline. Not as widely as they planned. After all, when we talk about Russia's limitless resources, in particular in ammunition and mobilization reserve, another problem arises. If the resource is too large and used inefficiently, the result will be different. Not the one that Russia hoped for at the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine."

Kyrychevskyi emphasized the lack of coordination in the Russian army is an advantage for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

"The main problem for the Russian army, which is very much in our favor, is chaos and disorganization. This is what gives us hopes, grounded in reality for a successful counteroffensive by the Ukrainian army. After all, even if Russian troops are showing some progress in certain elements, chaos and disorganization reign within the headquarters structure and combat planning," he added.

"As befits thieves": Ukrainian MoD explained why Putin came to Mariupol at night - The MoD said Putin's night visit was caused not only by security issues, but also by the dictator's attempts to hide the true state of the city

The Ministry noted the dark allowed Putin to "illuminate only what he wants to show" and hide the true consequences of the Russian occupation.

"As befits thieves, Putin visited Ukrainian Mariupol under the cover of night. First, it's safer. In addition, the darkness allows him to illuminate only what he wants to show and keeps the city that his army has completely destroyed and several of its survivors away from prying eyes," the statement said.

In the Luhansk region, local occupation "authorities" force people to obtain Russian citizenship - "In Rubizhne, Luhansk region, local occupation authorities are forcing the population to obtain Russian citizenship. Ukrainian passports have not been taken away from people yet, but to get a job, you need to have a Russian passport," the post says.

In addition, Russian troops continue to use civilian facilities in the temporarily occupied territory of the Zaporizhzhia region for their own needs. In particular, they are using a school building in one of the settlements of the Polohy district as a field hospital with 50 beds. In this way, Russian troops are trying to shorten the time for returning to the service among the sanitary losses.

Kremlin already searching for Putin's replacement: Intelligence official - The Kremlin is searching for Russian President Vladimir Putin's replacement amid growing dissatisfaction with the Ukraine war, according to a Ukrainian intelligence official.

Putin launched his "special military operation" on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, aiming for a quick victory against the Eastern European country, which at the time was perceived to have a much weaker military. However, Kyiv's stronger-than-expected defense, which has been bolstered by Western military aid, blunted Russian military gains.

After more than a year of combat, Russia's invasion continues to stagnate, with Ukraine retaking thousands of square miles of formerly occupied territory last fall. Fighting remains concentrated in the most eastern part of the country, where Russia's attempt to take control of Bakhmut have slowed in recent days.

Amid growing dissatisfaction, Ukraine now believes the Kremlin is searching for Putin's successor.

Andriy Yusov, a spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence directorate, said in recent remarks that the search comes as "the circle around Putin is narrowing." Putin is becoming "more and more toxic," even within Russian borders, according to Yusov.

"Within the Kremlin, there is more and more dissatisfaction with what is happening," Yusov said. "There is an increasingly gloomy understanding of the prospects, specifically the geopolitical catastrophe of the Putin regime. Thus, the search for Putin's successor is already underway."

Estonian Defense Minister: 'Russian army has not changed in 100 years' - Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Minister of Defense : What we see from the battlefield is that the Russian army has not changed in 100 years. During the First

World War and the Second World War, they used the same tactics, which are unimaginable atrocities and war crimes. They are raping kids, they are killing civilians.

So in that sense, nothing has changed in the Russian war system. And on the other hand, of course, we see that heavy artillery and long fire are still much needed. When we thought that whatever the new war would be, like a high-tech war, it's not. It's still a heavy artillery fight.

The answer lies in their Second World War mentality.

South Africa aware of 'its legal obligation' over Putin's ICC arrest warrant. A spokesperson for South African president Cyril Ramaphosa said earlier today that the country had "noted the report on the warrant of arrest" for Russian dictator Vladimir Putin put out by the International Criminal Court two days earlier.

He also said the South African government would "remain engaged with various relevant stakeholders" before a BRICS summit held in South Africa in August, which Russian dictator Vladimir Putin could attend.

South Africa is a member of the ICC and has ratified the Rome Statute, which means the country is obliged to cooperate with the court's demand to arrest Putin, but it puts South Africa in a difficult position as it has publicly advocated for stronger ties with Moscow.

The ICC issued on March 17 arrest warrants for Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian official allegedly overseeing the forced deportations of Ukrainian children to Russia.

Putin claims he delayed full-scale invasion of Ukraine over economic, military factors - Putin said he had decided to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 rather than earlier because of economic and military factors.

Speaking on Russian state television earlier today, he laid out the reasons why, according to him, Russia didn't go for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2014, when it invaded Crimea and started a war in the eastern Donbas region.

Putin claimed that Russia wasn't ready militarily in 2014 for a full-scale war, primarily because it didn't have "hypersonic weapons."

Putin also said Russia had been preparing economically to withstand the cost of the war. He cited good harvests, import substitution policies, and "improving" the country's financial system as the factors allowing him to start the invasion.

Comment – Yes – if you believe his propaganda. Putin fully expected to complete his invasion within days, evidenced by a horrendously poor supply chain. But then again, why did his army require any supply chain if they were only advancing for a week before installing Russian puppet Yanukovich as his Ukrainian appointee within that week?

Poppycock, and something intended for Russia's indoctrinated television audiences.