

# Conflict Update # 28

April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

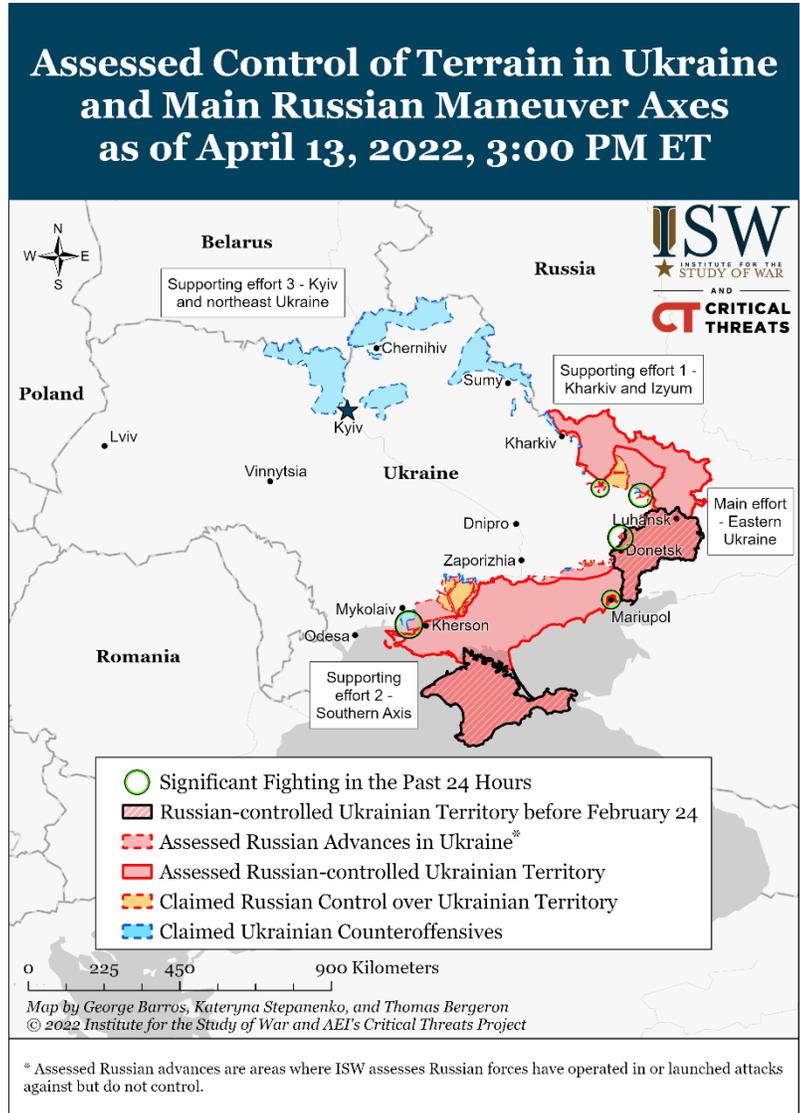
## Conflict Assessment

**Russia Says 1,000 Ukrainian Marines Surrender In Mariupol; No Confirmation From Ukraine** - Russia's Defense Ministry said more than 1,000 Ukrainian marines have surrendered to Russian forces in the besieged port of Mariupol, but Ukrainian officials said they could not comment or confirm the claim.

Russian claims of the mass Ukrainian surrender in Mariupol are likely false, but Russian forces forced Ukrainian troops to abandon the Ilyich metal plant in northern Mariupol on April 13, further constricting the two remaining pockets of Ukrainian defenders. Russian forces will likely capture Mariupol in the coming week. They have continued to conduct small-scale limited offensive operations on both the Izyum and Severodonetsk axes and have not yet begun a broader offensive campaign.

**Russian objective – Eastern:** Russian forces continued unsuccessful local attacks in eastern Ukraine throughout the past 24 hours amid continuing preparations for a likely wider offensive. They conducted unsuccessful attacks in Sverodonetsk, Rubizhne, and Popasna and made no substantial progress on April 13. US intelligence sources stated that Russia has approximately 55 battalion tactical groups (BTGs) fighting in “southern Ukraine,” though this number likely includes both Donbas and the southern Kherson axis.

**Russian objective - Southeast:** Russian forces continued to regroup in Kharkiv Oblast for offensive operations and conducted only minor attacks south of Izyum on April 13. US intelligence sources stated Russian efforts to reinforce Izyum are moving slowly. Ukrainian Deputy Commander-in-Chief Yevhen Moisyuk visited the frontlines at an unspecified location in Kharkiv Oblast on April 13 to inspect Ukrainian defensive positions and stated Russian forces continue to threaten Kharkiv city, though ISW assesses a renewed attempt to take the city is unlikely. Kharkiv Oblast civil authorities claimed Ukrainian forces made minor counterattacks at Rohan and Derhachi (southeast and northwest of Kharkiv city, respectively) but ISW cannot confirm this claim.



**Russian objective – Southern Axis** - Russian forces conducted minor attacks in Kherson Oblast without success on April 13. US intelligence sources stated on April 13 Russian forces have likely established two resupply bases in Crimea and southern Ukraine to resupply operations in Mariupol and Kherson.

**The Ukraine War Isn't a Sprint** - The U.S. military likes to win its wars with a sprint. When it launched Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the air assault began on March 19, and President George W. Bush declared "mission accomplished" on May 1. Operation Desert Storm in 1991 lasted a similar span, from January 17 to February 28.

By contrast, the Russian military seems full of marathoners. The Syrian war has lasted seven years, and it follows a decade-long Russian effort to subdue Chechnya. Russian military tactics are profoundly different than U.S. tactics, and the goals are different, too. Those who hope for a quick end to the war in Ukraine should be sobered by the Russians' deliberate and destructive efforts in Syria. (CSIS).

**Smashed To Pieces': Besieged Mariupol Teeters On The Brink** - "The city is smashed to pieces," said Mariupol journalist Yulia Harkusha, a contributor to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service who just completed the hazardous journey from the besieged Azov Sea port city to territory held by the Ukrainian military.

"There is nothing left [for the Russians] to control. I have only seen sights like this in photographs from World War II, when Dresden was bombed," she said.

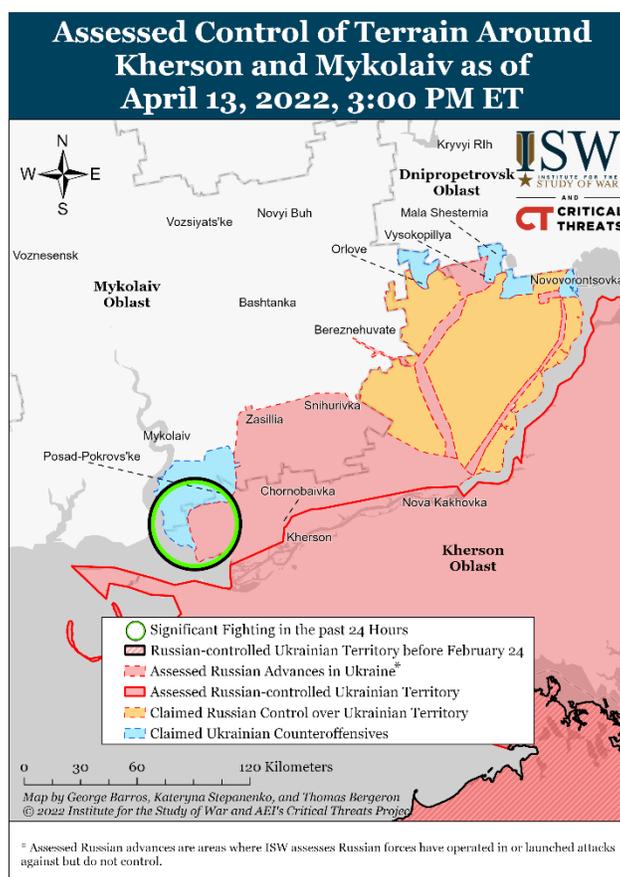
Capturing the strategic port has been an important goal for Russia, as the Kremlin seeks to establish a land connection between the occupied parts of eastern Ukraine and Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, seized in 2014. The separatists failed to take Mariupol in 2014; it has been targeted since the start of the new invasion and has been completely cut-off from Kyiv-controlled Ukraine since March 1.

Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko told AP on April 13 that at least 10,000 civilians -- and perhaps as many as 20,000 -- had been killed in the weeks since the war began. Boychenko alleged that Russian forces had been using "mobile crematoriums" to destroy evidence of civilian deaths.

**New Package Of U.S. Military Aid For Ukraine Announced As Russia Claims Capture Of Ukrainian Marines** - U.S. President Joe Biden has approved \$800 million in new military assistance for Ukraine to help the country in its fight against Russia's invasion, including helicopters, artillery, ammunition, and other weapons.

Biden announced the new package of aid on April 13 after a call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and after Russia's Defense Ministry said that more than 1,000 Ukrainian marines had surrendered in Mariupol.

"This new package of assistance will include many similar and highly effective weapons systems we have already provided, coupled with new capabilities tailored to the wider assault we expect Russia to launch in eastern Ukraine," Biden said in a statement.



The United States will also continue to facilitate the transfer of weapons from allies and partners around the world, Biden said, adding that the supply of weapons from the United States and other countries has been critical in sustaining Ukraine's fight against the Russian invasion.

France and Germany also pledged to send more weapons in response to Zelenskyy's pleas for more military aid from Western countries.

Russia said that, in addition to the surrender of the Ukrainian marines in Mariupol, it had taken control of the port. Ukrainian officials said they could neither comment on nor confirm any surrender of marines.

Petro Andryushchenko, an aide to the mayor of Mariupol, said Russia's claims about control of the port were exaggerated. Ukrainian armed forces control "most of the city -- especially in terms of area," Andryushchenko told RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service.

He called Russia's claim that it controls more than 80 percent of Mariupol "a very, very big exaggeration."

**Ukrainian split?** – Will Russia seek to split Ukraine into two sectors – one that they control and the balance under Ukrainian control? This will see Putin be able to claim some success in his looming May Day parade.

**Borodyanka** - The presidents of Poland and all three Baltic states visited the Ukrainian town of Borodyanka, northwest of Kyiv, in a show of support for the country.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said the town was "permeated with pain and suffering" after civilians were murdered and tortured there and residential homes and other civilian infrastructure were bombed.

"It is hard to believe that such war atrocities could be perpetrated in 21st-century Europe, but that is the reality. This is a war we must win," Nausėda said in a statement.

The goal of the visit was to show support for Zelenskyy "and the defenders of Ukraine in a decisive moment for this country," Polish presidential adviser Jakub Kumoch said in a statement.

The visit came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to continue his bloody offensive. All four countries worry they may face Russian attack in the future if Ukraine falls.

## Sanctions

**Russia-Germany trade rupture** could "move the macro needle" and cause a financial shock, says S&P Global. S&P Global's chief economist Paul Gruenwald said a "trade rupture" between Russia and Germany could have triggered a financial shock on the German economy, as the EU ponders what steps to take next to up the pressure on Moscow.

"The one that would really move the macro needle is some sort of trade rupture between Russia and Europe," Gruenwald told CNBC on Wednesday. Russia cutting off gas to Germany would not be the only way this would happen. Disruption to other Russian imports into Europe, like metals, would likely play a role too, Gruenwald added.

**Daily earnings for tankers shipping oil from Russia's Baltic ports** are soaring as shipowners continue to exercise caution about hauling the country's crude.

It now costs more than \$348,000 a day to charter an oil tanker from the port of Primorsk to northwest Europe, the highest since at least 2008, according to data from the Baltic Exchange in London. The increase is another sign of the discounts Russian producers will have to apply to their supplies in order to find buyers.

Russian Urals crude was offered at almost \$35 a barrel below the Dated Brent benchmark price last week, at a time when tanker earnings were about \$100,000 a day lower than they are now. Assuming a freight cost of about \$7 a barrel, it means producers would receive a discount of more than \$40.

**Russia discounting oil to spur sales** – Russia is discounting crude oil in order to spur sales. It is literally “selling at any cost” to move oil stocks and capitalize on high crude prices. Oil traders will be storing stocks for later sale, given current low prices.

**Russia sanctions US and Canadians** - Russia has introduced sanctions against 398 members of the U.S. Congress in retaliation against punitive measures announced by Washington over Ukraine.

More sanctions are planned, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on April 13 in a statement quoted by Interfax.

"Taking into account the sanctions the U.S. is constantly introducing, further announcements of Russian countermeasures are planned in the near future," the Foreign Ministry said in the statement.

The sanctions include entry bans on the lawmakers affected. In a separate statement, the Foreign Ministry said that it had introduced sanctions against 87 members of the Senate of Canada and said more measures will be announced soon due to Ottawa's "short-sighted" policies.

**Britain sanctions more Russians and separatists** - Britain has announced new sanctions against scores of Russians, including family members of Russian oligarchs and the wife of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. They also targeted the leaders of the two separatist regions in Ukraine.

A total of 206 Russian individuals, including the 178 "separatists," six oligarchs, close associates and employees, and an additional 22 individuals were put on the sanctions list through an "urgent procedure," the British Foreign Office said in a statement on April 13.

**China's biggest oil and gas producer plans Western exit as US threatens sanctions** - China's top offshore oil and gas producer, CNOOC, is preparing to ditch its operations in the UK and North America, amid growing fears the company's assets could be hit with Western sanctions.

Industry sources told news agency Reuters it was weighing up an exit, after the White House warned China last week it could face consequences if the country helped Russia to evade Western sanctions.

The fossil fuel giant holds stakes in major fields in the North Sea, the Rockies, Gulf of Mexico and large Canadian oil sand projects, producing around 220,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day.

**Russia's reputedly 'sanction proof' economy shows signs of stress** - Seven weeks into the war, how is the Russian economy faring? The short answer is well below expectations and the worse is yet to come.

Before the war, the Russian economy was stagnating but allegedly safe from macroeconomic crises. To use an image commonly employed by economists: it was stuck in a bog and therefore unlikely to fall off a cliff.

On the one hand, since 2013 Russia's GDP has grown on average around 1% per year. Corruption, a burdensome state, politically captive businessmen and isolation from the global economy have all added up to undermine the country's potential growth. On the other hand, a low sovereign debt, substantial sovereign wealth fund as well as large foreign exchange reserves assured the country's macroeconomic stability. Conservative fiscal rule and modern inflation-targeting monetary policies also contributed to steady modest growth. (The Conversation).

It turns out that most Russian industry critically relies on Western technology and inputs. For example, the Russian car sector has ground to a halt – as it suddenly discovered its extreme dependency on imported components. Car sales in

March 2022 were three times lower than in March 2021. This is especially striking as during periods of high inflation, households tend to try to buy durable goods.

However, the worst is yet to come. Even though the Russian economy could possibly adjust to a new equilibrium in a year or two, it will fail to recover any time soon to pre-war levels; Russia will continue falling behind developed economies. First, sanctions will keep it isolated from the global capital market and from advanced technology. Second, it has shifted to a highly repressive regime that will destroy opportunities for domestic entrepreneurs. Third, in the first few weeks of the war it had already lost hundreds of thousands of skilled workers, who understood that staying in Russia is neither safe nor conducive to their careers. These are educated professionals, IT specialists, researchers, engineers, and doctors. Russia's loss of their best human capital will continue further, undermining its growth prospects.

Finally, it is likely that the West will impose additional sanctions. As evidence of alleged Russian war crimes continues to mount, there is growing pressure on European politicians to target the backbone of Russia's economy – hydrocarbons. In recent years, oil and gas alone accounted for 35-40% of the federal budget revenue and made up 60% of Russian exports. The European Parliament has already passed a resolution demanding an embargo on Russian imports of fossil fuels. And the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell said, "sooner or later – I hope sooner – it will happen." When the European oil and gas embargo is introduced, Russia will face major fiscal challenges – which will further reduce its growth potential. Also, as Europe joins the US and Canada, the united West will mount pressure on China – thus eliminating Russia's hopes that China's money and technology can replace those of the West.

## NATO

**Finland and Sweden on joining NATO** - Finland's prime minister says Helsinki is moving toward a decision on applying to join NATO "within weeks" against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

"I think it will happen quite fast. Within weeks, not within months," Prime Minister Sanna Marin told reporters in Stockholm on April 13.

Marin's Swedish counterpart, Magdalena Andersson, also signaled a major policy shift for her Nordic nation as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying at the same press conference that the current security situation would be discussed amid reports that Stockholm is also seeking to join the Western security alliance.

Andersson said the assessment of Sweden's security needs would be "thorough but quick."

One or both countries joining NATO would be a tectonic change for Europe's security, and an indication of just how rattled many European nations are by the Russian invasion. Both Sweden and Finland have steadfastly remained neutral, though they have often cooperated or held joint exercises with NATO in the past.

## Impacts

**50,000 to 70,000 Russian tech workers have fled the country** since the invasion of Ukraine. Tens of thousands more are expected to flee. (Business Insider).

Confronted with the likelihood of crippling sanctions, a plummeting ruble, and a country turning aggressively inwards, Aleks, a Russian engineer, made it to the airport with his wife and hopped on a plane to Georgia, where he has some relatives. He was among the first Russian technology workers to make a run for neighboring countries at the outset of the Ukrainian war, but he soon realized he would by no means be the last. Over the past few weeks, throngs of fellow Russian techies have joined him in Tbilisi

**Kazakhstan** - The number of Russians seeking permanent residence in Kazakhstan is rising as Moscow's war against Ukraine continues. Kazakh Deputy Interior Minister Marat Qozhaev said on April 13 that, in the first quarter of 2022, the number of Russian nationals who applied for permanent residence in Kazakhstan reached 1,055 people, almost triple the number in an average quarter.

Qozhaev also said that, in addition to permanent residence applicants, about 10,000 Russian citizens have applied for a Kazakh individual identification number (IIN), which allows people, including foreigners, to open accounts in Kazakhstan's banks, as international sanctions have blocked foreign operations at many financial institutions in Russia.

Qozhaev said that, at the moment, there are around 130,000 Russian citizens and almost 3,500 Ukrainian citizens residing in Kazakhstan, of whom 170 Russians and seven Ukrainians had applied for Kazakh citizenship since January 1.

**Russia Is Leaking Data Like a Sieve** - Names, birthdays, passport numbers, job titles—the personal information goes on for pages and looks like any typical data breach. But this data set is very different. It allegedly contains the personal information of 1,600 Russian troops who served in Bucha, a Ukrainian city devastated during Russia's war and the scene of multiple potential war crimes.

The data set is not the only one. Another allegedly contains the names and contact details of 620 Russian spies who are registered to work at the Moscow office of the FSB, the country's main security agency. Neither set of information was published by hackers. Instead, they were put online by Ukraine's intelligence services, with all the names and details freely available to anyone online. "Every European should know their names," Ukrainian officials wrote in a Facebook post as they published the data.

Since Russian troops crossed Ukraine's borders at the end of February, colossal amounts of information about the Russian state and its activities have been made public. The data offers unparalleled glimpses into closed-off private institutions, and it may be a gold mine for investigators, from journalists to those tasked with investigating war crimes. Broadly, the data comes in two flavors: information published proactively by Ukrainian authorities or their allies, and information obtained by hackers. Hundreds of gigabytes of files and millions of emails have been made public.

## Humanitarian

**First train departs Britain carrying aid for Ukraine** - DB Cargo UK has operated the first aid train from Britain bound for Ukraine.

The 500m-long train carried 24 containers carrying more than 1,500 tonnes of aid including non-perishable food, hygiene and medical products, basic living equipment and other much-needed supplies.

The train ran from Barking, via HS1 and the Channel tunnel and then running through Belgium, Germany and Poland before arriving in Ukraine.

The collection of aid was organised by UK Rail for Ukraine, an initiative set up by volunteers in early February.

DB has already begun operating a rail bridge to carry aid from Germany to Ukraine via Poland.

**Investigations underway** – International pathologists and investigative analysts are engaged in Ukraine together with Ukrainian investigators collecting evidence and statements from witnesses and war crime sites.

**Austria's Chancellor** met with Putin to 'confront' him with atrocities he saw in Ukraine. Austria's Chancellor Karl Nehammer said he went to Moscow to "look in President Putin's eyes and confront him with what I saw" in Ukraine, he told CNN Wednesday.

Nehammer said he raised alleged Russian atrocities in Ukraine during a "tough" and unfriendly meeting Monday with Vladimir Putin -- the first Western sit-down with the Russian President since he launched his invasion of Ukraine in February.

"This is not a friendly visit. I have just come from Ukraine and have seen with my own eyes the immeasurable suffering caused by the Russian war of aggression," Nehammer was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office after the meeting outside Moscow.

"I addressed the serious war crimes in Bucha and other places and emphasized that all those responsible for them must be held accountable," Nehammer said, according to the statement issued by his office. "I also told President Putin in no uncertain terms that sanctions against Russia will remain in place and will continue to be tightened as long as people are dying in Ukraine."

**Why Beijing Isn't Happy About The Crimes Of Bucha** - The revelations of the alleged war crimes in Bucha are making Russia's war more complicated for the leaders of China, who could have supported a victorious Moscow without hesitation, but a humiliated Moscow is a different matter. Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin's shared ambitions of a new world order is at stake.

**China's support of Russia is not unconditional** - What's pursued is not the non-defeat of Ukraine anymore, it is Russia's defeat: This condition is necessary and might be sufficient for Putin to go. The Western dilemma is in return to face Putin's allies, starting with China and, to a lesser degree, India.

When he invaded Ukraine with a combination of extreme brutality and inefficiency, did Putin challenge the "rock solid" alliance that had just been announced by Moscow and Beijing: the realignment of the world on ideological bases pitting authoritarianism against democracy?

Ever since the revelation of the crimes in Bucha, China seems embarrassed. It doesn't want to condemn its Russian ally, but it cannot ignore the global indignation. Like Russia, it is also looking to buy time.

China cannot choose between its ideological vision for the future of the world and the protection of its immediate economic interests. It is important to remember that its trade with Russia is one-tenth the trade it has with the United States and Europe.

What's even more troubling for Beijing perhaps is that, until now at least, the invasion of Ukraine has made only one victor: Biden's America. In a little less than a month, America has retrieved some part of the moral authority it had lost in recent years. And a day will come when American liquefied gas will be able to substitute Russian gas in Europe. What's the point in having a privileged ally if Moscow's politics only result in strengthening the position of Beijing's number one adversary, Washington?

For now — with a war that's going to last, and history far from written — Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not reinforced, but rather dwindled China and Russia's hope for this new international order built around the "authoritarians."

## Widening of war front

**Russia Threatens Direct Conflict With U.S., NATO in Ukraine War** - Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Wednesday said Russia will consider U.S. and NATO vehicles transporting weapons on Ukrainian territory as "legitimate military targets."

Ryabkov made the comments during an interview with the Russian state-owned news agency TASS. Ryabkov also said that any efforts by Western countries to impede Russia's military will be "harshly suppressed," Reuters reported.

The comments followed reports about the success Ukraine has had using "Switchblade" drones and other security aids sent by the U.S. A White House fact sheet in mid-March detailed that the U.S. would provide Ukraine with millions of rounds of ammunition in addition to air defense systems and more. On Tuesday, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks told reporters that the Pentagon is considering providing Ukraine with even more advanced weapons.

**Moscow Threatens To Strike Kyiv Command 'Centres' If Ukraine Keeps Attacking Russia** - The Russian military on Wednesday threatened to strike Ukraine's command centres in the capital Kyiv if Ukrainian troops continue to attack Russian territory.

"We are seeing Ukrainian troops' attempts to carry out sabotage and strike Russian territory," the Russian defense ministry said in a statement. "If such cases continue, the Russian armed forces will strike decision-making centres, including in Kyiv."

Since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on February 24, Moscow has accused Kyiv forces of attacking territory in southern Russian.

It is constantly being reported that Russia is seeking an excuse to attack further targets by mounting "false flag" operations such as conducted in the run up to the present conflict when they alleged abuses against Russians in the Donbas.

There have been unconfirmed reports that something is planned for Transnistria to enable an attack from Ukraine's western flank.

**Japan, US hold navy drills off Koreas amid nuke test worry** - U.S. and Japanese warships are conducting a joint naval exercise in a rare location — in waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. 7th Fleet and Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force said Wednesday they conducted a joint naval exercise at the Sea of Japan on Tuesday and Wednesday. It was the first time the U.S. aircraft carrier held the exercise in the area since 2017 and is seen as an apparent attempt to deter North Korea's provocation.

**Putin vows 'weapons of unprecedented characteristics' after reported chemical attack** - Vladimir Putin has warned his military will use "weapons of unprecedented characteristics" after it was reported his army had been using illegal chemical weapons in Ukraine.

The warmongering leader was surrounded by security officers as he arrived in the far eastern region of Amur to visit a space port in tribute of the Soviet's first manned space mission.

Shortly after the presentation Putin held a press conference where he vowed Russian military have been using "weapons of unprecedented characteristics" in what appeared to be a veiled threat at NATO.

In so-called "warm words" to his troops on the ground, he said they are "acting effectively" in their strategic operation refocused on the pro-Russia Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. The despot's chilling promise comes amid claims that Russian soldiers deployed illegal chemical weapons in the besieged city of Mariupol - where thousands of innocent civilians have been slaughtered, according to Mirror Online.

Mourners at Christ the Savior Cathedral were removed to make way for Putin to pay his respects to the open coffin of ultranationalist and far-right lawmaker Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

In recent weeks reports have emerged of Putin's rising paranoia, with him terrified of assassination or a coup carried out by the country's top military chiefs.

**“All options are on the table”** - The UK’s armed forces minister James Heappey made his own veiled threat to the Kremlin today. He said “all options are on the table” if it’s proven that Russian troops used chemical agents in Mariupol, which has not yet been verified by British intelligence.

When questioned whether the use of the illegal weapons could trigger an on-the-ground response from British and NATO troops, he replied: “All options are on the table.”

## Putin's Big Lie:

**Why Russia Is Doubling Down On The "Denazification" Of Ukraine** - Even as the Russian army shifts in its original invasion objectives, the country’s state media is busy fueling pro-war sentiment with what remains a central talking point, the supposed "denazification," of Ukraine, which some warn is a recipe for genocide.

At the end of March, Russia appeared to clearly readjust its ambitions for the invasion of Ukraine. Moscow was no longer requesting Ukraine to be “denazified,” and according to state media would “magnanimously” retreat from Kyiv towards the Eastern and Donbass regions of Ukraine.

But the would-be magnanimity didn't last long: the rhetoric coming from Russia now seems to have retreated back to familiar ground. The spurious narrative of denazification as the primary excuse for the “special military operation” is being pushed harder than ever before.

Central to this renewed push was an article written by Kremlin political operative Timofey Sergeitsev entitled “What is Russia to do with Ukraine?,” and published last week on Russian state-run media site Ria Novosti. It has since stoked a series of debates on state TV channels Rossiya 24 and Perviy Kanal, with viewers being bombarded with denazification propaganda in an attempt to fuel the pro-War sentiment in Russia.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians have warned that the article is a “blueprint for genocide,” The harrowing article argues that denazification of Ukraine goes hand-in-hand with de-Ukrainianization. He writes: “The political elite must be eliminated, its re-education is impossible. The common people, who actively and passively supported it by action and inaction, must survive the hardships of the war and assimilate the experience as a historical lesson and atonement for its guilt.”

The article has since been viewed millions of times and was published in tandem with an article by Victoria Nikiforova, advising Ukrainians on how to cure themselves of their “Stockholm Syndrome” with the West. She comments on the psychological instability of the Ukrainian people, who support “drug addicts and neo-Nazis,” saying that “after the liberation of Ukraine, of course, a whole range of measures will be required to bring these mentally unhealthy people to their senses.”