

Conflict Update # 272

November 24th, 2022

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 85,720 (390) soldiers killed, 2,898 (+1) enemy tanks, 5,837 (5) armored combat vehicles, 1,889 (+2) artillery systems, 395 (+2) MLRS systems, 209 (+0) air defense systems, 278 (+0) warplanes, 261 (+0) helicopters, 1,547 (+10) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 531 (+51) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 4,400 (+4) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 161 (+0) units of specialized equipment.

Key Takeaways

Russian forces in Kherson alert as Ukraine plans next move - Ukraine has kept Russian forces guessing about their next move, pinning down occupying troops in defensive positions.

After recapturing Kherson city, Ukraine kept Russian forces guessing about their next move, pinning down occupying troops in defensive positions and rendering them unavailable for offensive operations.

Some 30,000 Russian troops that withdrew from the west bank of the Dnieper river earlier this month were entrenching themselves in the Zaporizhia and Kherson regions during the 39th week of the war, deputy head of Ukrainian military intelligence Major-General Vadym Skibitskiy, told the Kyiv Post.

“[The Russians] are waiting for our liberation offensive, that’s why they have created a defensive line in Kherson, another on the administrative border of [Kherson and] Crimea, and another in the northern Crimea region,” Skibitskiy said.

“The enemy is on the defensive in the Zaporizhzhia direction,” said Ukraine’s general staff. “In the Kryvyi Rih and Kherson directions, the enemy is creating an echeloned defence system, improving fortification equipment and



logistical support of advanced units, and not stopping artillery fire at the positions of our troops and settlements on the right bank of the Dnipro River.”

In announcing the withdrawal from Kherson city on November 9, the Russian commander-in-chief of forces in Ukraine, Alexander Surovikin, had said it would free up manpower to strengthen other fronts.

Russia has been prioritizing the occupation of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in the east, and Russian artillery fruitlessly pounded away at Ukrainian defenders there throughout the week.

Ukraine’s general staff said that continued to be Russia’s plan, but soldiers were resisting it.

“The command of the Russian occupying forces plans to redeploy separate units withdrawn during the retreat from the right bank of the Dnipro River in the Kherson oblast to continue hostilities in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The mobilised persons, most of whom make up these formations, are very indignant at the prospects of the implementation of the mentioned plans” they said.

A possible further source of Russian restraint is that Ukraine has made no secret of its intention to take back Crimea, annexed by Russia in 2014.

To get there, it must prevail over the remaining Russian forces in Kherson or Zaporizhia, and Russia appeared to anticipate an attack there.

Skibitskiy said the timing of a counteroffensive in Crimea would depend mainly on the “weapons and munitions” Ukraine would receive from allies, but that once these were in place, troop movements could outmaneuver those of Russian forces.

“One area where we have some advantages over the Russian Federation is very quick movement or regrouping of forces,” he said. “For example, during the preparation for [counteroffensive] operations in Kherson region, Russian forces redeployed battalion tactical groups from Kharkiv and Donetsk to Kherson and Zaporizhia for a month,” he said.

“If the Ukrainians continue to fight the methodical, logistically centric war that they have so far, then their next move will try and extend the range of their weapons to fully separate Russian forces into completely unsupported zones,” said Phillips O’Brien, who teaches strategy at the University of St Andrews.

That means driving a wedge through Zaporizhia to the Sea of Azov, cutting off Russian forces in Kherson and Crimea from those in Donetsk and Luhansk, he said. (**Comment** – This is precisely what our Updates have been forecasting for months now).

Despite the mobilisation of 300,000 conscripts in September and October, Russia appears short of manpower – possibly because it cannot adequately equip those forces.

Ukraine’s general staff said Russia was preparing legislation to conscript men in occupied parts of Ukraine next year and was continuing to recruit prisoners in Russia.

They also said the Wagner group, which is credited with some Russian successes in the Bakhmut area over the past months, was enlisting mercenaries among factory workers in Belgorod.

Putin sending elite airborne troops in bid to stop Ukrainian breakthrough in east - Putin is sending some of his elite airborne troops to shore up his army’s defences against a Ukrainian counter-offensive in the eastern Donbas region, British defence chiefs believe.

Russian generals are thought to be deploying VDV airborne forces to stop a breakthrough by Ukrainian forces on the frontline between Kremina and Svatove.

But these elite units are reported to have been “severely weakened” by losses so far during Putin’s “one-week” war, now running for nine months.

In its latest intelligence update, the British MoD said: “In the last two weeks, Russia has likely redeployed major elements of the VDV (airborne forces) to the Donetsk and Luhansk fronts in the Donbas. (**Comment** – they have also deployed troops relocated from Kherson to the same zone/s).

“From September to October, most of the severely weakened VDV units were dedicated to the defence of the Russian-held territory west of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast (province).

The briefing added: “Some VDV units have likely been reinforced with mobilised reservists. Although these poorly trained personnel will dilute VDV’s supposedly elite capability, Russia will likely still allocate these units to sectors deemed especially important.

“Potential operational tasks for the VDV include supporting the defence of the Kremina-Svatove area in Luhansk Oblast or reinforcing offensive operations against the Donetsk Oblast town of Bakhmut.”

Russian sources were claiming that Ukrainian forces were continuing counter-offensive operations in the directions of Kremina and Svatove, according to the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War.

Russian troops were seeking to make advances in the Bakhmut area and digging in on the east bank of the Dnipro, it added.

Comment – Russia is desperately defending this zone, being the narrowest of gaps between Ukrainian and Russian forces along the entire front line. As mentioned in previous Updates, Ukraine breaking through here leads straight to Mariupol on the coast, a port Russian logistical commanders use extensively to resupply BTGs.

Aside from this, it neatly bisects the entire Russian war machine, stranding hundreds of thousands of their soldiers in an encircled killing zone.

After Russian retreat, Ukrainian military plans next move – Ukraine has diligently maintained “radio silence” in all battles and tactical moves.

They just do not broadcast or talk about planned moves and strategies, other than when feinting as happened in the Kharkiv success.

Ukrainian commanders also follow strict discipline in planning and executing, exercising patience and exemplary tactical adherence to “marching orders.”

As mentioned in a previous Update, their leadership secures territory, consolidates it, moves artillery to these new front lines, brings in supplies and armaments, secures supply chains, rotates troops and then launches the next phase - once it has what they believe is the upper hand.

Current battles in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts are more holding patterns than advance strategies.

But they still continue to blast Russian rearguard points and command posts and deploy partisan scouts to



reconnoiter local positions, assumptions and enemy positions.

Following this logic, Ukraine suffered tremendously in late February/early March. Then they started pushing the invaders back, before routing them in northern Ukraine.

Then all quiet.

Suddenly they again rout enemy forces, but this time in Kharkiv Oblast further east, capturing huge amounts of Russian hardware and munitions.

Then all quiet again.

Once more they appear and push back Russian positions, but this time in Kherson Oblast.

Now it is all quiet again.

Sniper duty – Ukrainian sniper squads are operating across all lines, picking out Russian soldiers and commanders, keeping them ill at ease for fear of being struck and killed.

Ukraine has deployed squads which include the shooter, his spotter and a couple of drone operators. The drones spot from on high, communicating to the spotter who then coordinates with the shooter, armed with a .50 caliber sniper rifle.

These squads have been very successful and accompany most brigades.



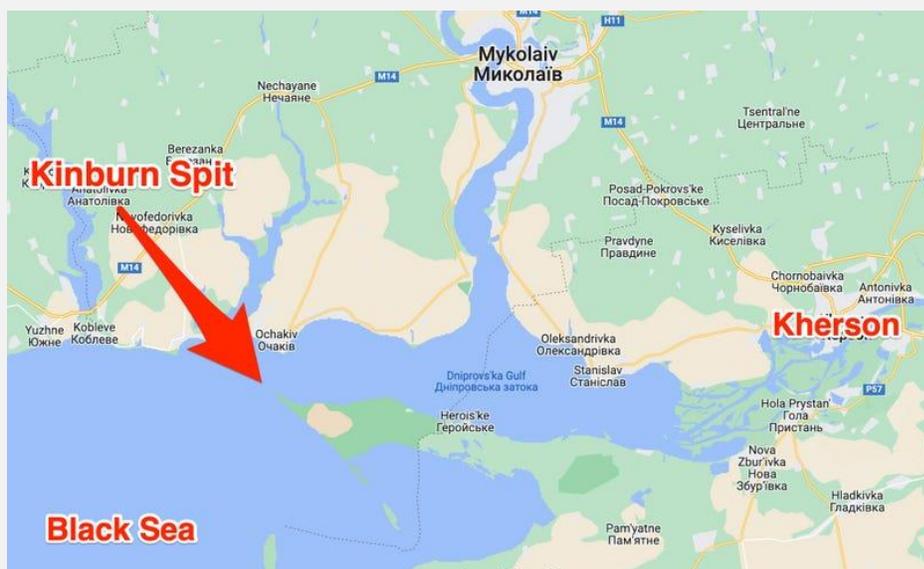
This tactic effectively forces enemy combatants to go to ground and commanders to lead from behind defensive structures, ensuring they operate with little to no first-hand sighting of the battle terrain.

Ukraine is attempting to retake a crucial spit of land that could disrupt Russia's missile barrages -

Ukraine is trying to take control of a strategic spit of land that would allow it to take command of a major river and thwart Russia's missile strikes parts of the country.

Ukraine has confirmed that is trying to regain control of the Kinburn Spit — a thin stretch of land across much of the mouth of the Dnipro river that it lost to Russia in June.

Ukrainian officials have said that it would release no details on the operation until it had concluded. Forbes reported on Thursday that Ukrainian commandos landed in small boats on the spit in an amphibious attack.



It did not say how big or well-armed a landing party was and also not clear how much of a defense Russia was making.

But if Ukraine were to retake the Kinburn Spit, it would get a significant new advantage.

Russia has been using the strip for its missile and artillery strikes nearby Ukrainian cities, according to a recent update from The Institute for the Study of War.

Ukraine regaining the peninsula would "relieve" those areas from Russia's strikes by putting them out of range, it said.

Russia has heavily relied on artillery and missile strikes for its entire invasion, and in recent weeks has waged an intense campaign of missile and drone strikes on residential areas, seemingly aimed at knocking out electricity and water supplies to civilians.

Depriving Russia of the Kinburn Spit would degrade Russia's ability to strike some regions, per the ISW, though it wouldn't end Russian strikes in of itself.

Whoever gets the peninsula also gains significant control over the entrance to the Dnipro, Ukraine's most significant waterway, the ISW noted.

Russia and Ukraine swap 50 POWs each - Russia and Ukraine have swapped prisoners of war according to the 50-50 formula, head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andrii Yermak, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk "people's republic" Denis Pushilin, and Russia's Defence Ministry all say.

Electricity 'restored to all regions' of Ukraine after devastating Russian strikes - A senior aide to Ukraine's president says electricity has been restored to all regions of Ukraine, although efforts continue in many places to connect households and efforts to restore water supplies are ongoing.

The deputy head of the Office of the President Kyrylo Tymoshenko said on November 24 that "the first thing that was restored were critical infrastructure facilities."

Retired US General predicts how new phase of Ukraine war will unfold – Former commanding general of the United States Army Europe has said that Russia will try to force a pause in fighting in Ukraine so its troops can regroup.

Mark Hertling said in a Twitter thread on Thursday the conflict was now entering its fourth phase. The first phase involved Russia's initial intentions of executing a change of government in Kyiv and controlling ports on the Black and Azov Seas.

The second phase included a struggle by both sides for personnel, equipment and ammunition, while the third phase saw Ukrainian forces generate momentum.

Hertling said that now Moscow is seeking to create a "frozen conflict" along the lines of the situations in Transnistria, a Russian-dominated unrecognized republic in Moldova, and the similarly unrecognized breakaway Georgian republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

But Hertling said that a cessation in hostilities could allow Russia to "rebuild their force and attack again" and that the West "should not fall for this ruse."

He said that Moscow "must not be allowed" to create another frozen conflict with "shifty attempts at cease fires."

"Ukraine will still win this fight, regain their territory and sovereignty. But there's lots of fighting ahead," he said.

Hertling, who commanded the 1st Armored Division and Task Force Iron/Multinational Division-North in Iraq during the troop surge of 2007 to 2008, also predicted that Iran, which is supplying drones, and reportedly missiles to Russian forces, would continue to step up its support for Moscow.

Meanwhile, Moscow's forces will focus on the "continued destruction" of Ukrainian infrastructure and "the suffering of the Ukrainian people as a strategic objective to gain concessions." "Ukrainian morale will be tested" with continued Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure but the country "will persevere."

Following Russia's withdrawal from Kherson, Hertling believed that Ukraine's force "will slowly grow in capabilities" although a continued maneuver east of the Dnieper River and into the Russian occupied Donbas region "will prove to be a much tougher fight."

He said that the Ukrainian armed forces face fights in the east and the south of the country which will be "tougher" because of trickier terrain, longer supply lines and the issue of fielding new weapons and tactics.

Hertling's comments come as Petro Kotin, head of nuclear power company Energoatom, warned of the consequences of continued Russian attacks against Ukrainian nuclear power plants, saying on Thursday that such attacks risked "nuclear and radioactive catastrophe."

A day earlier, Ukrainian officials said three nuclear power plants on territory held by Ukrainian forces had been switched off after the latest wave of Russian missile strikes.

Comment – True State Terrorism.

European Parliament declares Russia 'state sponsor of terrorism' - The European Parliament has declared Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism," saying Moscow's "deliberate attacks and atrocities" in Ukraine violate human rights and international humanitarian laws.

European lawmakers passed the resolution on Wednesday with 494 members voting in favour, 58 against and 44 abstaining.

Ukraine keeps trying to kill Russia's navy with drones - On Tuesday this week, Kyiv conducted a drone strike against the Crimean port city of Sevastopol, home to the Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet.

Reports suggested that Admiral Makarov, an Admiral Grigorovich-class frigate that entered service in 2018, suffered a breach to her hull and damage to the ship's radar system.

The strikes were just the latest efforts by Ukraine to push into Crimea, which was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014. It further highlights how Kyiv's offensive to liberate captured territory shows little signs of losing momentum.

This is also just the most recent attack on Sevastopol and likely won't be the last.

An audacious raid conducted on the Russian Navy in port in the city last month successfully disabled the Black Sea Fleet's flagship frigate Admiral Makarov, and damaged at least two other ships.

Comment – Just Russia having knowledge of Ukraine's ability to strike it anywhere and across all occupied territories is unsettling and forces them to maintain defensive capabilities close to hand, similar to the explosion on the Kerch Bridge some months ago.

There are reports of a large-scale evacuation of Russian citizens from Crimea in expectation of a pending Ukrainian assault. Russia posted thousands of its citizens to the island after illegally occupying it in 2014. This is an age-old trick of the Kremlin in trying to dilute nationalities in occupied areas.

Good strategic and tactical approach by Ukraine in order to keep uppermost in Russian minds.

Ukraine's attack on one of Russia's most important bases shows Putin is losing his grip on the Black Sea

Ukrainian forces appear to have launched a reasonably successful attack on Russian naval forces at Sevastopol.

How successful it was remains unclear, but reportedly a frigate and a minesweeper took some damage. (The frigate, Admiral Makarov, became the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet upon the sinking of the cruiser Moskva).

The attacks were undertaken by unmanned surface vehicles, or USVs, and unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs. Video taken during the attack has been yet another propaganda boon for Kyiv.

Such successes are critical to maintaining support for the war at home and across the international coalition that currently backs Ukraine.

The attack appears to have had only limited military effects, but it is important in strategic terms, because Russia can no longer count on the security of its anchorage at Sevastopol. The growing reach of Ukrainian weapons puts the viability of the base in great question.

That is a problem for Russia, because the maintenance of a fleet anchorage at Sevastopol is crucial to Moscow's aims in this conflict. Without Sevastopol, Russia would struggle to maintain a significant naval force in the Black Sea, as other available ports lack the natural and man-made facilities necessary to keep the fleet at readiness.

Russia lost its major shipyards in the region when Ukraine gained independence in 1991, and as a consequence of Moscow's estrangement from Kyiv since 2014. Indeed, concern that Kyiv might abrogate or at least fail to renew the Russian lease over Sevastopol helped tip the balance of Russian decision-making towards the seizure of Crimea in 2014.

Neutralization of Sevastopol would affect Russia's ability to project power into the Mediterranean and beyond.

Ukraine's military is going 'underground' to fight Russia - As Ukrainian civilians brace for a brutal winter without full access to electricity, the Ukrainian military is creating a network of underground fortified positions designed to keep soldiers safe – and warm – as they continue fighting through the colder months.

In a report from the Ukrainian Military Center, photographs of underground metal modules reveal how engineering units of the Armed Forces are working around the clock to ensure soldiers can remain safe.

"Engineering crews are actively working on a reliable, competent arrangement of fortified positions," the report reveals, citing ArmyInform.

The modules are made of corrugated metal and are installed into trenches dug more than 10' into the ground. Trenches are prepared before the modules arrive, in an effort to evade Russian strikes designed to stop the units from being installed. Soldiers dig the trenches by hand, and the pre-prepared modules are disguised as they are brought onto the battlefield and installed into the trenches.

Each module can accommodate up to 6 servicemen, and they are designed to provide as much comfort as possible. With that in mind, the modules feature a bed for each soldier, as well as a stove for heating and cooking.

Behind enemy lines, Ukrainian partisans played a key role in the battle for Kherson - In parallel with Ukrainian forces, civilians acted clandestinely in the territories occupied by Russians.

This is by definition one of the invisible aspects of the war in Ukraine. However, according to Ukrainian officers that *Le Monde* met in recent months, clandestine military operations in enemy territories have made a significant contribution to resisting the Russian invasion.

Between "fighters infiltrated by the special operations command, who act on orders" and "ordinary civilians who become partisans and pass on information" to the Ukrainian army, clandestine action greatly influenced the battle in the Kherson region and was "at the heart of the victory," said General Dmytro Marchenko, who coordinates partisan operations in southern Ukraine from his command post in Mykolaiv.

According to the Ukrainian forces, the Russian army suffered considerably from the destruction that prompted it, on several occasions, to flee the battlefield in the face of the scale of losses, impacting headquarters, barracks, ammunition depots, tanks and artillery positions.

Russia can no longer rely on General Winter - Putin can no longer count on Russia's old ally now that the Kremlin's soldiers in Ukraine are the demoralized invaders, facing rasping sleet and snow, and temperatures that plunge to -20 Celsius, and lower.



Pundits and military analysts had suggested for months that winter would bring a hiatus in the fighting on Ukraine's frontlines — but it is becoming increasingly clear that both sides will seek to press home advantages in the cold, each marshaling their dueling generals. It's General Winter versus General Frostbite. The Russian plan is to demoralize Ukrainian civilians by knocking out their electricity and heating, while the Ukrainians want to launch commando raids and train their artillery on poorly equipped Russian draftees, who lack warm winter gear and hot food.

Ukraine's defense ministry has also made clear the plan is to keep the pressure up during winter. "Those who are now talking about a possible 'pause in hostilities' due to freezing temperatures in the winter have likely never sunbathed in January on the southern coast of Crimea," Ukraine's defense ministry tauntingly tweeted Sunday, hinting at the Ukrainian ambition of taking the fight to the peninsula Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

General Winter has, of course, not always come good for Russia. The Finns turned the tables on the Russians during their 1940 Winter War outmaneuvering the leaden Russians as they glided nimbly across the snows on skis to launch lightning guerrilla strikes.

For now, action is crackling across a number of fronts. Nothing signals a quiet winter.

According to Kateryna Stepanenko from the Institute for the Study of War, which has been monitoring combat using open sources: "The Russians are resuming and intensifying their offensive operations southwest of Donetsk oblast [province]." She added that they were using hardened paratroopers freed up by the withdrawal from around the southern city of Kherson.

The Ukrainians have also been moving forces to reinforce their line, said Nick Reynolds of Britain's Royal United Services Institute, a security think tank that's been conducting operational analysis for Ukraine's general staff.

Reynolds added the Ukrainians want also to push the Russians on the east bank of the Dnipro River 15 to 20 kilometers further from newly liberated Kherson to stop Russian artillery bombardments. This week, both sides have been trading barrages across the Dnipro River with Kherson city echoing with the blasts, prompting the Ukrainian authorities to offer civilians evacuation.

Reynolds also suspects the Russians may throw in a wild card by building up "forces on the Belarusian border north of Kyiv again in an attempt to draw Ukrainian forces away from the frontline in the south and east."

Putin

Putin accused of staging event with handpicked relatives of Russian soldiers, as Kremlin attempts to quell anger over Ukraine war - Two months after the Kremlin ordered a partial mobilization of Russia's reservist troops, President Vladimir Putin is set to meet with mothers and wives of men who were drafted, the Kremlin said.

But some are suggesting that attendees are being purposefully handpicked in order to stage little more than a publicity stunt for the Russian president, according to The Guardian.

Many in Russia have grown more critical of the war amid ongoing reports that mobilized Russian soldiers are being deployed in Ukraine with little training, poor equipment, and often no clear orders.

In a video blog posted online earlier this week, Olga Tsukanova, the co-head of the grassroots movement Council of Mothers and Wives, accused Putin of "hiding" from them.

The group has petitioned the Kremlin to halt mobilization and return men from the front.

"Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin], are you a man or what?" Tsukanova said in the video, according to The Guardian. "Do you have the courage to look us in the eye, not with hand-picked women and mothers in your pocket, but with real [women], who have traveled from various cities here to meet with you?"

"We are waiting for your answer! Or will you hide again?" said Tsukanova, whose son was drafted but has resisted being sent to Ukraine, The Guardian reported.

Valentina Melnikova, a veteran advocate of the NGO Soldiers' Mothers Committee, told The Guardian that they have received thousands of complaints since the start of Russia's invasion on February 24.

"Of course, they didn't invite us [to the event] and we of course don't want to go," she told The Guardian. "To go together with the relatives of mobilized [soldiers] who agreed to their husbands and sons dying on the front is not comfortable for us."

Moscow official calls for 'liquidation of Ukraine' in rant – A Moscow official has rejected Ukraine's right to exist in what has been described as the latest piece of "openly genocidal rhetoric" by a Russian politician.

Andrey Medvedev, deputy chairman of Moscow's city parliament and a journalist, told his 150,000 followers on Telegram that in Ukraine "Russophobia has been elevated to the rank of national policy" and Kyiv "will never stop in its desire to kill us."

He wrote, "The Ukrainian nation does not exist, it is a political orientation," as he questioned the notion of Ukrainian identity. Its language, he added, "was still being formed."

Impacts

Moldova summons Envoy, demands Russia 'Stop these bombings' after energy blackout - Moldova's Foreign Ministry summoned the Russian ambassador to Chisinau on November 24 to "firmly condemn" the invasion of Ukraine and demand that Russia end its bombings, which were blamed for knocking out power in most of Moldova a day earlier.

Moscow's war planners have increasingly targeted civilian infrastructure throughout Ukraine following weeks of gains as Kyiv's forces recaptured occupied territory in the east.

Much of Moldova's foreign gas and energy arrives through neighboring Ukraine.

"The brutal attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine creates problems for every citizen of the Republic of Moldova" regardless of their political or geopolitical preferences, the Moldovan ministry told Russian Ambassador Oleg Vasnetsov. "Russia must stop these bombings."

The world responds: is Ukraine headed for a nuclear accident? – IAEA Says Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant Safety Is "Increasingly Precarious" – The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant once again lost access to external energy sources on Wednesday and revealed that the plant was relying on diesel generators to remain functional and safe.

In a statement, the United Nations nuclear watchdog described the "increasingly precarious" nuclear safety situation at the plant, describing how the conflict between Ukrainian and Russian soldiers had created a dangerous and worsening situation at the plant.

A team of IAEA experts and officials at the plant confirmed that it lost power at 3:30 pm local time, meaning it was entirely disconnected from the national grid. The news came following reports of "widespread military action" targeting Ukraine's national energy infrastructure.

A fresh round of missile strikes in Ukraine meant that the plant was taken offline, prompting 20 diesel generators on the site to begin operating automatically.

Eight generators reportedly began supplying the nuclear plant with sufficient power to keep safety-related equipment online, and a further 12 generators were left in standby mode.

Russia is getting ready for an Arctic war - Even as Russian troops on the frontlines in the Eastern Donbas region of Ukraine seem ill-equipped for the coming winter, the Kremlin has continued to prepare for a potential conflict in the mineral-rich Arctic. In recent years, Moscow has made it more than abundantly clear that it sees the region as its own and has built up its military presence.

That has included an expansion of the Nagurskoye air base, which is located on the Franz Josef Land archipelago about 600 miles south of the geographic North Pole.

The base, which was first built in the 1950s as a weather station and communications outpost between the Eurasian mainland and the North Pole, features a 'shamrock-shaped facility' that consists of three large pods extending from a central atrium called the Arctic Trefoil. The structure is painted in the white-red-blue colors of the Russian national flag to make sure anyone who sees it knows that this is Russian territory.

Harsh Reality of Arctic

The base is far from an ideal posting as temperatures regularly plunge to minus 42 Celsius in the winter, and snow only disappears from August to mid-September. However, Russian units have continued to train in the extreme cold – and even the Russian Air Force has conducted operations with its MiG-31 long-range jet fighters. It truly is pushing the limits of the “all-weather” aircraft, which now patrol the skies overhead.

Of course, defending the region will require more than control of the air, and Russian engineers announced this week that they are developing armored vehicles to operate in the harsh Arctic climates.

Armored vehicles, tanks and other military vehicles will be considerably modified.

Among the vehicles now being developed are advanced tanks, tracked and wheeled infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers under the Armata, Kurganets-25 and Boomerang research projects.

Moscow has touted the capabilities of these new platforms and suggested it has also adopted a new type of tank support combat vehicle that could effectively suppress and destroy an enemy's anti-tank weaponry, tanks and other armored targets.

When these vehicles could actually be deployed to the Arctic isn't clear. As with other Russian military programs, these sound capable but it is unclear if Moscow maintains the resources to produce the vehicles in numbers. More likely, it is the latest hype from the Kremlin that sounds good in releases but will be a long-time in actually materializing.

Peace Talks

Kremlin: Ukraine leadership can 'end suffering' by meeting Russian demands - The Kremlin earlier today denied that its attacks on Ukraine's electricity network were aimed at civilians but said Kyiv could "end the suffering" of its population by meeting Russia's demands to resolve the conflict.

Repeated missile barrages against power infrastructure across Ukraine has forced millions of people to go without light, water or heating for hours or days at a time, just as outdoor temperatures fall below freezing.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "there have been no strikes on 'social' targets and there are none - special attention is paid to this."

"As for targets that are directly or indirectly related to military potential, they are subject to strikes," he said.

Peskov was asked how the suffering of Ukraine's civilian population could be reconciled with Putin's positions. Putin has said Russia does not wish to destroy Ukraine or its people.

"The leadership of Ukraine has every opportunity to bring the situation back to normal, has every opportunity to resolve the situation in such a way as to fulfil the requirements of the Russian side and, accordingly, end all possible suffering among the population."

Russia is upping their “offers” for peace talks evermore in the hope of stalling Ukrainian advances in both the east and the south toward Crimea. Experienced US retired army commanders are convinced that Ukraine is about to spring forward once again. Russian assumptions will mirror this view via their command staff – and push for time to rebuild.

Geopolitics

Putin's nemesis Bill Browder dismayed that South Africa is siding with the 'murderous dictator' - Bill Browder, architect of the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign to sanction perpetrators of atrocities and corruption around the world, is really disappointed that South Africa is "siding with a murderous dictator." Russian President Vladimir Putin, instead of with the free and fair world – the free and fair world which sided with South Africa to help defeat apartheid.

Browder, then a major investment fund manager, was hounded out of Russia in 2005 when he exposed massive corruption among oligarchs close to Putin. He launched the Magnitsky Act in the US after his Russian lawyer, Sergey Magnitsky, was tortured and murdered in a Russian police cell on 16 November 2009. This was after Magnitsky had exposed a massive scam in which Browder's financial documents were stolen and used in a complex fraud to steal \$230-million in taxes which he had paid to the Russian government.

Browder told Daily Maverick's *The Gathering* in Cape Town earlier today the US Magnitsky Act of 2012 froze the assets and banned the visas of the Russians involved in Magnitsky's murder and the fraud he exposed.

Since then another 34 countries passed their own Magnitsky Acts which sanction not only Russians but also those responsible for human rights abuse and corruption across the world in places like China, Venezuela and Iran. Browder noted that the US Magnitsky Act was used to sanction the Gupta brothers for their corruption and State Capture in South Africa.

Browder addressed the gathering by video rather than in person because he said Putin hated him so much because of his Magnitsky laws that he had put him on several Interpol and extradition lists.

"There are certain countries that I can travel to. South Africa is one country I can't travel to because I'm pretty sure that if I did... the South African government would arrest me and send me back to Russia where President Putin would then torture and kill me like he did my dead lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky."

He said it would be great if South Africa also passed a Magnitsky Act, "as long as South Africa was using it properly. I kind of have my doubts right now based on the fact that South Africa is so sympathetic to Vladimir Putin."

Browder noted that all the rule-of-law countries in the world had condemned Putin in the harshest possible ways, sanctioned him, and supplied weapons to Ukraine.

"And then there's South Africa which we all supported when the South African people were standing up to apartheid. We all went on demonstrations at universities, boycotting products, getting sanctions imposed so that South Africa could live a free and fair life.

"And now South Africa is free and fair... instead of siding with the free and fair of the world, South Africa is siding with a murderous dictator and that really does disappoint me."

Browder hoped one day to return to South Africa "when it won't be dangerous to come there when another South African government, a new South African government, condemns Putin and does the right thing and joins the civilized world fighting against these atrocities."

Pretoria has drawn wide criticism for its "non-aligned" stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Though it initially called on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine, it has never condemned Russia or Putin for the aggression, and it has abstained from all of the resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly which did condemn them.

The Soviet Union was an Empire as is the Russian Federation. This in and of itself should alienate countries previously subject to imperial rule. Such as South Africa under Dutch and British rule for nearly 350 years.

Containment

Putin Is angry: Turkey gave Ukraine laser-guided missiles? - Turkey Gave Ukraine Laser-Guided Missiles – Even while Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pushes for Ukraine and Russia to resolve the conflict through diplomacy, unnamed sources told Middle East Eye this week that the country supplied Ukraine with dozens of TRLG-230 laser-guided missiles.

According to the news outlet, 50 TRLG-230 missiles were sent to Ukraine in the early summer.

The unnamed sources familiar with the matter confirmed a similar report from Oryx, a defense blog, which claimed on Monday that the weapons had been sent from Turkey to Ukraine.

While the report is still unconfirmed, some sources also claim that as many as 200 of the missiles have been sent to Ukraine so far – and that more could be on their way.

The fact that the deliveries were not announced does not necessarily mean that the reports are unlikely, however, given that Turkey's deliveries of Bayraktar UAVs, electronic warfare equipment, mortars, and ammunition have largely been made without announcements from the Turkish governments.

Shipments of weapons from Turkey to Ukraine typically only come to light weeks after they have already been delivered.

Hungary will provide \$195 million in financial aid to Ukraine as its contribution to a planned EU support package worth up to \$18.6 billion in 2023.

Humanitarian

Russia should be declared a terrorist state around the world, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said after another massive Russian missile attack killed six people and wounded 36.

'Attack goal reached': Russia's Defence Ministry comments on yesterday's massive attack on Ukraine's critical facilities - Russia's Defence Ministry reports that, on 23 November, Russian Armed Forces launched a massive attack using high-precision long-range air-and ground-based weaponry, at the military control system of Ukraine and energy facilities related to it. The goal of the attack has been reached, the ministry adds.

Russia's Defence Ministry claims that "not a single strike was carried out against targets within the city limits" of Kyiv. All of the destruction in Kyiv declared by Ukraine "was the result of foreign and Ukrainian air defence missiles falling in residential areas of the Ukrainian capital," the state body adds.

The attack by Russian troops, according to the Defence Ministry, "disrupted the transfer by rail of the AFU reserves, foreign weapons, military equipment and munition to the areas of combat operations."

Comment – A true reflection of State-sponsored terrorism. Russia is rapidly expending its missiles in the knowledge that Ukraine will shortly engage advanced anti-missile missiles, neutering Russian launches.

Prosecutor General of Ukraine: over 400 bodies of civilians found on liberated territories of Kherson region - Over 400 bodies of civilians have been found on the Kherson region territories liberated from Russian troops, Prosecutor General of Ukraine Andriy Kostin says. "According to the Prosecutor General Office, the presence of nine torture chambers on the liberated territory of the Kherson region has been confirmed. Also, 432 bodies of murdered civilians have been found," Ukraine's news agency Interfax-Ukraine quotes Kostin's words.

He says that the mine threat on the liberated territories remains at high level. "Many territories and buildings are still mined. Also, the aggressor continues mortar attacks," he claims.

According to the Prosecutor General, 12 joint investigative teams are working on the territory of the Kherson region. They will soon be joined by specialists from the Prosecutor General Office.

On 17 November, the National Police of Ukraine reported that law enforcement agents had discovered bodies of 991 civilians killed during Russian occupation on the liberated territories of the Donetsk, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson regions. On the same day, Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Denys Monastyrskyi, said bodies of 63 torture victims had been found in the areas of the Kherson region liberated from Russian forces.

Sanctions

EU fails to agree on gas price cap amid deep divisions - EU energy ministers failed earlier today to agree on a cap on gas prices to mitigate the energy crunch in Europe, amid deep divisions over an initial proposal slammed by many as a "joke." The ministers will now meet in the first half of December to try to bridge differences, said Czech Industry and Trade Minister Jozef Sikela, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU.

Russia's tanker fleet too small to bypass oil price cap - Maintaining current seaborne flows of 3.5 million barrels per day would require about a third more oil tankers than Russia has access to, says analyst Alexei Gromov,

Russia's oil tanker fleet is too small to fully circumvent a plan by the European Union, G7 countries, and Australia to enforce a price cap on its maritime crude exports starting on December 5, analysts and market watchers say.

The amount Russia would be unable to export is expected to increase when EU sanctions on Russian refined product shipments take effect on February 5.

In all the shortfall could mean Russia halts exports of around 1 million barrels per day, compared with current flows to the world market of around 3.5 million bpd. The impact would push oil and fuel prices higher and worsen global inflationary pressures.

Russia has said it will not sell oil to countries that endorse the price cap.

Russia needs to boost its fleet by 157 Aframax, 65 Suezmax, and 18 VLCC (very large crude carrier) vessels, Gromov told Reuters. Sixty are owned by Russian companies and another 70 aged at least 15 years – old by oil shipping standards – have been sold this year to unnamed firms that could trade oil outside the cap, Gromov said.

Aframax tankers carry around 600,000 barrels of oil, Suezmax about 1 million barrels, and VLCCs about 2 million barrels.

Comment – We have previously included articles regarding Russia's seaborne oil transportation and their need to transload mid-ocean – and even that will be a stretch.

The leaders of Poland and the Czech Republic publicly criticized Hungarian PM Orban on November 24, laying bare tensions within Central Europe's Visegrad Group that have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

War Crimes

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure an "intolerable, inhumane crime" and said the German presidency will invite G7 members at a meeting next week in Bucharest "to initiate further support for Ukraine's energy supply" as winter approaches.

War crimes are part of Russia's war culture, says Ukrainian Nobel Peace prize winner - Committing war crimes have become an integral part of how Moscow wages war and Kyiv shouldn't wait to bring alleged Russian perpetrators to justice, argues Oleksandra Matviychuk, head of the organization that jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

"For decades, Russia has used war for achieving its geopolitical interests and war crimes as a way to win these wars," Matviychuk, who heads the Center for Civil Liberties, told RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service in an expansive interview. "They learned that they could do whatever they want because they weren't punished for war crimes in Chechnya, Moldova, Georgia, Mali, or in Syria.

Therefore, until we can bring justice, there will be no sustainable peace in our region." Matviychuk, a lawyer by trade, says she wants to use the organization's elevated stature to call for international action against human rights violations and the growing list of evidence pointing toward war crimes committed by Russian forces since the Kremlin's February 24 invasion of Ukraine.

"We see that all these crimes have a systemic nature," she said. "It's clear that this is not done by any specific unit of the Russian armed forces but that it is part of the culture of how Russia conducts war."

Founded in 2007, the Center for Civil Liberties was established with the goal of pressuring Ukrainian authorities to turn the country into a full-fledged democracy and ensure that it was governed by the rule of law. But that mission shifted in 2014 when Moscow forcibly annexed the Crimean Peninsula and fighting with Russian-backed forces broke out in eastern Ukraine, which saw the group begin documenting abuses from the conflict, as well as the disappearances of Kremlin critics, journalists, and activists.

Matviychuk says her growing focus is to gain momentum to bring perpetrators of alleged war crimes to court.

She points to the Nuremberg Tribunal as an example often brought up as a template. However, unlike those trials that only began to hold Nazi war criminals accountable following Germany's loss in World War II, Matviychuk argues a similar effort for accountability toward Russia could begin immediately.

"We don't have to wait for Russia to lose. Why do we make people's demands for justice dependent on this?" Matviychuk asks. "We must create an international tribunal now and begin all necessary procedures to bring Russian war criminals to justice."

Doing so will be no small task.