

# Conflict Update # 45

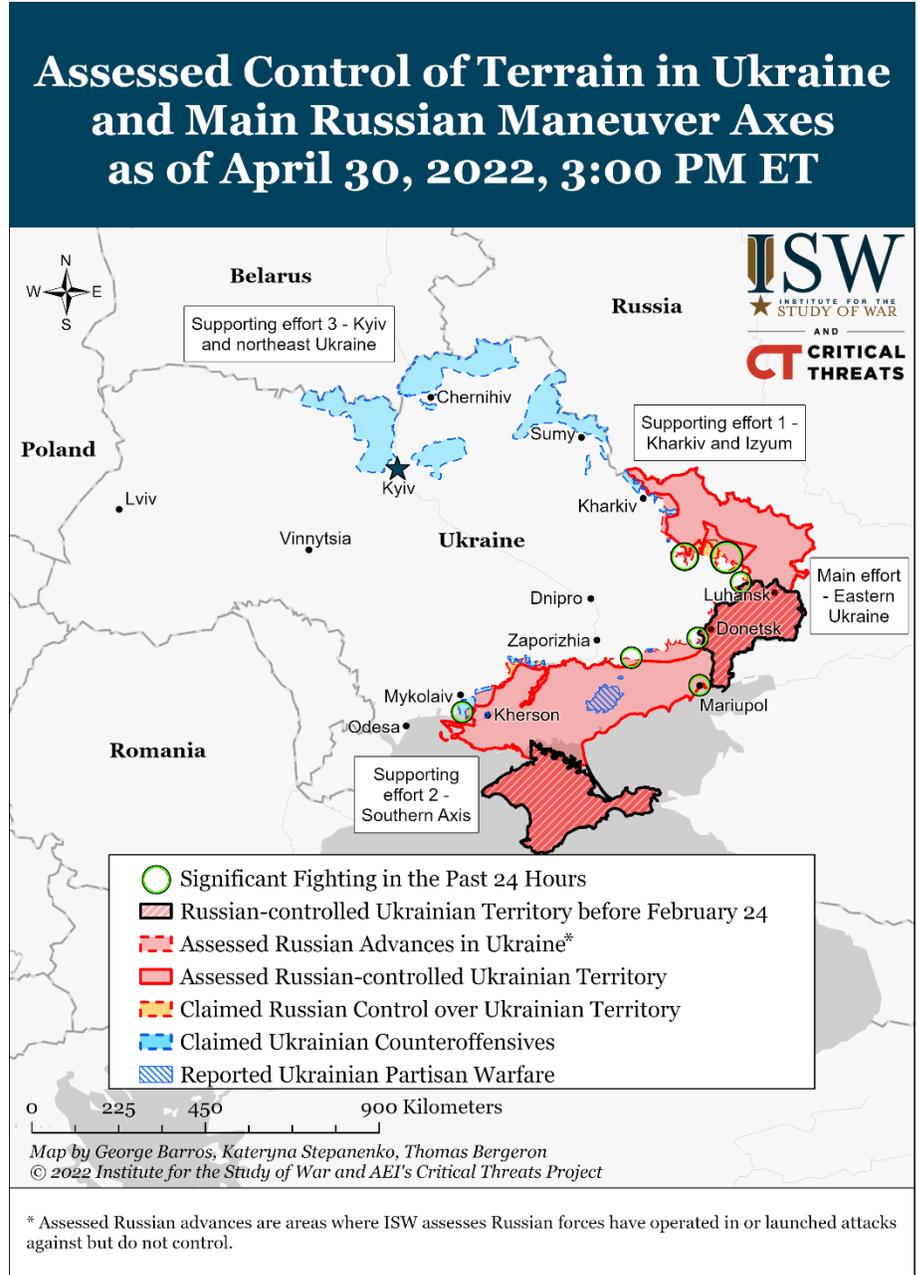
April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Conflict Assessment

**Another Russian General killed** - Ukrainian sources claimed an artillery strike on a Russian command post near Izyum killed Russian Major General Alexei Simonov today, although ISW cannot confirm preliminary reporting at this time. (See below).

### Key Takeaways

- A Ukrainian counteroffensive out of Kharkiv City will likely alleviate pressure on parts of the city that have suffered the most from Russian shelling and may force Russian troops from Izyum to re-deploy northward to support forces maintaining the partial encirclement of Kharkiv.
- Additional Russian forces are deploying to the Izyum front but are unlikely to enable any major advances.
- Russian troops did not make any confirmed advances to the southwest or southeast of Izyum or to the west of the Donetsk-Luhansk frontline.
- Russian forces in Kherson are pausing major offensive operations to improve their tactical positions and regroup to prepare for a renewed offensive to capture the administrative borders of Kherson.
- Russian occupation forces in Mariupol announced plans to consolidate their control over the city and intend to return Ukrainian citizens forcibly deported into Russia at some point in the future.



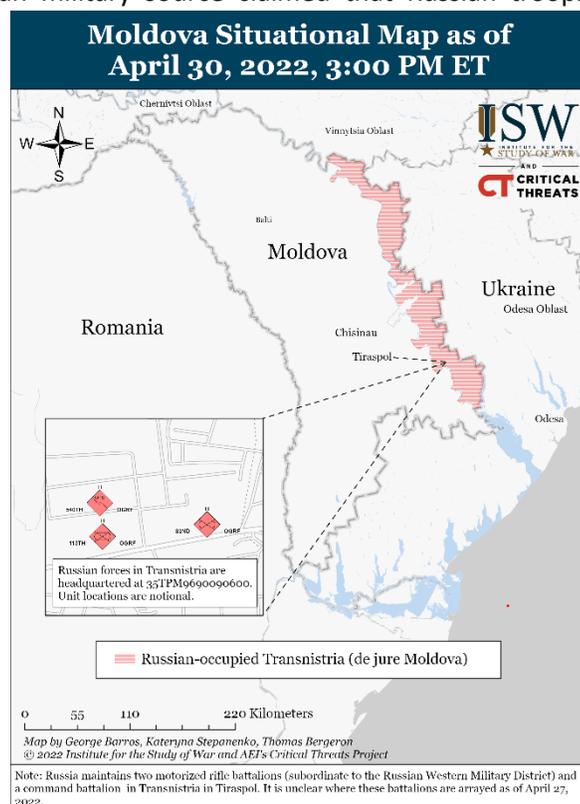
**Subordinate Main Effort—Mariupol** - Russian forces remaining in Mariupol, including elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, continued to block Ukrainian troops in the Azovstal Steel Plant and carried out airstrikes on April 30. Occupying Russian forces are intensifying occupation measures through Mariupol. Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated that abandoned homes in the Staryi Krym region of Mariupol are being resettled under

DNR-issued permits and that the Kremlin plans to return Mariupol residents who were previously forcibly deported to Russia once Russian forces consolidate control of the city. Head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Denis Pushilin announced the "Great Construction" of Mariupol today.

**Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts** - Russian forces continued unsuccessful attacks alongside artillery fire and airstrikes on the entire Donetsk-Luhansk frontline and did not make any confirmed advances today. Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces aim to capture Rubizhne and Popasna and use these towns as springboards for further advances west toward Lyman and Slovyansk. Russian forces around Izyum are attempting to capture these towns from the north to merge Russian advances in eastern Ukraine, but Ukrainian forces are successfully preventing them from making major gains on either axis.

**Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum** - Russian forces continued to attack southeast and southwest from Izyum but did not secure any confirmed advances in these directions today. Ukrainian General Staff stated that elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army, 20th Combined Arms Army, 35th Combined Arms Army, 68th Army Corps, and likely 2 battalion tactical groups (BTGs) of the 76th Airborne Division are trying to advance southwest to Barvinkove and southeast to Slovyansk. They additionally reported that Russian forces are deploying unspecified elements of the Eastern Military District to the Izyum area to support these advances, and that additional Russian air-defense forces are deploying to cover Russian troops in the Izyum area. A Pro-Russian military source claimed that Russian troops encircled approximately 600 Ukrainian troops in Yaremivka, about 25 kilometers southeast of Izyum on the road to Slovyansk, although ISW cannot independently confirm this report. Ukrainian sources claimed an artillery strike on a Russian command post near Izyum killed Russian Major General Alexei Simonov on April 30, although ISW cannot confirm preliminary reporting at this time.

**Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis** - Russian forces continued to prioritize improving their tactical positions and shelling Ukrainian positions on the Southern Axis but did not make any confirmed advances today. Ukrainian General Staff notably stated that elements of the 8th and 49th Combined Arms Army, 22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet, and Airborne forces are engaging in combat operations to improve their tactical positions (indicating local attacks to capture key terrain, rather than major offensive operations) and are regrouping and replenishing supplies in preparation for a renewed push to reach the administrative borders of Kherson Oblast. Russian forces shelled several points in Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv Oblasts. Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces continue to disseminate disinformation about the threat of Ukrainian troops to the population of Transnistria. See map to right.



**Supporting Effort #3—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine** - There were no significant activities on this axis in the past 24 hours.

### Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces attacking southeast from Izyum, west from Kreminna and Popasna, and north from Donetsk City will likely make steady but tactical gains against Ukrainian defenders.

- Russian forces will likely attempt to starve out the remaining defenders of the Azovstal Steel Plant in Mariupol and will not allow trapped civilians to evacuate but may conduct costly assaults on remaining Ukrainian defenders to claim a propaganda victory.
- Russian forces are likely preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.
- Russia may continue false-flag attacks in and around Transnistria or might move to generate a more serious crisis in Transnistria and Moldova more generally.

**US says Russia plans to dismantle local governments across Ukraine and install its own puppet leaders** - Russia plans to dismantle Ukraine's government and install puppet leaders to head local municipalities, a US official said on Thursday.

Michael Carpenter, US ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said in remarks to the agency's permanent council in Vienna that Russia seeks a "forced capitulation" of Ukraine's elected government and wants to "dissolve" all local municipal governments across the country.

"Plans for a new government and new constitution are being developed by Russian officials and so-called 'separatists,'" Carpenter said. He added: "This planning includes a moratorium disallowing legitimate Ukrainian leaders and those supporting Ukraine's legitimate government from any leadership positions."

**Depleted Russian units that failed to take Kyiv are merging, says MoD** - Russian troops have been forced to merge and redeploy units from their "failed advances" in Ukraine's north-east, the UK Ministry of Defence has said, as both Kyiv and Moscow deal with serious losses on the frontline in the Donbas region.

"Russia hopes to rectify issues that have previously constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control," a British military intelligence report released early on Saturday said.

"It has been forced to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in north-east Ukraine. Many of these units are likely suffering from weakened morale."

**Ukraine says Russia taking 'colossal losses' in eastern battle** - Ukraine acknowledged on Friday it was taking heavy losses in Russia's assault in the east, but said Russia's losses were even worse. "We have serious losses but the Russians' losses are much much bigger ... They have colossal losses," presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said, without elaborating. Western officials said Russia had been suffering fewer casualties after narrowing the scale of its invasion but numbers were still "quite high."

**Russian Strike on Odesa Airport Knocks Out Runway** - A Russian missile strike on Odesa airport has damaged the runway and it can no longer be used, the Ukrainian military said today.

**Russia Pounds Eastern Donbas Region, Fails to Capture Target Areas** - Russian forces pounded Ukraine's eastern Donbas region on Saturday but failed to capture three target areas, Ukraine's military said, while Moscow said Western sanctions on Russia and arms shipments to Ukraine were impeding peace negotiations.

**Russian assault on Donbas "behind schedule"** - Russian forces appear to be "several days behind where they wanted to be" in their latest assault on Ukraine's Donbas region, a senior U.S. defense official said on Friday.

Russian troops pulled back from Kyiv and refocused their efforts on the Donbas region earlier this month after failing to seize the Ukrainian capital. The Pentagon believes Russian forces intended to be further along in their efforts to completely encircle Ukrainian troops in the east, the official said.

Moscow's forces have not been able to link its units in the north with those in the south.

"In fact, they're nowhere close to linking north with south as the Ukrainians continue to fight back," the official said.

What they're saying: Russian forces are using artillery and some airstrikes before moving in their ground forces, but these ground movements are making "plodding, uneven progress," the official said.

"The artillery and airstrikes that they're launching against Ukrainian positions are not having the effect that they want them to have," the official said. "The Ukrainians are still able to resist ... So that's why we think this progress has been slow and uneven still over the last 24 hours."

"We also assess that because of this slow and uneven progress — again without perfect knowledge of every aspect of the Russian plan — we do believe in a sense that they are behind schedule in what they were trying to accomplish in the Donbas," the official said.

## Sanctions

**Lifting sanctions against Russia part of peace talks with Ukraine, Lavrov says** - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said the lifting of sanctions imposed on Russia is part of peace talks with Ukraine, but senior Ukrainian negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak denied that this was the case.

"At present, the Russian and Ukrainian delegations are actually discussing on a daily basis via video-conferencing a draft of a possible treaty," Lavrov said in comments to China's official Xinhua news agency published on the Russian foreign ministry's website on Saturday.

Mere inclusion of sanctions by the Russian delegation indicates the effect they are having.

**Russia faces threat of sanctions on nuclear power industry as Germany backs uranium ban** - Germany has thrown its weight behind demands to sanction uranium imports from Russia and other parts of Vladimir Putin's civil nuclear industry in retaliation for his invasion of Ukraine, five EU diplomats told POLITICO.

Such a move could hit the supply of uranium that fuels the bloc's Russian-built power reactors, as well as new nuclear projects managed by Russia's Rosatom Western Europe subsidiary, based in Paris.

**Russian oil heading to storage in South Africa** - Two supertankers loaded with Russian oil are en route to a storage facility in South Africa.

The Searacer and Elandra Denali, each carrying about 2.1 million barrels of oil, are headed to the Port of Saldanha, a hub for crude oil storage, according to Argus. American Shipper has verified the destinations through MarineTraffic.

Andy Lipow of Lipow Energy Associates tells American Shipper the only reason for vessels to berth in Saldanha is to store oil. "This shows you the sanctions are having a real effect on Russia's ability to sell their crude oil, and we are now seeing Russian crude oil go into storage," Lipow said. "The only reason for an oil tanker to go to Saldanha Bay is to unload the oil into storage."

Lipow said the oil markets are keeping an eye on other "out of the ordinary" tanker voyages, such as from the Netherlands or Gibraltar to the Caribbean.

"There are numerous storage locations in the Caribbean," Lipow said. "St. Croix, Bonaire, St. Lucia, St. Eustatius and Curacao are important oil storage hubs for producers and traders."

**A full European ban on Russian oil is coming** - The EU's 27 member states have to agree unanimously for a ban to come into effect. But Germany has been the major opponent to this measure, because it purchases so much Russian oil and gas. Last year, Germany bought 27 billion tons of Russian crude, a third of its overall oil consumption. "It was a mistake that Germany became so heavily dependent on energy imports from Russia," Christian Lindner, Germany's finance minister, told the New York Times earlier this month.

But like other European states, Germany has been scrambling to find alternative sources of fuel—to the extent that Russian oil now accounts for only 12% of domestic consumption. In all, the EU buys 3 million barrels of oil from Russia every day. Countries like Germany can diversify their sourcing by buying instead from the US, Iran, Norway, and Canada, wrote Maciej Miniszewski, a climate and energy analyst at the Polish Economic Institute.

**Russia's economy could spiral into a depression under an EU oil embargo** - Germany's announcement this week that it's ready to stop buying Russian oil makes a sweeping European Union oil embargo much more likely — which would have devastating consequences for Moscow.

"Russia's economy is projected to contract by more than 10% already this year. If an EU embargo happens, it would likely send the economy spiraling into a depression," Matt Smith, lead oil analyst at markets analytics firm Kpler, told Insider.

Without European buyers, Russia would need to find somewhere to put roughly 2.5 million barrels a day. Unless Moscow can sell that supply quickly or at least find a place to stash it, there's a strong chance Russia will have to slash its oil production dramatically due to its limited storage capacity, he said.

Russia could use its extensive network of pipelines as storage space, but that wouldn't hold all the excess supply, Smith explained, adding that unsold crude also could be loaded onto tankers and stored offshore.

Moving oil to Asian customers is easier said than done, as thousands of miles of new pipelines will need to be laid and laid in permafrost conditions. This will take years and huge amounts of capital, something Russia is and will be short of.

There comes a tipping point in any economy, beyond which economic catastrophe accelerates. This is not the point of zero revenue, but above average revenue where national cash flow evaporates to the point where the downward economic spiral gets out of control. Russia is approaching such a point, which will weight on Putin's mind as to how long this can be withstood.

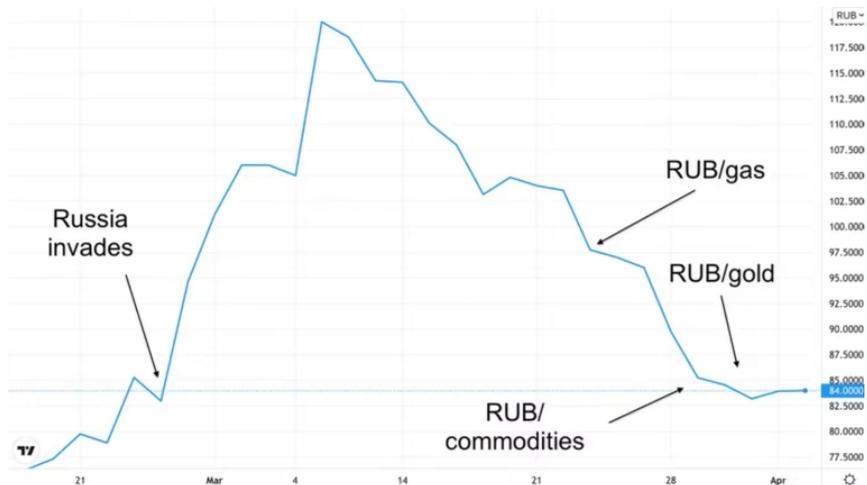
**Russia has put the ruble on a gold standard** - The Bank of Russia has surprisingly announced a fixed price for buying gold with rubles. With a price of RUB5,000 (£45.12) for a gram of gold, it's the first time that a nation's currency has been expressed in "gold parity" since Switzerland decided to stop doing so in 1999.

Enacting gold parity was common practice by the world's major powers for facilitating international trade payments in the era of the gold standard in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The same was true in a slightly different way during the Bretton Woods era from 1944 until 1971, which was when US President Nixon decided to end the system by removing the link between gold and the US dollar.

Putin's new arrangement is envisaged, initially, to hold from March 28 to June 30. It is the latest in a series of ruble-related moves by the Russians, starting with the announcement on March 23 that they would only accept rubles for European gas instead of euros and US dollars. I predicted that Russia would at least extend this policy to oil, but it has gone further and signaled an intention to make it apply to all the commodities it exports (others include wheat, nickel, aluminum, enriched uranium and neon).

The main goal of these moves is to try to ensure the credibility of the ruble by making it more desirable in the forex market, though it also fits into longstanding attempts by Russia and China to weaken the US dollar's dominance as global reserve currency (meaning it's the currency in which most international goods are priced and which most central banks hold in their foreign reserves).

As one can see in the chart, the ruble collapsed in late February and early March when western sanctions were imposed in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine (the collapse looks like a rise in the chart because it's showing the number of rubles to the US dollar rather than the other way around).



## NATO

**NATO chief says Finland and Sweden could join 'quickly' as both warm to membership** - The chief of NATO has said Finland and Sweden could join the 30-nation military alliance "quickly" as opinion polls show both countries warming to membership. "It's their decision," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Thursday. "But if they decide to apply, Finland and Sweden will be warmly welcomed, and I expect that process to go quickly."

Stoltenberg's remarks come as public support in Finland and Sweden for NATO membership has reached record highs, with speculation mounting that the pair may apply in May.

Polls have found that a majority of Swedes and Finns are currently in favour of joining the military alliance, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine driving public support. Both countries have a long history of non-alignment and neutrality towards Russia, although they have warred with the country in centuries past.

## Putin

**Battles in Ukraine Show Putin Was Wrong About the Country's Russian Speakers** - The Kremlin thought Russian troops would be greeted as liberators in Ukraine's predominantly Russian speaking south and east. Instead, Ukrainians of all linguistic backgrounds have rallied against the Kremlin's invasion.

This should not have come as a surprise, least of all to the men in Moscow. Russian-speaking Ukrainians have been organizing to defend the Ukrainian state from Russian aggression since at least April 2014, when Moscow-backed forces first began seizing administrative buildings in the Ukrainian Donbas region.

"In the first week after those events started, ordinary steelworkers in Mariupol were organizing on the grassroots level to form local patrols," Dr. Olga Onuch, an associate professor at the University of Manchester, told Newsweek. "These were Russian speaking Ukrainians getting together to defend their neighborhoods and their families from Russia itself." (Newsweek).

**Russia not at war** - Russia says it does not consider itself at war with NATO, warning such a development could increase the risks of a nuclear war.

**Putin threatens countries that help Ukraine** – Putin has again threatened those countries who are supplying Ukraine with weapons and support.

**If Putin begins to believe he's losing the war at** "peacetime strength," Kofman says, "he may have to declare a real state of war and enact national mobilization."

- Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds from the Royal United Services Institute, a British think tank, argue in a new report that Putin is likely to do just that, perhaps during Victory Day commemorations on May 9.
- That could provide hundreds of thousands of fresh troops who will need training but could certainly prolong the war.

RT chief Margarita Simonyan said that if it were a choice between losing in Ukraine or starting World War III, "I think World War III is more realistic, knowing us, knowing our leader Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin."

**Putin 'will undergo cancer operation in the near future'** - and is set to 'hand over power to hardline ex KGB chief while he is incapacitated', insider claims.

Putin may be forced to give up control of the war in Ukraine for days as he is set for cancer surgery, a 'Kremlin insider' has claimed. The Russian dictator will reportedly nominate hardline Security Council head and ex-FSB chief Nikolai Patrushev to take control of the invasion while he is under the knife.

Shadowy Patrushev, 70, is seen as a key architect of the war strategy so far - and the man who convinced Putin that Kyiv is awash with neo-Nazis.

General SVR reported that Putin has abdominal cancer and Parkinson's 18 months ago. He has reportedly delayed surgery, which will now not take place before the Victory Day commemoration of Russia's World War Two victory in Red Square on May 9.

Although slated as a conventional medical procedure, stranger things have happened in the old Russia and Soviet Union. Watch this space.

**Putin set to declare 'all-out war on Ukraine within days as payback for losses'** - Putin is poised to declare 'all-out war' on Ukraine 'within days' as revenge for humiliating military losses, Russian sources and Western officials fear.

We know – there is already a war going on in Ukraine which has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the slaughter of innocent civilians.

But all this time, Moscow has banned its media from using the term 'war' and has insisted it is a 'special military operation' to demilitarize and 'denazify' Ukraine.

As the invasion approaches its third month, army chiefs have called on Putin to officially declare war, meaning things could still get worse for Russia's neighbour.

This would enable mass mobilization of the population, meaning reservists would be called up and that conscripts would be kept beyond their one year term.

Putin would also be able to declare martial law, which would allow the closing of Russia's borders and nationalization of large chunks of the economy.

Ex-NATO chief Richard Sherriff has warned the West must 'gear itself up' for a 'worst case scenario' with Russia.

It remains to be seen however, as the Russian Constitution stipulates that Russia can declare a "War" only when it has been invaded.

## Humanitarian

**One-third of recent Russian immigrants to Israel left within one month** - Russians who have immigrated to Israel since the start of their country's invasion of Ukraine were given additional perks that ordinary immigrants to Israel do not receive — nearly one-third of recent Russian immigrants to Israel have already left the country, according to a report from the Jerusalem Post.

The 5,600 Russians who immigrated to Israel under the country's Law of Return since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February were given an envelope full of cash upon arrival, monthly financial assistance payments, and additional perks that ordinary immigrants to Israel do not receive, including free extended hotel stays as well as banking, medical and other benefits.

Nearly 1,800 have now left, some returning to Russia in anticipation of sanctions easing, within an average of one month. Since Russia's invasion, hundreds of major companies and financial institutions have pulled out of Russia and barred Russian citizens from using their products. Gaining Israeli citizenship is one way to circumvent these and other sanctions.

"Those eligible for the Law of Return in Russia and other former Soviet Union countries have realized the potential that this law offers them," according to the Jerusalem Post article. "Many companies published advertisements on Russian-speaking sites and even billboards, offering Israeli citizenship within mere days." (Forward).

**No Sign Of Evacuation Of Civilians From Mariupol As 'Brutal' Fighting Intensifies** - Hopes for an evacuation of civilians holed up the besieged port city of Mariupol faded on April 29, and Zelenskyy indicated there also was little hope for broader peace talks with Moscow.

His office had said that an operation was planned to get civilians out of the huge Azovstal steel plant, where some 2,000 Ukrainian fighters are holed up together with about 1,000 civilians.

But there was no sign of an evacuation by day's end, and Zelenskyy later expressed pessimism over the prospect of continued peace talks with Russia, blaming public anger over alleged atrocities by Russian troops.

**Former US Marine colonel training soldiers in Ukraine says 'Russians are worse than ISIS'** - A former US Marine colonel helping train Ukrainian forces has condemned the Russian military's actions as being worse than ISIS.

"I have a greater respect for the ethical behavior of the Islamic State than I do for the Russians. That is no exaggeration," Andy Milburn wrote in an article for Newsweek.

Milburn has served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Libya and commanded a special operations task force against ISIS in 2016. He began his career as a second lieutenant and later became a colonel and task force commander.

The Marine said that he was one of the first people in Bucha, Ukraine, after the Russian retreat, where reports have emerged of a civilian massacre in which nearly 300 people were buried in mass graves.

Milburn said that he saw bodies dumped in Bucha, including children. While noting that civilian casualties are common in war, Milburn said the events in Bucha appeared to be "a very, very deliberate approach to killing civilians."

"People were dragged from their homes and killed, women gang-raped in cellars and executed."

Milburn wrote that he is no stranger to the depravity of war, but that Russia's actions left him "filled with the deepest contempt and anger." (Insider).

## Containment

**British missiles to down Putin's ships as war takes to sea with more weapons** - The latest intelligence from the Ministry of Defense estimates there are 20 Russian navy vessels in the Black Sea, including submarines.

Russia's navy have faced "embarrassing losses" in the form of the landing ship Saratov and the flagship Moskva, but British defense officials warn they still have the force necessary to strike at the Ukrainian coast.

Asked on Sky News about the supply of weapons to Ukraine, Ben Wallace said: "We have said we will source and supply, if we can, anti-ship missiles.

He added that Russia could not be allowed to "control the Black Sea" as "it's not theirs anymore."

"Making sure that Russian ships are not used to bombard cities is important." On March 13, the MoD said Russia had established a "distant blockade" of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, effectively isolating the country from international maritime trade.

The Brimstone missiles the UK will be sending have been in service with the RAF since 2005 and used extensively in Afghanistan. They can be modified to target ships. Such missiles will most likely be used to help defend Odesa, a major Ukrainian port city. Each missile costs around £175,000.

**U.S. Troops Train Ukrainians in Germany** - U.S. service members in Germany have begun training Ukrainian soldiers on key systems being used to defend Ukraine against the Russian invasion, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said today.

"These efforts build on the initial artillery training that Ukraine's forces already have received elsewhere and also includes training on radar systems and armored vehicles that have been recently announced as part of security assistance packages," Kirby said.

U.S. Army Europe and Africa is organizing the training in coordination with Germany. The United States is not the only country training Ukrainian service members. Yesterday, Canadian Defense Minister Anita Anand said Canadian service members were training Ukrainians on the M-777 howitzer in Europe.

Florida National Guardsmen who were part of the Joint Multinational Training Group in Western Ukraine and were ordered out of the country as the threat of the Russian invasion intensified have reunited with Ukrainians in Germany and are again working to give the Ukrainians the knowledge they need to defend their country.

### **British Army exercises boost presence across Europe** -

Around 8,000 British Army troops will conduct a series of planned exercises across Europe this summer in one of the largest deployments since the Cold War.

The exercises will see 72 Challenger 2 tanks, 12 AS90 tracked artillery guns and 120 Warrior armored fighting vehicles deploy to countries from Finland to North Macedonia, demonstrating the Army's modernisation into a lethal, agile and global force.

Tens of thousands of troops from NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) allies and partners are involved in the exercises. The high readiness forces from the Lead Armored Task Force and Air Maneuver Task Force will take part.



**America - the arsenal of democracy** - America, while not directly engaged in combat, is once again doing what it did in the year before Pearl Harbor. With help from allies, the US is serving as the “arsenal of democracy,” giving the defenders of freedom the material means to keep fighting.

For those who aren't familiar with this history: Britain in 1940, like Ukraine in 2022, had unexpected success against a seemingly unstoppable enemy, as the Royal Air Force defeated the Luftwaffe's attempt to achieve air superiority, a necessary precondition for invasion. Nonetheless, by late 1940 the British were in dire straits: Their war effort required huge imports, including both military hardware and essentials like food and oil, and they were running out of money.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt responded with the Lend-Lease Act, which made it possible to transfer large quantities of arms and food to the beleaguered British. This aid wasn't enough to turn the tide, but it gave Winston Churchill the resources he needed to hang on, which eventually set the stage for Allied victory.

Now Lend-Lease has been revived, and large-scale military aid is flowing to Ukraine, not just from the United States but also from many of our allies.

Thanks to this aid, the arithmetic of attrition is actually working strongly against Putin. Russia's economy may be much bigger than Ukraine's, but it's small compared with the American economy, let alone the combined economies of the Western allies. And with its limited economic base, Russia doesn't appear to have the capacity to replace its battlefield losses; Western experts believe, for example, that the fighting in Ukraine so far has cost Russia two years' worth of tank production.

Ukraine's army, by contrast, is getting better equipped, with ever more heavy weapons, by the day. Assuming Congress agrees to President Biden's request for an additional \$33 billion in aid — a sum we can easily afford — cumulative Western support for Ukraine will soon come close to Russia's annual military spending.

Time appears to be on Ukraine's side. Unless the Russians can pull off the kind of dramatic battlefield success that has eluded them so far — such as a blitzkrieg-style assault that encircles a large part of Ukraine's forces — and do it very soon, the balance of power seems set to keep shifting in Ukraine's favor.

And let's be clear about two things.

- First, if Ukraine does win, it will be a triumph for the forces of freedom everywhere. Would-be aggressors and war criminals will be given pause. Western enemies of democracy, many of whom were huge Putin fanboys will have been given an object lesson in the difference between macho posturing and true strength.
- Second, while credit for this victory, if it materializes, will, of course, go above all to the Ukrainians themselves, this wouldn't have been possible without brave, effective leadership in some (if, alas, not all) Western nations.

Whatever else you may say about Boris Johnson, Britain has been a rock in this crisis. Poland and other Eastern European nations have risen to the occasion, defying Russian threats. And Joe Biden has done an incredible job, holding the Western alliance together while supplying Ukraine with the weapons it needs. (NYT).

**US National Guard's battle taxis find new use in Ukraine fight** - At least five states are sending M113 armored personnel carriers to Europe to support the Pentagon's race to send equipment to Ukraine.

As of Friday, the governors of Indiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and West Virginia announced that, at the request of the Defense Department, they're turning M113s from their fleets over to Ukraine. The aid stems from President Joe Biden's announcement April 13 of an \$800 million package that included 200 M113s, among more than a dozen other capabilities.



As the fighting in the Donbas region of Ukraine faces a rainy, muddy spring, the M113 — which has tracks and weighs far less than an Abrams tank — could offer the country's forces transportation and protection from small-arms fire and the effects of artillery. "You need mobility on the battlefield, and protected mobility is even better," National Guard Association of the United States spokesman John Goheen said.

**Dutch Arms Deliveries To Ukraine** - Reports indicate that the Netherlands is providing Ukraine not just with AFVs, but also with five highly advanced 155mm Panzerhaubitze 2000NL (PzH 2000NL) self-propelled guns (SPGs). Under the arrangement proposed, the Netherlands would provide a number of PzH 2000s while Germany would train Ukrainian soldiers to use the SPGs on German or Polish soil, as well as provide the necessary ammunition. The PzH 2000s would be the most capable ground-based fire-support assets provided by any country to Ukraine so far, and a clear indication of how serious the country is about its support. With much of the weaponry delivered by Ukraine's allies thus far being of older or surplus stock, the delivery would mark the Netherlands' ascent to a very select group of nations that have been willing to pledge such a degree of support.



**Slovakia Mulls Delivery Of MiG-29s To Ukraine** - Slovakia is considering donating its entire fleet of MiG-29 fighter aircraft to Ukraine, a move that would finally give heed to President Zelensky's long-standing request for additional fighter aircraft. While the actual merit of additional fighter aircraft to Ukraine is debatable (along with many of Zelensky's other requests for heavy weaponry), it is certain that the delivery of MiG-29s to Ukraine would be a huge morale boost to both its citizens and military, and finally satisfy Ukraine's most vocal request ever since Russia began its invasion on February 24.

## Impacts

**US Seeks Authority to Give Seized Russian Assets to Ukraine** - The Biden administration is asking Congress for additional legal authority to make it easier for the U.S. government to seize Russian government and oligarch assets and transfer the proceeds to Ukraine.

If enacted, the proposed measures would "establish new authorities for the forfeiture of property linked to Russian kleptocracy, allow the government to link the proceeds to support Ukraine, and further strengthen related law enforcement tools," the White House said in a statement.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland urged Congress to quickly enact the changes. The administration's key proposal would allow the departments of Justice, Treasury and State to hand over to Ukraine Russian assets forfeited to the U.S. government.

**Europe's special operators are watching Ukraine closely for lessons learned** - Ukraine's success with special operations against Russia's invading force has consequently provided European and NATO SOF units — particularly in neighboring states like Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Poland — with critical lessons learned as they consider how to respond to a similar type of invasion.

The results from UASOF doesn't come as a surprise to officials at NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) which is charged with influencing and shaping the policy, doctrine, capabilities, standards, training, education and coordination of 26 NATO and four NATO-partner SOF organizations.

**Russian threats redraw the global energy map** - Algeria has long been a middle-stakes player in the global game of oil and gas exports, but the energy crisis in Europe has marked a new beginning for the North African nation. Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi flew a few weeks ago to sign a deal to increase natural gas imports from Algeria by 40 percent via an underused pipeline running under the Mediterranean Sea.

Other oil and gas exporters that were not previously front and center in the global energy conversation, such as Angola, Nigeria and the Republic of the Congo, are also emerging as potential players for Europe's future. And European nations are turning to more reliable, but costly, liquefied natural gas providers such as Qatar and the United States, in a hurry to rid themselves of Russian gas.

The moves are part of a scramble in Europe to respond to the energy crisis prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin has in recent days reprimanded his enemies in the West by natural means Gas supply to Bulgaria and Poland for refusal to pay in rubles, Other big consumers of Russian gas, including Germany and Italy, have sought to reassure their citizens that they are looking for a workaround if Putin threatens to extend the cutoff.

But under almost every scenario, the next 18 months are going to be a harrowing time for Europe, as the effects of a wave of high prices sweep the world and governments power their factories, heat their homes and keep their power plants running. Struggles to keep. There are not enough options in the near term to avoid major economic pain in the coming winter if Russia shuts down supplies. For example, this month, the German central bank warned that the country's economy could shrink by 2 percent if the war continued.

**Russian central-bank chief calls outlook 'extremely uncertain' with economy forecast to shrink 10% in 2022**

- The head of the Russian Central Bank says the outlook is "extremely uncertain" as the country's economy is expected to contract by up to 10% this year. International sanctions and falling consumer demand are squeezing the economy as inflation rises. The Central Bank cut its key interest rate from 17% to 14% on Friday and predicted the economy would shrink by between 8% and 10% this year.

**Russian Women Are Leading the Underground Protest Against Putin's War** – Increasing reports are being received that Russian women and mothers are becoming more vocal in opposition to Putin's war. As body bags arrive in Russia in ver-increasing numbers from casualties from eastern Donbas, the effect of troop losses is taking its toll on Russian families.

Donbas borders Russia, so casualties are felt much quicker than when the war was hundreds of miles away in Northern Ukraine. Ukrainian officials are also using the latest imagery technology to identify and post death notices to Russian families.

Young Russians are also reportedly accessing Western and Ukrainian news and war updates regularly, dissipating the news across Russia within their own informal channels. It appears there is a "media multiplier" effect underway.

## **Widening of conflict and war**

**Satellite photos show missiles being loaded onto Russian submarine** - A sharp-eyed satellite spotted missiles being loaded onto a Russian submarine yesterday.

A new photo captured by Maxar Technologies' WorldView-2 spacecraft shows what appear to be Kalibr missiles sitting next to a docked Kilo-class submarine in Sevastopol, an important Black Sea port in the Crimean Peninsula.

"The imagery reveals the bow section of the Kilo submarine with extended trays to load the missiles, as well as two trucks positioned nearby that are used to transport the missiles to the quay for loading onto the submarine," Maxar representatives wrote in an emailed statement.

**Putin can 'disconnect' UK from rest of world as 60 undersea cables 'extremely vulnerable'** - Almost 60

undersea cables connect Britain to the rest of the world - and they are "extremely vulnerable" to an attack from the likes of Russia, an expert has told Express.co.uk.

The huge network, mapped by TeleGeography, shows the cables connected to Britain that keep the internet running and lets the UK communicate with the rest of the world. According to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, 97 percent of all global intercontinental data is carried via undersea network cables. In the UK some only stretch as far as Ireland, like the 80-mile CeltixConnect cable to Ireland, while others, like the 8,000 mile Tata TGN-Atlantic, extend all the way to the US.

