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U.S. Senate advances bill with \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine

Final Senate vote to come as Kyiv faces ammunition shortage



Official X channel of Volodymyr Zelensky

A Ukrainian artillery soldier is seen at the front of the war on February 8.

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – Ukraine's forces are feeling the brunt of drastically reduced Western assistance as Russia's effort to subjugate the entire country is entering its third year.

Last week, Brussels, the main hub of the European Union, approved funding for Ukraine valued at \$54 billion over four

years. Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress has not committed to providing security guarantees for the war-torn country.

President Joe Biden over the past week accused Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump of sinking a bill in Congress since October that would provide \$60 bil-

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Zelenskyy meets soldiers on frontline visit days before announcing new military commander

RFE/RL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited a frontline village on February 4, hailing the "warriors" who are fighting there four days before he removed his popular military commander, while Moscow-installed officials said the search-and-rescue effort at the site of a building attack in Russia-occupied Lysychansk had ended, with the death toll set at 28.

"I have the great honor to be here today, to reward you, because you have such a difficult and decisive mission on your shoulders, to repel the enemy and win this war," Mr. Zelenskyy told soldiers on February 4 following his visit to Robotyne, a southern village in the Zaporizhia region that was one of the few successes of Ukrainian forces during last year's counteroffensive.

The presidential office released video of Mr. Zelenskyy handing out medals to

troops of the 65th Separate Mechanized Brigade, which led the advance on Robotyne, a village with a prewar population of about 450 people.

While there, Mr. Zelenskyy appointed Ivan Federov – mayor of now-occupied Melitopol who was once abducted by Russia – as head of Ukraine's Zaporizhia region.

Mr. Federov was abducted in March 2022 when he refused to cooperate with Russian troops, triggering local protests and calls by Mr. Zelenskyy for his immediate release. He was released five days later.

Mr. Zelenskyy faces a growing political storm after he pushed out the country's top military commander, Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, on February 8.

Polls show that Mr. Zaluzhnyi is as popular, if not more so, than Mr. Zelenskyy, and

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Zelenskyy names new Ukrainian military commander, says it's time for 'renewal'



Office of the President of Ukraine

Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, who was previously the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, was appointed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on February 8 to be the Ukrainian Army's commander-in-chief.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

KYIV -- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy as the Ukrainian Army's commander-in-chief just minutes after announcing it was time for a "renewal" and "renewed leadership" of the country's armed forces.

In his statement on February 8, Mr. Zelenskyy said Mr. Syrskiy "has successful

defense experience – he conducted the Kyiv defense operation. He also has successful offensive experience – the Kharkiv liberation operation."

The Russia-born, 58-year-old Syrskiy, who has served as the commander of Ukrainian ground forces since 2019, replaces Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi following reports

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Wave of Russian strikes across Ukraine kills at least 10 people as Kuleba pleads for more arms



RFE/RL

Kyiv municipal workers repair high-voltage lines that were damaged during a Russian projectile attack on February 7.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

An intense wave of Russian missile and drone strikes on six Ukrainian regions on February 7 killed at least five people – four of them in a high-rise apartment block in the capital, Kyiv – wounded dozens of oth-

ers and caused widespread damage to energy infrastructure. Five more Ukrainian civilians were killed during a separate wave of attacks on February 5 in Kherson and Sumy, Ukrainian officials said.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Moscow alarmed by Kyiv's increased interest in ethnic Ukrainians across Russia

by Paul Goble
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On January 22, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree calling for Kyiv to devote more attention to the fate of ethnic Ukrainians living in Russia (President of Ukraine, January 22; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 25). Kremlin officials and commentators view the decree as an indication of Ukrainian aggressiveness and an attack on Russia's territorial integrity. Perhaps more importantly, some see it as an effort to call into question Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence that Russians and Ukrainians are one people. Others believe that the measure is meant to undermine domestic support for the Russian war effort and a broader policy of support for non-Russian nationalist and secessionist movements (Vzglyad, January 22; Ukraina.ru, January 24; Business Gazeta, January 28; Izvestia, January 30).

Paradoxically, these Russians see Mr. Zelenskyy's move as larger and more threatening than many in Ukraine and the West do. Many observers in the West and Ukraine have focused solely on the Ukrainian president's explicit call for expanded attention to ethnic Ukrainians in the portions of Russia bordering Ukraine rather than on the rest of his text (Kavkaz Realii, January 26). Mr. Zelenskyy also called for more attention to the other regions and nations within the Russian Federation that are further away from the Ukrainian border, which include ethnic Ukrainians as well. As so often happens, the Russian reaction may prove more significant than Mr. Zelenskyy's specific intentions.

Those in Moscow who view Mr. Zelenskyy's decree as an expansion of Kyiv's long-

standing policies have their reasons. Some Russian writers point to Ukraine's persistent interest in ethnic Ukrainians across the Russian Federation all the way to the Pacific Ocean (Apostrophe.ua, January 29; Sibir' Realii, January 29; Bloknot, January 31). Additionally, they refer to Kyiv's increasing support for non-Russian ethnic groups within Russia, especially those national movements that are on the rise (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, July 28, 2022). These analysts also comment on Mr. Zelenskyy's increasing willingness to call Putin's Russia "an evil empire," as former U.S. President Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union 40 years ago (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 13, 2022).

Many in Moscow are concerned that, despite claims to the contrary, Russia's program of assimilating Ukrainians is not working and that many of the nominally assimilated remain Ukrainians at heart. The fear is growing that Ukrainians living in Russia are waiting for the chance to express their true sentiments once Moscow has been significantly weakened and Ukraine and the West have grown in strength. This possibility will likely increase as other nations expand their protests against the Kremlin. A year ago, Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Russian Security Council, was explicit on this point (Argumenty i fakty, January 10, 2023; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 8, 2023). There is little reason to think that such worries have lessened, especially with increased attacks on Russian military and transportation facilities east of the Urals. These attacks have almost certainly been carried out by "assimilated" Ukrainians in support of Ukraine (Stoletie, January 19; The New

(Continued on page 17)

New Polish government bolsters relations with Ukraine

by Janusz Bugajski
Eurasia Daily Monitor

In his first foreign trip following the formation of the new Polish government, Prime Minister Donald Tusk visited Kyiv on January 22 to reaffirm that Ukraine remains Warsaw's overarching security priority (Rzeczpospolita, January 23). His meetings with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian government were intended to demonstrate that relations between Warsaw and Kyiv were emerging from a downswing in the latter part of 2023 when Poland was embroiled in general elections and government formation. The visit was not simply symbolic. It also announced the delivery of a new military aid package to Ukraine and plans to launch joint weapons production.

In December 1991, Poland was the first country to officially recognize Ukraine's independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Warsaw views Ukraine's independence from Russia as key to its own security, and successive Polish governments have all expressed their commitment to Ukraine's national security, territorial integrity and Western integration (Wilson Center, May 23, 2018). Warsaw has been a staunch advocate of Ukrainian interests in both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Poland's Foreign Affairs Minister Zbigniew Rau delivered a major foreign policy speech to the Sejm in April 2023 in which he underscored that Warsaw would strive to enable Ukraine's speedy accession to NATO and the European Union: "It is in Poland's most vital, existential interest. A safe Ukraine means a safe Poland and a peaceful Europe. It is why Poland is Ukraine's ally in its defense of peace and preventing Russian imperialism" (Gov.pl, April 13, 2023). Mr. Tusk reiterated this fundamental position in Kyiv, stating that while there were partisan political conflicts in Poland, "there is no difference of opinion regarding support for Ukraine ... because our security is also at stake; ... there is nothing more important than supporting Ukraine" (NotesFromPoland.com, January 22).

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NEWSBRIEFS

Senators block bill with aid to Ukraine

Republicans in the U.S. Senate on February 7 blocked a bipartisan border package, scuttling months of negotiations on the legislation, which included \$60 billion in wartime aid to Ukraine. Many Republicans said the compromise wasn't enough, even as supporters of the bill insisted it was the best possible solution. The 49-50 vote, far short of the 60 yes votes needed to open debate, came after most Republicans said they would vote against the legislation. The Senate's Democratic leader said he would try to salvage the wartime funding by pushing for a vote on a bill that strips out the border portion. (RFE/RL)

Explosion near Russian missile plant

A large explosion lit up the night sky on February 7 near Votkinsk, a city about 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow that is the location of a Russian military production facility. Residents of Votkinsk reported that a powerful explosion had occurred near the city and posted videos on social media showing high flames and a massive yellow glow over the horizon. Further messages said the explosion occurred at the Votkinsk Machine-Building Plant, which produces some of the Russian military's most sophisticated missiles, including the types it has used against Ukraine. The explosion was also reported by TASS, which quoted the emergency services agency as saying there had been a "scheduled test of rocket engines" at the plant. "This is not an emergency, [but] a planned [event]," a spokesman for the Ministry of Emergency Situations, was quoted as saying by the Russian state media outlet. But there was no indication of a planned test on the ministry's website. There are no details about casualties. At the end of 2023, the Votkinsk plant published 19 government contracts for the production of nuclear weapons components. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the plant in 2011 while serving as prime minister. A post on the Kremlin website at that time said the plant had 23 shops for "special purpose manufacturing" and employed 250 people. The Votkinsk plant is located 50 kilometers from Izhevsk, the capital of the Udmurtia region. It makes sections and warhead plat-

forms for Topol-M, Yars, and Bulava missile systems as well as bodies for Iskander missiles, according to the Kremlin website. "Your plant is one of the leading enterprises in Russia's defense industry," Putin said at the time of his visit in 2011. "Everyone knows – and especially you – that the Votkinsk plant is one of the key enterprises in Russia's defense industry. And it will receive a large order under the new state armaments program," Putin said at the time. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Rada extends martial law by 90 days

Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, on February 6 passed laws to extend martial law and military mobilization for another 90 days as Russia's full-scale invasion nears the two-year mark. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on February 5 submitted to the Verkhovna Rada the drafts providing for the extension of the two measures from February 14, in line with the provisions of Ukraine's constitution. This extension is the 10th time since February 24, 2022, when the Kremlin launched its invasion, that the parliament voted on the two measures. The extension will be in effect until at least May 13. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Lawmakers dismiss CEC member

Ukrainian lawmakers on February 7 voted to dismiss Yuriy Buhlak from the Central Election Commission (CEC) after he left Ukraine for the United States 12 days before Russia launched its ongoing invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The Skhemy (Schemes) investigative unit of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service revealed earlier that Mr. Buhlak continued to work online from Miami after leaving Ukraine, although President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had urged all officials to return home to stand against Russia's aggression. After the Skhemy report was published in August 2023, the 59-year-old former lawmaker offered his resignation but remained in the job. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Clash over bodies from plane crash

Ukraine says it has repeatedly asked (Continued on page 14)

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Ukraine war veteran tells story of valor, courage since he began fighting in 2014

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – In 2022, when Russia launched a genocidal, full-scale war on Ukraine, retired 1st Lt. Oleh Krupa had 120 soldiers in his platoon. Only 40 remain.

Honorably discharged and in the U.S. for four months now, Mr. Krupa is employed as a 47-string harp-maker for Italian manufacturer Lyon & Healy Today at one of its three worldwide factories. He helps build instruments that can cost up to \$120,000.

"I usually donate 20 percent of what I earn to Ukraine's war effort," said Mr. Krupa, adding that he plans on returning to Ukraine after his two-year visa, granted through the U.S. presidential administration's United for Ukraine program, expires.

The 59-year-old war veteran is a rare breed and is revered for being one of those who took part in the so-called Revolution of Dignity and the Euro-Maidan protests in 2014. He then went to fight off Russia's ensuing invasion, where he suffered injuries from riot police in February 2014. After recovering from those injuries and at an advanced age, he underwent training conducted by the country's special forces in the Carpathian Mountains that included 25 miles of mountain hiking.

"Only 15 out of 200 of us graduated," Mr. Krupa said.

"Not many that I know are still alive that have fought since 2014," Mr. Krupa said. "We've lost two good commanders, both of whom have posthumously received Hero of Ukraine awards. ... I only know of two combat unit commanders that still are alive from that time."

Mr. Krupa is also a recipient of the military's Knight Cross, one of the highest honors that is awarded in many countries. He also wears a badge of courage medal that he received from Ukraine's military.



Courtesy of Oleh Krupa

Honorably discharged 1st Lt. Oleh Krupa is seen shortly after he was beaten with iron truncheons by Berkut riot police during the Revolution of Dignity pro-democracy protests in late February 2014. He then joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces and helped defend the country against a covert Russian invasion of the country.

He took part in fighting in the two easternmost regions of Luhansk and Donetsk as part of the Pravyi (Right) Sector's Salamander reconnaissance unit and then entered the Armed Forces' 67th brigade where most of the group was officially integrated.

"I had Croats, Belarusians, Russians, Georgians, Chechens and other foreign nationals fighting for our cause," he said. "I always wanted to be in the hottest spots of the war. ... I never backed down and helped



Mark Raczkiewycz

Honorably discharged 1st Lt. Oleh Krupa is pictured in uniform with his medals and honors earned during his service with the Pravyi (Right) Sector Salamander reconnaissance unit and then the 67th mechanized brigade. He was photographed in Chicago in 2024 before a radio interview.

our boys in Pisky [near Donetsk airport] and all the way up the line."

He also spoke about being stationed in the eastern Ukraine-Russia border town of Shyrokyne, some 19 miles from the Donetsk regional city of Mariupol.

A native of Starosambir in the Lviv region, Mr. Krupa said that when Russia fully invaded he was sent to defend Boryspil, a northern Kyiv suburb where Russia was approaching and breaking through towns in neighboring Chernihiv Oblast.

Soldiers from the 72nd brigade were also there as they were on the western side of the Dnipro River trying to stop Russian troops from advancing toward Kyiv through Irpin, Bucha and Hostomel.

Then in March 2022, Mr. Krupa was sent to Izyum in eastern Kharkiv Oblast for a counterattack with his platoon.

Mr. Krupa, who offers a modest and unbecoming demeanor, was honorably discharged in late 2022 after a minor stroke, multiple concussions and shrapnel wounds. He then came to Chicago to live with his cousin.

"I'll work here for two years [for the duration of my visa] and go back to Lviv. ... I have two daughters and two grandchildren to look after," he said. "I would still be fighting if the military's medical commission didn't deem me combat ineffective. ... I know another soldier who is seven years older than me and is still fighting."

Asked what Ukraine's military needs, Mr. Krupa said they need electronic warfare equipment to jam Russian drones and more artillery.

"If the West doesn't give more security assistance, I might have to revert to partisan warfare," he said. "Without their money, we can't defend ourselves ... and nobody in Kyiv should get rid of their best people," he said referring to the country's former top military commander, Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, "and replace them with those who only listen to the powers that be."

Editor's note: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced on February 8 that he had appointed Oleksandr Syrskiy to be the Ukrainian Army's commander-in-chief. According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Mr. Zelenskyy met with Mr. Zaluzhnyi earlier on February 8 and said he had asked him to remain "on his team," though he didn't say in what capacity.

EU's Borrell, IAEA's Grossi in Kyiv as Russian strike on Kharkiv kills 2-month-old

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

KYIV – European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and United Nations nuclear chief Rafael Grossi arrived on separate visits to Kyiv as Russian missile strikes continued to claim victims among Ukrainian civilians, killing a 2-month-old boy on February 6 in the Kharkiv region.

"Back in Kyiv for my fourth visit since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion," Mr. Borrell wrote on X, formerly Twitter, adding that he will reaffirm during talks with Ukrainian officials the "E.U.'s unwavering support to Ukraine – on military side, on the financial side with the new [50 billion euro] Ukraine facility, as well as on the E.U. reform path."

Kyiv, which largely depends on Western military and financial support, has said it expects a 4.5 billion-euro (\$4.84 billion) disbursement from the E.U. next month after the 27-member bloc last week approved a four-year, 50 billion-euro (\$54 billion) package for Ukraine.

E.U. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen confirmed on X that the bloc is to start payments next month.

However, a \$60 billion U.S. aid package for Ukraine remains blocked in Congress amid opposition from some Republicans who are tying any funds to massive changes in U.S. border policies.

Meanwhile, Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), arrived in Kyiv where he said he held talks with Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko and other Ukrainian



IAEA chief General Raphael Rossi (right) meets with Ukraine's Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko in Kyiv on February 6.

officials ahead of a visit to the Russia-occupied Zaporizhia nuclear power plant – Europe's largest.

The IAEA has voiced concern many times over the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe at the Zaporizhia nuclear plant amid the fighting in the area.

The IAEA has had a monitoring team at the plant since September 2022, but its experts have not been able to inspect every part of the power station, said Mr. Grossi, who was to visit the plant on February 7.

At times "we weren't granted the access that we were requesting for certain areas of the facility," Mr. Grossi said at a press conference in Kyiv.

"On a technical point of view, we have many questions, and we are trying to

address these one by one with the administration," Mr. Grossi said.

One of the problems is the situation with the nuclear fuel, which has been inside the reactors for years and is reaching the end of its useful life.

Mr. Grossi on February 6 also said he was worried about the operational safety of the plant amid personnel cuts after Moscow denied access to employees of Ukraine's Enerhoatom.

"This huge facility used to have around 12,000 staff. Now, this has been reduced to between 2,000 and 3,000, which is quite a steep reduction in the number of people working there," Mr. Grossi told AP. "I need to see for myself what is the situation, what are the prospects in terms of staffing, medi-

um-term and long-term as well."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he told Mr. Grossi during their meeting that the Russian occupation of the plant must end.

"This is the main prerequisite for the restoration of radiation safety for our entire region," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his evening video address.

Meanwhile, a Russian missile strike on the settlement of Zolochiv, in Ukraine's eastern region of Kharkiv, killed a 2-month-old baby on February 6.

"At about 2:30 a.m., a three-story hotel was destroyed in Zolochiv after being struck by the occupiers with S-300 missiles," regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said on Telegram. "A 2-month-old boy died. Three women were wounded and were hospitalized."

Houses, civilian infrastructure and cars were also damaged by the Russian strike, he said.

Separately, Russian shelling on February 6 wounded two civilians in the village of Tokarivka, in the southern region of Kherson, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram. On February 5, five people were killed and one was wounded in Kherson by Russian shelling.

(With reporting by AFP and Reuters)

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'The situation is critical': What the looming fall of Avdiyivka says about Ukraine's battlefield mood

by Mike Eckel
RFE/RL

In a wooded southeast corner of Avdiyivka, the industrial Donbas city where Ukrainian troops have been desperately holding out against Russian assaults, there's a facility called Tsar's Hunt. It is a spot once frequented by tourists relaxing in its restaurant, a low-slung hotel, gardens and outdoor pool.

It has served as a heavily fortified base for Ukrainian forces – the 53rd Motorized Brigade and 110th Mechanized Brigade, among others, have cycled in and out – one element of the defenses for the now devastated city, which Russian forces have been trying to encircle since October.

Early last month, Russian sappers and other troops began creeping hundreds of meters underground from the south, moving beneath the facility's grounds through a partially flooded water outflow tunnel, cutting through metal piping, trying to shroud the noise behind aboveground mortar explosions. Sometime around January 17, an unknown number of Russian troops – 150 by some estimates – emerged behind Ukrainian lines, sparking a vicious days-long effort by Ukrainian troops to push back the attack.

The surprise, detailed by Russian war bloggers and corroborated by Ukrainian sources, was partially repelled. But in recent days, the reports have gotten more dire, with Russian troops inside the city itself, battling Ukrainian forces block-by-block.

Barring a major tactical blunder by Russia or Ukraine drawing on stretched reserves to reinforce it, Avdiyivka is likely to be captured within weeks, if not days, observers say.

"If we said a few weeks ago that the situation was very difficult but under control,"

Vitaliy Barabash, head of the city's military administration, said in televised comments on February 6, "now it is very difficult and in some places critical."

"Russian units have entrenched themselves on one of the streets on the northern outskirts," Yuriy Butusov, a Ukrainian activist and journalist, said in a post to Telegram. "Two weeks ago, the enemy managed to enter two streets on the southern outskirts of the city. The situation is critical."

Along the 1,200-kilometer front line, Ukraine's wintry discontent is turning into despondency as Russia forces make slow, grinding advances in Avdiyivka and at least one other location, Kupyansk, in the Kharkiv region further to the north.

With U.S. political infighting stalling a new \$60 billion weapons package, and indications that the country's popular, top military commander could be pushed out, the mood in Ukraine on the eve of the second anniversary of Russia's all-out invasion is sinking into further gloom.

"The situation is difficult, terrible and in all likelihood, it's possible that by the end of the month, Avdiyivka will have to be abandoned," Ivan Stupak, an analyst with the Ukrainian Institute for the Future, a Kyiv think tank, told Current Time. "This is understandable even for people who aren't involved in war fighting."

Ukrainians "in general are resigned. I mean [everyone] understand the risks if there is no funding out of the U.S. but [they] do what they can," said Mykola Byelyeskov, an analyst at the government-backed National Institute for Strategic Studies: like trying to increase drone production, for example.

"The major open question is 'what's next in the second part of the year' or whether we'll be able to withstand the next round of a Russian offensive without major U.S.

assistance," he said.

As for Avdiyivka, "if Russia is able to inflict major damage as we try to resupply the town garrison then it's better to withdraw," Mr. Byelyeskov said. "If not, then it's better to fight."

'Stable but stably bad and trending for the worse'

Fortified by an influx of powerful new Western weaponry – tanks, armored personnel carriers, self-propelled artillery, infantry fighting vehicles – Ukraine's military launched a major counteroffensive last June.

The goal was to punch through Russian lines in several places: south of Orikhiv in the southern Zaporizhia region; south of Velyka Novosylka in the Donetsk region further to the east; and in the north, around the obliterated Donetsk regional city of Bakhmut.

Those efforts, however, faltered by late last year, thwarted by deep, well-constructed trench lines and anti-tank defenses that inflicted major losses on Ukraine's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) trained brigades. An ambitious, parallel effort to cross the Dnipro River near Kherson in the south and set up a bridgehead there has also stalled out, with Ukrainian soldiers precariously holding on in a small village, unable to break out.

By October, meanwhile, Russian forces fired up their own smaller-scale counteroffensive, pressuring Ukrainian troops, in particular in Avdiyivka, which is better known as the home of what was once the country's largest coke factory. The city's relative high ground allowed Ukrainian troops to threaten a key highway to the east, and put pressure on the city of Donetsk, whose outskirts are just 10 kilometers to the south.

Russian forces tried to encircle the city, pushing into villages to the northwest and southeast, but were thwarted by Ukraine's own defenses. Outside experts said Russia suffered major equipment losses, as well as substantial casualties, particularly among units made up of prison inmates, whom Russian commanders have employed in staging World War I-style infantry wave attacks.

Ukraine's defense minister said Russia had lost at least a brigade – around 4,000 soldiers – in the first month of the concentrated effort.

Russian commanders then shifted tactics to brute force assaults from all sides of the city, Mr. Barabash, the city's military administrator, reported in late November.

Ukrainian troops, meanwhile, began reporting serious shortages of ammunition in Avdiyivka and elsewhere; one estimate said Ukraine was firing just 2,000 artillery rounds a day in December, down from 7,000 a year earlier. By contrast, Russian forces were reaching about 10,000 daily.

Then came the January 17 surprise attack via the underground water tunnel. Despite limiting the Russian advance, Ukrainian troops have now reportedly been forced to engage Russian troops in southern and northern districts in block-by-block fighting. Some reports say the west-east road used by Ukraine to resupply defenses and evacuate the wounded is increasingly threatened, and some Russian war bloggers asserted that Ukrainian defenses were falling.

"If the Russian Army takes control of the [supply] road, the Ukrainian Armed Forces will evidently be forced to withdraw," former Kremlin adviser Sergei Markov said in a Telegram post on February 6. "That will

(Continued on page 19)

Controversy swirls as right-wing U.S. commentator Tucker Carlson airs Putin interview

RFE/RL

Right-wing U.S. political commentator Tucker Carlson, who is known in part for lauding authoritarian leaders and has questioned U.S. support for Ukraine in its fight against invading Russian troops, said he will publish an interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin late on February 8.

Mr. Carlson, a former Fox News television host who has made a name for himself with his often extremist views, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that the interview will be posted online at 6 p.m. in New York on his streaming network.

Russia-focused political analysts and Kremlin critics said they believed that Putin would use his first interview with a Western media figure since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine to advance his narratives ahead of presidential elections this year in Russia and the United States, whose military support for Kyiv is crucial to its defense but is in question as Republican lawmakers block a \$60 billion aid package proposed by President Joe Biden.

Describing his decision to interview Putin in an announcement posted on X on February 6, Mr. Carlson asserted that U.S. media outlets focus fawningly on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy but that Putin's voice is not heard in the United States because Western journalists have not "bothered" to interview him since the full-scale invasion.

Numerous Western journalists rejected that claim, saying that they have consistently sought to interview Putin but have



Tucker Carlson is seen as he made his announcement that he would interview Russian President Vladimir Putin

been turned away. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later confirmed that, saying that his office receives "numerous requests for interviews with the president" but that most of the Western outlets asking are "traditional TV channels and large newspapers that don't even attempt to appear impartial in their coverage. Of course, there's no desire to communicate with this kind of media."

Mr. Carlson also faced criticism for interviewing Putin when his government is holding two U.S. journalists – Alsu Kurmasheva of RFE/RL and Evan Gershkovich of The Wall Street Journal – in jail on charges related to their reporting that both vehemently deny.

Some estimates say that around 1,000 independent Russian journalists have been

forced to flee the country fearing for their safety due to strict censorship laws that Putin has put in place and that make critical coverage of the war against Ukraine a criminal offense.

"Two American journalists are currently in Russian jails for trying to conduct independent journalism in Russia. Russian journalists have been killed for trying to practice independent journalism, some are in jail, and many others have had to flee the country," said Brian Taylor, a professor of political science at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in the United States.

"Many Western journalists who work on and in Russia have sought an interview with Putin since his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago, to no avail," Mr.

Taylor said in e-mailed remarks. "The fact that Putin is willing to talk to Tucker Carlson now means that Putin is looking for an opportunity to influence American domestic politics and he thinks Carlson will be a useful conduit for his message."

In his February 6 announcement, Mr. Carlson portrayed the interview as a chance to hear the Russian side, stating that "most Americans are not informed" about a war that he said is "reshaping the world."

Mr. Carlson has gained a reputation for defending the Russian leader, once claiming that "hating Putin has become the central purpose of America's foreign policy."

His credentials as an independent journalist have been widely questioned.

Mr. Carlson's former employer, Fox News, successfully won a 2020 defamation case against him, with the judge saying in her verdict that, when presenting stories, Mr. Carlson is not "stating actual facts" about the topics he discusses and is instead engaging in "exaggeration" and "non-literal commentary."

Mr. Carlson was one of Fox News' top-rated hosts before he abruptly left the network last year after Fox settled a separate defamation lawsuit over its reporting of the 2020 presidential election. Fox agreed to pay \$787 million to voting machine company Dominion after the company filed a lawsuit alleging the network spread false claims that its machines were rigged against former President Donald Trump.

Mr. Carlson has had a rocky relationship

(Continued on page 12)

Former Republican elected officials call on U.S. Congress to support Ukraine

Ukrainian National Information Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On the initiative of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and its Washington, D.C., public affairs bureau – the Ukrainian National Information Service (UNIS) – half a dozen former Republican Senators and Representatives penned a letter to U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) calling on his support for the Ukraine supplemental request of \$61.4 billion (Editor's note: the full text of that letter can be seen below).

The UCCA has released the co-signed letter addressed to the honorable Mike Johnson, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, urging him to provide steadfast security assistance aimed at aiding Ukraine's territorial defense against the Russian aggressor. The letter was signed by former Senators Rob Portman (Ohio), Roy Blunt (Missouri) and Cory Gardner (Colorado), as well as former Representatives John Shimkus (Illinois), Jim Gerlach (Pennsylvania) and Charles Dougherty (Pennsylvania).

The letter, which comes on the eve of the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale, unprovoked war against Ukraine, highlights key facts about America's support for Ukraine and the impact it will have. The Republican letter emphasizes that supporting Ukraine aligns with U.S. national security and geopolitical interests. Additionally, the letter underscores that the assistance provided to Ukraine is a small investment in comparison with its impact.

"Fully supporting Ukraine now is an investment to save American lives and treasure in the future," the former Republican elected officials wrote in their letter. "Moreover, of the aid that we are providing Ukraine, 60 percent stays in the United States. The American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) Marc Thiessen argues that support for Ukraine at this particular juncture "puts America first." Not only will it help revitalize our industrial base and help us prepare better militarily domestically, it will weak-

en the adversarial Sino-Russian alliance."

The letter also ensures that common refrains around transparency and accountability are addressed. "In the Lead Inspector General Joint Oversight Plan for 2024," the letter states, "the U.S. is making clear that there 'are no gaps in oversight coverage' and the inspector generals are committed to promoting 'the integrity, efficiency and accountability of U.S. government operations and associated funding by deterring fraud, waste and abuse.' Taxpayers' dollars are being closely tracked, monitored, and audited." Furthermore, as is evident in

recent crackdowns in Ukraine, the Zelenskyy government has taken unprecedented steps to weed out possible corrupt actors.

Ukrainian Americans recognize the bipartisan support for Ukraine funding and are collectively urging the Senate and House of Representatives to take up supplemental funding immediately. UCCA President Andrew Futey commented that the letter is "a timely initiative as the Russian war is an existential threat for Ukraine. And, it is within the scope and military capacity of the United States to defeat this destabilizing aggression from the Russian

Federation."

Additionally, Michael Sawkiw, Jr., UNIS director, urged the Ukrainian community to "follow the initiative of the former elected officials and contact its Senators and Representatives to advocate for desperately-needed security assistance for Ukraine." As a reminder, the first #SupportUkraine! advocacy event of 2024, entitled "Ukrainian Week," will be held on February 20-23 in local congressional districts throughout the country. Additional information can be obtained by contacting UNIS via email: unis@ucca.org.

FOR THE RECORD

Former U.S. Republican Senators and Congressmen call on House speaker to support passage of additional funding for Ukraine

The following letter, dated February 1, was released by the Ukrainian National Information Service – the Washington, D.C., public affairs bureau of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America – on February 5. Its signatories, listed below the letter, are all former members of the U.S. Congress.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We, the undersigned group of former elected officials of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, write in strong support of supplemental requests to aid Ukraine's territorial defense. This assistance to a free and democratic ally in the face of a brutal and unprovoked attack from an authoritarian regime is necessary to avoid the collapse of Ukraine and a victory for Vladimir Putin that would be far more costly for the United States and our NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies.

Recently retired [U.S. Chairman of the] Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley recently stated that, "If Ukraine loses [the war] and Putin wins, I think you would be certainly increasing, if not doubling, your defense budget in the years ahead." This

sentiment was echoed in early 2023 by former [U.S.] Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arguing that supporting Ukraine now will save lives and money in the long term. "The least costly way to move forward is to provide the Ukrainians with what they need now, provide them with the tools and resources that they need today," argued the former secretary of state. We urge you to support the \$61.4 billion supplemental request to be able to continue to lead the international coalition in support of Ukraine.

We believe the United States' continued support of Ukraine directly benefits our national security. With merely 5 percent of our expended defense budget, we have assisted the Ukrainians to deplete roughly 50 percent of the military capabilities of Russia, one of our two strongest geopolitical rivals and an adversary that increasingly acts against our core national interests worldwide.

Fully supporting Ukraine now is an investment [that will] save American lives and treasure in the future. Moreover, of the aid that we are providing Ukraine, 60 percent stays in the United States. American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) Marc

Thiessen argues that support for Ukraine at this particular juncture "puts America first." Not only will it help revitalize our industrial base and help us prepare better militarily [and] domestically, it will weaken the adversarial Sino-Russian alliance and help secure the rules-based international system that has benefited America and its allies for decades.

You are rightly concerned about accountability for U.S. taxpayer funds going to support Ukraine. As you know, the Zelenskyy administration has taken unprecedented steps to root out corruption that has plagued Ukraine in the past, even while the war is engulfing the country. This shows the dedication of Ukrainians to build a fundamentally new state. In addition, monitoring mechanisms and special procedures are in place and the Ukrainian government has consistently signaled its support of transparency and accountability.

Defense Department Inspector General Robert Storch confirmed this in his 2023 testimony to the U.S. Congress. There have been dozens of planned audits that are

(Continued on page 7)

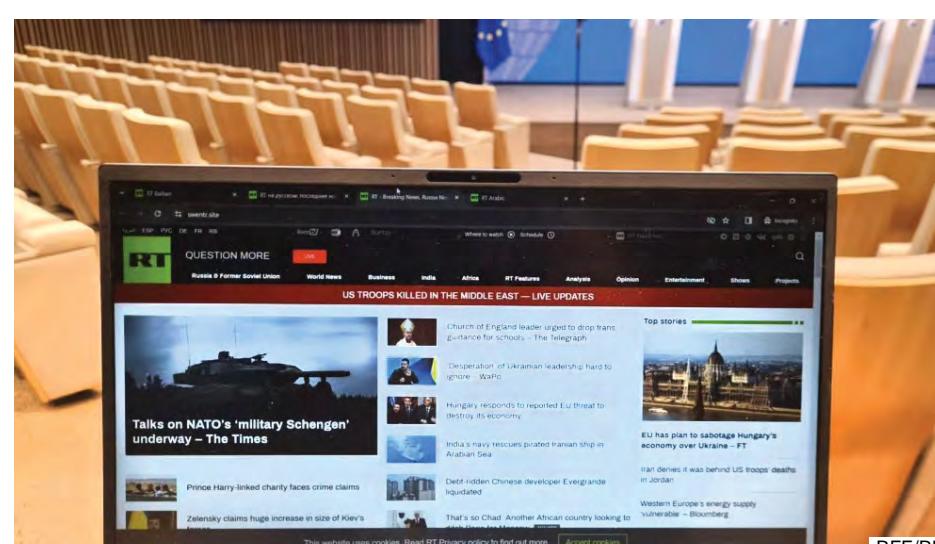
Two years into EU ban, Russia's RT and Sputnik are still accessible across the EU

by Gjeraqina Tuhina
RFE/RL

BRUSSELS – Deep within the heart of the European Union, inside the hulking buildings of the "European Quarter" in the Belgian capital, there is glaring evidence of the bloc's weakness.

Without using a virtual private network (VPN) or other circumvention tool, a correspondent for RFE/RL's Balkan Service was able to access the websites and streaming services of RT – previously known as Russia Today – and Sputnik from the buildings of the EU's executive body, the EU Commission, and the EU Council, which establishes the general political agenda and direction of the EU but does not negotiate or enact legislation. The websites were accessible in a handful of languages despite the EU's "urgent suspension" in the early weeks of Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Nearly two years after EU-wide sanctions were imposed to blunt Russian propaganda supporting the Kremlin's war on Ukraine, the websites of the Kremlin-backed RT and Sputnik media outlets are still easily accessible in many countries across the EU, including in the very institutions that drafted the regulations targeting them.



The Kremlin-backed RT media outlet can be easily reached inside the EU Commission building even though its websites were suspended by the EU Council in the early weeks of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In Brussels, RT and Sputnik videos, text and other content are available in English, French, German, Serbian, Spanish and Arabic.

RFE/RL's Balkan Service's digital forensics team also used VPNs to impersonate users in 19 other EU member states, and in each case it was possible to reach the RT and Sputnik websites without any problem.

The ease of access is a clear blow to

unprecedented Western efforts to punish Russia for the invasion and to combat its carefully tracked trail of disinformation to try to justify or spin the conflict.

"The sanctions cover all means for transmission and distribution, such as via cable, satellite, IPTV ... websites and apps," Johannes Bahrke, a spokesman for the EU's Commission responsible for digital economy, research and innovation,

told RFE/RL in a statement. "All relevant licenses, authorizations and distribution arrangements are suspended."

Mr. Bahrke and other EU officials, as well as outside experts, say the problem stems from obstacles to implementation by the 27 EU member states themselves and their relevant bodies or agencies.

To enforce the ban, observers say, authorities in each member state must ask local service providers to eliminate access to the Russian-run websites. They say the safest method is to ban domains and specific website addresses on a national level.

"National authorities designate relevant government bodies or agencies responsible [for] implementing and enforcing EU sanctions, depending on the sector the specific sanctions designation covers," said Tinatin Tsotskvadze, an expert on European sanctions at the Open Society Institute, a non-governmental organization created and funded by billionaire George Soros, and who has extensive experience in the efficacy of EU policies concerning its near and more distant neighbors, including Russia.

Mr. Bahrke said that, in RT's case, the European Union sanctioned the media outlet in English, and also in Germany, France and Spain – and eventually in Arabic as

(Continued on page 12)

THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Tucker goes to Moscow

Tucker Carlson's decision to interview Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow poses significant dangers, not only for the integrity of journalism but also for the potential manipulation of public opinion in the United States. As Mr. Carlson, known for his controversial views and close alignment with authoritarian leaders, aired his interview with Putin, concerns mount regarding the exploitation of his platform for propagandistic purposes.

The timing of the interview, amidst Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and escalating tensions between Moscow and the West, raises alarming questions about Mr. Carlson's intentions and the potential ramifications of providing a platform to a leader accused of egregious human rights violations and aggressive military actions.

While Mr. Carlson portrays the interview as an opportunity to present the Russian perspective to American audiences, critics argue that his track record and biases undermine the credibility of such an endeavor. His history of defending Putin and questioning U.S. foreign policy suggests a predisposition toward advancing narratives that align with the Kremlin's agenda.

But, in this case, even the Kremlin quickly dismissed Mr. Carlson's main reason for traveling to Moscow to interview the Russian despot. After Mr. Carlson said that "not a single Western journalist has bothered to interview" Putin, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "Mr. Carlson is not correct. In fact, there's no way he could know this. We receive numerous requests for interviews with the president, but mostly, as far as countries in the collective West are concerned, these are from major network media."

Moreover, Mr. Carlson's disregard for journalistic ethics and penchant for sensationalism cast doubt on his ability to conduct a fair and impartial interview. His past legal troubles, including defamation lawsuits and accusations of spreading misinformation, underscore the risks associated with granting him a platform to engage with world leaders on matters of global significance.

The decision to interview Putin also draws condemnation due to the broader context of repression and censorship within Russia. At a time when independent journalism is under siege, with journalists facing imprisonment and persecution for their reporting, Mr. Carlson's engagement with Putin sends a troubling message of complicity with authoritarian regimes.

The imprisonment of American journalists in Russia underscores the gravity of the situation, highlighting the dangers faced by those who dare to challenge the Kremlin's narrative. By legitimizing Putin's regime through a high-profile interview, Mr. Carlson risks lending credibility to a government responsible for stifling dissent and trampling on press freedoms.

Putin's motivations for participating in the interview are clear: to exploit the platform provided by Mr. Carlson to propagate his own version of events and shape perceptions in the United States. As Russia seeks to bolster its image and undermine Western support for Ukraine, Putin views the interview as a strategic opportunity to advance his agenda on the global stage.

The dangers of Putin using Mr. Carlson as a conduit for propaganda cannot be overstated. By leveraging Mr. Carlson's platform to disseminate his message, Putin seeks to sow discord and division within Western democracies, exploiting vulnerabilities and amplifying narratives that serve his interests.

As the interview with Putin unfolds, it is imperative that viewers approach it with skepticism and critical scrutiny. In an era marked by disinformation and manipulation, discerning truth from propaganda requires vigilance and a commitment to upholding the principles of a free and independent press.

Ultimately, Mr. Carlson's decision to interview Putin underscores the complex challenges facing journalism in an increasingly polarized and volatile world. As the boundaries between media and politics blur, the imperative to uphold journalistic integrity and defend democratic values has never been more urgent. In the face of authoritarian encroachment and manipulation, the integrity of journalism must remain sacrosanct, serving as a bulwark against tyranny and oppression.

Kremlin lures Russians to support war with access to its spoils

by Ksenia Kirillova
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On January 31, Russian presidential candidate Boris Nadezhdin announced on his Telegram channel that he had received 105,000 signatures of support for the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation (Telegram.me/BorisNadezhdin, January 31). Mr. Nadezhdin's unexpected success in his Russian presidential campaign revealed that many Russians are ready to oppose the war openly if such opposition is relatively safe. Queues formed at signature collection points both in Russia and abroad, demonstrating that many Russians do not blindly follow Kremlin policy (Euronews.com, January 25).

Opposition leaders are urging voters to support Mr. Nadezhdin despite understanding that such a successful figure could only have emerged in Russia via coordination with the Kremlin. These opposition leaders demonstrate this support to express their stance against the incumbent president (Youtube.ru, January 31). Independent sociologists are confident that this support illustrates people's fatigue with both Putin and the war (Istories.media, January 26).

Kremlin political technologists are attempting to connect people's everyday needs to the war, demonstrating that the ongoing war satisfies the Russian people's basic needs. For instance, in late January, social media users on X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok began promoting excerpts from a documentary about the real estate market in occupied Mariupol. According to propagandists, investing in destroyed housing, which can be sold at a higher price after restoration, is the most profitable path after the chaos (Meduza.io, January 26). Thus, the destruction of residential buildings as a result of the war is portrayed as an obvious benefit, allowing people to address the notorious "housing issue" in Russia and earn money from it.

At the same time, residents of Mariupol claim that destroyed houses are being restored exceptionally slowly, with many remaining in the same condition as at the end of hostilities. Hot water has not been fixed in numerous houses, and electricity is periodically cut off (Istories.media, January 22). Nevertheless, these realities do not deter Russians. As early as mid-summer, independent media reported that residents from various regions of the country are willing to purchase houses or apartments in any condition and personally restore them after being damaged from shelling, viewing it as a "good investment" and an opportunity to "live by the sea" (Meduza.io, June 29, 2023).

The "allure" of moving to the occupied territories for personal gain involves offers of cheap housing and employment opportunities. By late autumn of 2023, a new wave of high salary offers, even for unskilled work, emerged for those willing to work in the so-called "new regions of Russia." For example, an "educational worker" in Kherson can earn up to 110,000 rubles per month (over \$1,000) – a substantial sum by Russian standards, especially for a more rural area. Security guards earn about the same, while dump truck drivers earn 140,000 rubles monthly.

There is a demand for drivers, doctors, engineers, foremen, welders and more in the occupied territories. Qualified personnel can earn about 250,000 rubles per

month (Fontanka.ru, November 16). According to independent media reports, many Russians are willing to move to the occupied territories to earn money. Some claim they did not fully grasp the extent of the city's destruction before moving and went there solely for the high salaries (The-village.ru, March 31, 2023).

Similar sentiments are prevalent among Russian elites. Independent analysts, drawing from government sources, report that, while officials generally dislike the war and would prefer to avoid it, many have adapted to the situation and find it advantageous as long as they can profit from it in some way. Paradoxically, the frustration and opposition to the war often spur government officials to become more actively involved in "addressing frontline issues and gathering humanitarian aid" (Verstka, January 22). This underscores how the rationale of prolonged conflict and the benefits reaped outweigh people's initial attitudes.

The concept of linking the innate need to address daily survival concerns to the war is not new. In the first year of the full-scale invasion, Russian authorities released extensive "social advertising" campaigns, encouraging citizens to sign contracts with the Ministry of Defense to fight in the war to pay off debts or even purchase new iPhones for their daughters (Youtube.com, December 27, 2022; Sova.news, December 28, 2022).

In spring 2023, there was a resurgence of such advertising to encourage people to sign contracts to fight in Ukraine. Investigative journalists uncovered deliberate efforts by the Ministry of Digital Development and the "Internet Development Institute" to engage in such propaganda, distributing it free of charge within the social advertising quota. Banners promoting contractual service garnered over 200 million views within the Yandex advertising network (Verstka, January 25).

The number of individuals willing to engage in violence for financial gain, even amidst Russian poverty, remains limited. Consequently, involving people in more "peaceful" reliance on the war is a less challenging task. In the absence of an immediate threat to their life, Russians are more inclined to invest in destroyed housing or "instill patriotism" in children in occupied territories.

This promotion of the policy of moving to occupied territories for personal gain achieves two objectives. First, it normalizes the war for most Russians and even turns it into something advantageous. Second, Russians searching for work and housing who have become personally dependent on the occupation of foreign territories, despite their desire for an end to the war, insist that any resolution occurs on Russia's terms. For instance, recent surveys reveal that only a third of respondents advocate for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Furthermore, sociologists observe that even among these individuals, many are only willing to withdraw troops under Russian terms (Currenttime.tv, November 15). This approach unquestionably dampens public demand for an end to military actions and strengthens support for Putin, who has made war the linchpin of his rule.

The article above is reprinted from Eurasia Daily Monitor with permission from its publisher, the Jamestown Foundation, www.jamestown.org.

Feb.
26
1951

Turning the pages back...

Seventy-three years ago, an editorial in The Ukrainian Weekly featured excerpts from an article, "Why doesn't someone kill Stalin?" by Ellsworth Raymond, published in the February issue of the monthly magazine America.

Mr. Raymond's article was based on his experience working as a government expert, political analyst and chief translator at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and during the 1940s, he was the chief of the USSR Economic Section, Military Intelligence, U.S. Army General Staff, based in Washington.

To the question posed in the title of the article, Mr. Raymond retorted that Stalin had spent his life in conspiracy and knew better than we how many enemies he had. "He long ago learned how to protect himself," the editorial added, "and is today the most heavily guarded man in the world."

The Kremlin, Mr. Raymond wrote, is a fortified castle, designed to keep people out. Even during Stalin's time, Soviet army officers who were invited to an event would be closely scrutinized by secret police before the event and they would be searched before entering. They were given assigned seats and guests were forbidden from leaving early.

Mr. Raymond also recounted how Stalin wouldn't converse at such events with the guests. He instead kept to his inner circle members of the Politburo and the Cabinet. At times, Stalin would hastily finish his meal and then unceremoniously leave the dining hall without saying goodbye, and the event would conclude with all of the guests being marched to the gate to leave.

An assassination of Stalin, Mr. Raymond underscored, would need to be carried out in the few limited opportunities where Stalin appears in public. Soviet police in their daily shifts and army soldiers during parades were under strict security measures to account for weapons and ammunition.

(Continued on page 12)

Wave of Russian...

(Continued from page 1)

The latest round of Russian strikes came as European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and the head of the United Nation's atomic agency, Rafael Grossi, were in Ukraine, with the latter visiting the Russia-occupied Zaporizhia nuclear power plant to assess the situation amid concerns about the facility's safety.

In Kyiv, debris from a downed Russian missile fell on an 18-story residential block in the southern Holosiivskiy district, triggering a fire that killed at least four people, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

Sixteen people were injured in Holosiivskiy and in the eastern district of Dnipro in the capital, Mr. Klymenko said.

Serhiy Popko, the head of the Kyiv City Military Administration, said that at least 38 people were wounded in the capital.

Fragments of a downed Russian missile also damaged electricity lines, leaving part of the Ukrainian capital without power and heating.

"Some consumers on the left bank [of the Dnipro River] are currently without electricity," Mayor Vitali Klitschko wrote on Telegram. "The heating supply main on the left bank was damaged."

"Another massive Russian air attack against our country," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on X, formerly Twitter, as an air-raid alert was declared for all of Ukraine. "Six regions came under enemy fire. All of our services are currently working to eliminate the consequences of this terror," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote.

In the southern city of Mykolayiv, one man died following a Russian strike, Mayor Oleksandr Sienkevych said. Russian missiles also hit the Kharkiv and Sumy regions, wounding two people, regional officials said.

The Ukrainian Air Force said Russia launched 64 drones and missiles at Ukraine's territory. The Ukrainian air defense shot down 29 missiles and 15 drones, it said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its air defense systems intercepted two waves of Ukrainian airborne attacks, destroying a total of 12 rockets and drones over the southwestern region of Belgorod.

Two people were injured, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

The ministry said the first attack involved seven rockets and two drones. The second wave involved five more Czech-made Vampire rockets, the ministry said. The same type of rocket was used in deadly strikes on the city of Belgorod in late December.

Mr. Borrell, in Kyiv on a two-day visit to highlight the bloc's support for Ukraine, posted a picture on X from a shelter.



Moscow fired cruise and ballistic missiles as well as Shahad-type drones at six regions across the country on February 7, killing a man in Mykolayiv, a city in southern Ukraine, where some 20 residential buildings and public infrastructure were damaged, regional Gov. Vitaliy Kim said. In Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that residential buildings in multiple Kyiv districts (including the building pictured above) were set ablaze following a Russian missile attack.

"Starting my morning in the shelter as air raid alarms are sounding across Kyiv," Mr. Borrell wrote. "This is the daily reality of the brave Ukrainian people since Russia launched its illegal aggression."

Mr. Borrell met later with Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who called for "urgent steps" to increase deliveries of military aid.

"If you ask a soldier at the front what he needs most now, the answer will be shells," Mr. Kuleba told Mr. Borrell. "The scale of the war and Russia's use of artillery reached a level for which, let's be honest, the European defense industry was not ready," he added.

Mr. Kuleba also said Ukraine found infighting in the U.S. Congress over the future of U.S. aid "confusing." Some \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine is included in a border security bill that has stalled in Congress despite the urging of President Joe Biden to pass it.

U.S. national-security adviser Jake Sullivan told a joint news conference in Brussels with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on February 7 that the United States "can and will" deliver the needed aid. Mr. Stoltenberg said such a move was "vital."

Mr. Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), meanwhile, arrived at Moscow-controlled Zaporizhia – which is home to Europe's largest nuclear power plant – accompanied by IAEA mission staff and Russian soldiers, Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Russia occupied the plant shortly after it launched its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and its six nuclear reactors are now idled.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog has voiced concern many times over the possibility of

a nuclear catastrophe at the plant amid fighting in the area.

Earlier, on February 5, five Ukrainian civilians were killed when Russian forces shelled the southern city of Kherson and the northeastern region of Sumy, Ukrainian officials said, amid a dramatic increase in the intensity of Moscow's bombardment of civilian areas.

Mr. Klymenko, Ukraine's interior minister, said on Telegram that Russian artillery killed four people and wounded one other person in Kherson city in a strike that occurred around noon. Russian troops also shelled the city of Vorozhba in the Sumy region, killing one person and injuring two others, the regional military administration reported.

Ukrainian forces in November 2022 liberated Kherson as Russian troops retreated eastward across the Dnipro River. Since then, Russian forces have regularly targeted the city with artillery and missiles from across the river, causing numerous deaths among civilians and destroying infrastructure.

In a separate Telegram message, Mr. Klymenko said that over the past week, the intensity of Russia's shelling of southern Ukraine increased by almost a quarter compared to previous weeks, causing at least a dozen civilian deaths. Mr. Klymenko added that Russian forces attacked civilian areas more than 1,500 times over the past seven days.

"Attacks have been recorded on more than 570 settlements, with the largest number in the Zaporizhia region," Mr. Klymenko wrote. "As a result of the Russian strikes over the past week, 12 people died and 60 people were wounded."

Eight explosions were recorded in the attack on Vorozhba.

"As a result of the shelling, a 40-year-old

man died [and] his mother was injured. Another person was also injured. According to preliminary information, five residential buildings, commercial buildings, electrical networks and internet connections were damaged," the military administration said in a statement.

Emergency services were working at the scene, the statement said, calling on residents of border communities "not to expose themselves to danger and to take advantage of offers to evacuate to safer communities and regions."

On the battlefield, Ukrainian forces fought 105 combat clashes at the front on February 5, the General Staff said in its evening summary. More than one-third of the clashes occurred in the area around Avdiivka and nearby towns in the Donetsk region. Russian forces supported by aviation were repelled when they tried to break through Ukrainian defenses, the General Staff said.

Russian forces also attacked in areas around Kupyansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Maryinsk and Zaporizhia, and tried to knock Ukrainian troops from the bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnipro River in the Kherson region, the General Staff said.

Russian forces also launched more than 30 missile and air strikes and 52 attacks from rocket salvo systems on the positions of Ukrainian troops and populated areas.

Separately, Oleh Synyehubov, the governor of the eastern region of Kharkiv, said early on February 5 that 18 settlements in the region had been struck by Russian shells over the past 24 hours and that in total about 18 settlements in the Kharkiv region were hit by enemy artillery and mortar fire during the day.

Nearly two years into Russia's mass invasion of Ukraine, the battlefield along the nearly 1,200-kilometer front line stretching from northeast Ukraine to Kherson has largely frozen, with Russia pushing forward in localized offensives near Kupyansk in the north, and around Avdiivka to the south.

Mr. Zelenskyy on February 5 visited a hospital in the city of Kropyvnytskiy where injured Ukrainian troops are receiving treatment. "I spoke with the warriors and presented them with awards," Mr. Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter. "I thank each of them for their service. They are doing an excellent job and are true heroes. Ukraine takes pride in them."

(With reporting by Reuters, AP and AFP)

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Former U.S. ...

(Continued from page 5)

working to ensure U.S. tax dollars are used responsibly and with accountability, according to the inspector general. In the Lead Inspector General Joint Oversight Plan for 2024, the U.S. is making clear that there "are no gaps in oversight coverage" and the inspector generals are committed to promoting "the integrity, efficiency and accountability of U.S. government operations and associated funding by deterring fraud, waste and abuse." Taxpayers' dollars are being closely tracked, monitored and audited.

American lifesaving security assistance – through military, financial and humanitarian mechanisms – has been critical to ensuring that our ally and strategic partner Ukraine continues to exist as a sovereign state. While we have committed \$60 billion for security assistance, \$40 billion for financial support

and \$3 billion in humanitarian aid, the United States is not in this fight alone. We are also working with our European allies and IFIs [international financial institutions] to supplement Ukraine's budget both in the short-term fight and long-term recovery. The Ukrainian economy shrank nearly 40 percent since February 24, 2022, making this continued economic assistance vitally necessary.

We agree with your stated view that helping Ukraine is a geopolitical priority for us. As you have said, "We can't allow Vladimir Putin to prevail in Ukraine, because I don't believe it would stop there, and it would probably encourage and empower China to perhaps make a move on Taiwan." Indeed, history and Putin's own actions show us that the Kremlin will not stop in Ukraine. Ukraine is defending its sovereignty and territory against Russian aggression so that our children won't have to take action once again on the European continent.

Some advocate that the United States "pivot to the Indo-Pacific" where rising threats from China pose direct threats to our national security interests. Supporting Ukraine is critical to standing up to a rising "axis of evil" that interconnects Russia, China, Iran and North Korea. Iran's support in destabilizing our democratic ally in the Middle East emphasizes the interconnectedness of this fight. If Ukraine is left behind, "the Kremlin would again endanger all surrounding regions and prompt China and others to take advantage elsewhere of perceived U.S. weakness and lack of resolve," according to former National Security Advisor and Ambassador John Bolton.

Upholding the international rules-based order has been a central, bipartisan doctrine of American foreign policy for over 80 years, and continues to be the bulwark of our power and global leadership for democratic principles.

Ukraine is a free, democratic and inde-

pendent European state and an ally that made a decision to join the free world. With U.S. leadership, Ukraine can win, benefiting the United States and the entire free world. We, the undersigned, look forward to your support and stewardship to ensure Ukraine's success, which will directly benefit U.S. national security interests.

Sincerely,

Sen. Rob Portman
Ohio

Sen. Cory Gardner
Colorado

Sen. Roy Blunt
Missouri

Rep. John Shimkus
Illinois

Rep. Jim Gerlach
Pennsylvania

Rep. Charles Dougherty
Pennsylvania

Gallery event assesses unique achievement of Ukrainian artistic icon Maria Prymachenko

by Nicholas Gordon

NEW YORK – Art lovers gathered for a guided tour of the work of Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko on January 28 at The Ukrainian Museum in New York's East Village. Titled "Exploring Maria Prymachenko's World: Captions and Dialect," the tour was led by Ukrainian linguist Ivanka Svitliar, who has been researching Ms. Prymachenko's unique usage of dialect in her paintings. Over 20 people attended the event.

A self-taught artist, Ms. Prymachenko (1909-1987) worked in the "naïve art" style, drawing creative inspiration from

Ukrainian folk culture. Her vibrantly colored paintings of fantastical animals and scenes from songs and fairy tales done in variegated shades of yellows, reds, pinks, greens and blues fairly popped from the white walls in the museum's galleries. During the tour, photocopies of Ms. Prymachenko's handwritten captions from the back of her paintings were provided for further insight into the artist's methods and sensibility.

"Maria's work conveys what was dear to Ukrainian people, our history and folk traditions, our closeness to nature," Ms. Svitliar said. "She also expressed her closeness to Ukraine with her unique



Nicholas Gordon

Fulbright scholar Ivanka Svitliar (third from the right) with individuals who took part in her gallery tour of Maria Prymachenko's art works. That tour was conducted in English, while Ms. Svitliar also led a similar tour in Ukrainian the previous day.

motif of signing her paintings in the middle Polissian dialect of the Ukrainian language."

Ms. Svitliar studied linguistics at Cherkasy National University before moving to the U.S. six months ago as a Fulbright scholar at Old Dominion University, where she's now studying socio-linguistics. Ms. Svitliar said she first became fascinated by Ms. Prymachenko after seeing her art exhibit in Lviv. She then began researching Ms. Prymachenko's usage of dialect, particularly in her captions, which she was surprised had not received much scholarly attention over the years.

"[Ms.] Prymachenko wrote her titles and captions as she heard them, documenting

her region's speech for future generations," Ms. Svitliar said, noting that due to Ms. Prymachenko's contracting polio as a child, the artist only attended school until 4th grade and had limitations in literacy. "Some of her captions rhyme, which is a tradition that dates back to Ukrainian folk painting of the 18th and 19th centuries. Each of her captions reflects Ukrainian identity."

Ms. Svitliar discussed the example of Ms. Prymachenko's painting "My Salad Years," which depicts the artist's interpretation of the Ukrainian folk song with that title. Ms. Prymachenko's caption provides a variant on the song's original lyrics, in which she

(Continued on page 9)



Fulbright scholar Ivanka Svitliar leads a gallery tour of the work of Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko at The Ukrainian Museum in New York's East Village.

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STAND WITH UKRAINE

Zelenskyy meets...

(Continued from page 1)

some experts fear that, Mr. Zaluzhnyi's ouster may demoralize some of Ukraine's troops and undermine national unity.

Mr. Zelenskyy appointed Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy as the Ukrainian Army's commander-in-chief just minutes after announcing it was time for a "renewal" and "renewed leadership" of the country's armed forces.

In a statement on February 8, Mr. Zelenskyy said Mr. Syrskiy "has successful defense experience – he conducted the Kyiv defense operation. He also has successful offensive experience – the Kharkiv liberation operation."

In remarks to Italian television late on February 4, Mr. Zelenskyy said, without being specific, that he is considering "replacing a number of state leaders," not only those in the military.

"It is a question of the people who are to lead Ukraine," he told RAI television when asked about reports that he was about to fire Mr. Zaluzhnyi.

"A reset is necessary. I am talking about a replacement of a number of state leaders, not only in the army sector. I am reflecting on this replacement. It's a question for the entire leadership of the country."

"I have in mind something serious that does not concern a single person but the direction of the country's leadership."

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said the



Office of the President of Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (right) talks to soldiers at military positions near the front line in Robotyne on February 4.

search-and-rescue operation at the site of a deadly building attack in the Russian-occupied city of Lysychansk has been completed.

Rescuers early on February 4 recovered more bodies from the rubble of the building in eastern Ukraine that was hit by apparent artillery fire, bringing the death toll to 28.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said in a post to Telegram that a child was among the bodies recovered from the rubble of the building, which it said housed a bakery and a restaurant. Another 10 people were rescued.

Moscow-imposed officials in the

Luhansk region, which is nearly entirely controlled by Russia, initially blamed a Ukrainian drone strike for the attack, but later shifted explanations, asserting it was actually Ukrainian artillery. The claim could not be independently verified.

Ukrainian officials have not commented on the incident.

Russia took control of Lysychansk in July 2022 after months of fierce fighting.

Nearly two years into Russia's mass invasion of Ukraine, the battlefield along the nearly 1,200-kilometer front line stretching from northeast Ukraine to the south-central region of Kherson has largely frozen. After an unsuccessful counteroffen-

sive last fall, Ukrainian troops have turned to rebuilding their forces and shoring up defenses.

Russia, for its part, has continued to push forward in several, localized offensives: near Kupyansk in the north, and around the industrial city of Avdiivka, to the south.

Both sides have also launched longer-range attacks this winter using long-distance precision artillery, drones and air-launched cruise missiles.

Ukraine has increasingly used its drone arsenal to target industrial sites within Russia itself. On February 3, an apparent Ukrainian drone strike hit one of the largest oil refineries in Volgograd, about 400 kilometers east of the Ukrainian border.

Firefighters put out the blaze after several hours, and it was unclear the extent of the damage at the refinery, which is owned by Lukoil, and is one of the largest in Russia. It produces gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel, and fuel for ships.

In Ukraine's Sumy region, the military administration there said Russian forces had shelled the region in 16 separate attacks the previous day.

(With reporting by RFE/RL's Russian and Ukrainian services, Reuters and AP)

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Gallery event...

(Continued from page 8)

"transforms the narrative and embraces a life-affirming spirit."

Discovered for her early embroidery work, Ms. Prymachenko became a prominent artist in the Soviet Union, exhibiting at the Republican Exhibition of Folk Art in 1936 and the Paris World Fair in 1937. She lived during an era of unspeakable hardship for Ukrainians, millions of whom died in the

Stalin-led famine of 1932-1933 known as the Holodomor. And yet, Ms. Prymachenko's resilient spirit and abundant hope can still be seen in her vibrant paintings bursting with birds, plants and flowers.

"Maria is very alive in her artworks," Ms. Svitliar said. "As a viewer, you enter this very colorful world of hers and feel an optimistic vibe in her work, despite the difficulties of her time."

Preserving Ms. Prymachenko's work as one of the most beloved and renowned Ukrainian artists is now as important as

ever: In the early days of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian military destroyed a museum in Ivankiv, Ukraine, containing dozens of Ms. Prymachenko's artworks.

The exhibition at The Ukrainian Museum, "Maria Prymachenko: Glory to Ukraine," is the first exhibition of Ms. Prymachenko's art outside of Europe. It features over 100 paintings, ceramic works, embroidered blouses, wooden plates and children's illustration books, showcasing Ms. Prymachenko's "visionary outsider

esthetics," as stated on the museum's website. The exhibition runs until April 7.

As a linguist, Ms. Svitliar said she is passionate about studying Ms. Prymachenko's captions for the ways they "echo ancient sounds" and preserve the linguistic tradition of the Ukrainian language.

"Maria conveys the Ukrainian soul and the messages of our history and culture in her work," Ms. Svitliar said. "If you're not familiar with Ukrainian culture, Maria's bright mode of communication is a great entry point."

U.S. Senate...

(Continued from page 1)

lion in military funding by pressuring members of Congress. Mr. Biden said Mr. Trump is using Ukrainian lives as a bargaining chip ahead of this year's U.S. presidential election.

"Why? Donald Trump. Because he thinks it's bad for him politically. He'd rather weaponize this issue than actually solve it," Mr. Biden said in the state dining room of the White House on February 6. "For the last 24 hours, he's done nothing at all but reach out to Republicans in the House and the Senate and threaten them and try to intimidate them to vote against this proposal. And it looks like they're caving."

For months, a hard-right cohort of Republicans in both the House of Representatives and the Senate who have reportedly been pressured by the 45th president has resisted a stand-alone bill to continue helping Ukraine as it withstands the bloodiest invasion on the European continent since World War II. It is a war that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives, according to estimates by military experts.

A procedural vote on a Senate bill that would provide \$95 billion in aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan passed by a bipartisan vote of 67-32 on February 8, according to C-SPAN. A final vote in the Senate is expected to take place over the weekend, and the House of Representatives must still pass the legislation before

Mr. Biden can sign it.

Since October, Congress has been stalled on voting to provide more funding for Ukraine.

"Don't be a fool," Mr. Trump said on X (formerly known as Twitter). "This bill is a great gift to the Democrats...It should not be tied to the foreign aid in any way..."

Meanwhile, Russia is set to hold a presidential election in March, and Kremlin dictator Vladimir Putin wants to tout more battlefield success. Russia currently occupies about 20 percent of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Consequences

Military experts have sensed that the Kremlin is taking advantage of Ukraine's materiel shortage and have noted that Russia enjoys a 10-1 artillery advantage.

The so-called shell hunger comes amid the E.U. falling short on its promise to deliver 1.1 million 155-millimeter shells this year. The bloc has delivered about half that amount, E.U. Foreign Affairs chief Josep Borrell said.

Moscow's only success came during last May's takeover of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, and now Russian forces have occupied about 18 percent of Avdiivka, and they are attempting to encircle the town, which is located in Donetsk Oblast.

Forbes magazine's defense writers say that Russia is also massing recruits and "500 tanks" for an assault on Kupiansk in the eastern part of the Kharkiv region of Ukraine.

In the coming days, "hundreds of howitzers [and] ... 40,000 thousand troops" will enter the battlefield, Ukraine's eastern command said.

Overnight on February 7, Russia launched a mixture of 66 projectiles and Iranian-made drones at civilian targets, 44 of which were intercepted above the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mykolayiv, Lviv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, Ukraine's air force reported.

As a result of those attacks, five civilians were killed and more than 30 were wounded, Ukrainian officials said, amid damage to infrastructure and residential buildings.

Defense experts have voiced varying degrees of optimism regarding Ukraine's prospects of going with far less Western security assistance.

"Kyiv has huge amounts of money in the country, ... a citizens' army is forming who are pulling away from the armed forces," said Glen Grant, a British defense expert at the Latvia-based Baltic Security Foundation.

He referred to separate Ukrainian military units that do their own recruiting and training.

"There are still people who want to join and fight, but they are concerned about the stories they've heard from those who fight, and it matters who their [specific] commander is," Mr. Grant said.

Russia "has the initiative," he said, because "it has more manpower, more drones and more artillery."

Regarding former top military commander Valeriy Zaluzhnyi's prognosis

about the war and dwindling Western support, Mr. Grant said he partially agrees that "drones are much needed, ... but you need to fire and move and only soldiers can take up space."

In Tallin, Estonia, James Sherr, a senior fellow at the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, said that, despite flagging support, Kyiv "has inflicted 30,000 Russian casualties since January 1," about half the amount the U.S. suffered in its 10-year war with Vietnam.

He added that there is "willpower and ingenuity in the Euro-Atlantic system," in terms of providing Ukraine weapons via indirect channels.

However, Mr. Sherr told The Ukrainian Weekly "that without U.S. renewal of appropriations ... Ukraine's overall capacity will progressively decline if funding is not renewed."

The "decline could become steep and drastic," he said.

Ukraine has already lost the ability to conduct counteroffensives and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has ordered his forces to take a more defensive posture.

Kyiv is already rationing its artillery at a rate of one shelled fired to every 10 Russian shells fired, a Wall Street Journal report said. In turn, The Washington Post said that Ukraine is facing a manpower shortage as newer recruits are hard to come by and the nation's economy is facing government revenue problems to train and equip soldiers properly.

Shelter built to honor final wish of Plast member who died defending Ukraine opened in Carpathian Mountains

by Andrew Nynka

MOUNT PARASHKA, Ukraine – Amid a bright blue sky and freshly fallen snow, a group of hikers, mountaineers and members of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization made their way up Mount Parashka in the Carpathian Mountains on November 25 to officially open a shelter that was both a tribute to and a dying wish of a man who gave his life defending Ukraine.

The shelter, an A-frame built in Ukraine's Skole Beskids (Eastern Beskids) mountain range about two hours southwest of Lviv by car, was dedicated to Taras Havrylyshyn, who was known by his fellow Plast members as TT.

Mr. Havrylyshyn, a member of Plast's Chornomortsy fraternity, died on November

1, 2022, as his unit approached Kherson along the southern front of the war in Ukraine. He was born on April 20, 1985, in Lviv.

While he died fighting for his homeland, Mr. Havrylyshyn, who was known as Iceberg by his fellow fraternity members, also loved the outdoors, and he had a particular love of Mount Parashka.

"Above all, Taras loved traveling, the sea and the mountains. He was also a leading Plast instructor in astronomy and maritime navigation and was a crew member of the boat 'Chaika' [Seagull]. His biggest dream and last request, which he voiced to his brothers, was the construction of a hut on Mount Parashka," said project coordinator Yulia Hvozdovych, who is also a member of the Plast sorority Chornomorski Khvyli.



Andrew Nynka



Courtesy of Plast Chornomortsy

Project coordinator Yulia Hvozdovych, who is also a member of the Plast sorority Chornomorski Khvyli, spoke during the opening of the shelter on November 25.

We are in the midst of the most important fight for Ukraine in Congress since Russia's invasion began.

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bit.ly/ukraineaidnow or QR scan code



The wooden shelter is covered with a metal roof and was built on the southern slope of Mount Parashka. It is divided into three parts: the front includes a terrace with stunning views of the Carpathian Mountains, an office for park rangers that includes a separate entrance and bunk beds for three people, and a larger section for hikers that includes sleeping spaces for eight people. In total, the shelter can hold up to 16 people and there is no charge to use the space.

In keeping with Mr. Havrylyshyn's love of astronomy, organizers also plan to expand the shelter and use it as a nighttime astronomy observation post. If that happens, it could be the inaugural facility in the region's future Dark Sky Park project, an area in the Lviv region that would provide skies free of light pollution where individuals could better view the night sky.

(Continued on page 11)

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Andrew Nynka



Soyuzivka Heritage Center hosts 2023 summer dance camp

UNA donation funds attendance for children displaced by war

by Andrew Nynka

KERHONKSON, N.Y. – Held this past summer at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center in Kerhonkson, N.Y., two sessions of the Roma Pryma Bohachevsky Ukrainian Dance Camp hosted more than 100 participants, and among them were refugees from war-ravaged Ukraine who were able to take part in the camp thanks in part to a donation from the Ukrainian National Association that paid for their room and board.

The two Ukrainian Dance Camps for children aged 8-16 (first session: July 23-August 5; and second session August 6-19) were run by camp director Ania Bohachevsky Lonkevych. Among this year's participants were the following children from Ukraine: Bohdan Shvaiuk, 17, of Ivano Frankivsk; Mariia Lebedieva, 14, of Kyiv; Sofiya Vorobkewych, 13, of Lviv; and Vitalina Kostyk, 13, of Ternopil.

A large photo gallery of pictures from the camp can be found online at <https://gallery.ukrweekly.com/> or by scanning the QR code on the left with a mobile phone.



Shelter built...

(Continued from page 10)

"Taras's friends and members of the Lviv Astronomical Society are working on it. For Taras's birthday [April 20], they also want to buy a mobile telescope and other gear for organizing astronomical observations. Periodic astronomy and open-air camps, international events and the development of astronomy classes in local schools is also planned. In addition, this is the first tourist shelter in the Lviv region built by Plastuns," Plast said in a statement about the opening of the shelter.

According to Plast in Ukraine, Mr. Havrylyshyn volunteered for the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion. He served in the 45th separate artillery brigade and was killed by Russian artillery. He was awarded Plast's Iron Cross on November 6, 2022.

Funds for the construction of the shelter were raised by volunteers, activists, Plast members, the diaspora and Mr. Havrylyshyn's family, Ms. Hvozdovych said. Together they raised more than \$13,000, she said. Windows, doors and wood were donated, and no funds from local or state budgets were used to build the shelter.

The shelter, which sits in Ukraine's Skole Beskids National Nature Park, will be maintained and overseen by the park.



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Two years...

(Continued from page 5)

well as RT Balkan in Serbian.

The Serbian case represents a special challenge to the E.U. and the West. President Aleksandar Vucic has staunchly refused to lead his E.U. candidate country into participating with anti-Russian sanctions, making it the only country on the continent besides Turkey and Belarus to avoid at least formally distancing itself from Russia. Sputnik began its operations there in 2019 and has an office in Belgrade, and RT launched its Serbian-language operations at the end of 2022, well into the full-scale war.

"It is up to the relevant providers to block access to websites of outlets covered by the sanctions, including subdomains or newly created domains and up to the relevant national authorities to take any required accompanying regulatory measures," Mr. Bahrke said.

RFE/RL's Balkan Service sought explanations from specific service providers in Belgium, where the E.U. institutions are based, and the Belgian Telecommunications Ministry, but two weeks have passed without a reply.

The bloc has otherwise demonstrated the urgency of its efforts to counter Russian influence operations through the media.

War propaganda on a global scale'

The E.U.'s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, Josep Borrell, established its flagship EUvsDisinfo project

in 2015. It describes RT and Sputnik as "not media organizations, but weapons of deception [by] the Kremlin." EUvsDisinfo's website says the project's main goal is to increase public awareness and understanding of Russian influence and disinformation operations and to help citizens of Europe and beyond develop resistance to digital information and media manipulation.

"Russia accompanies its illegal war against the Ukrainian people with information war and aggressive war propaganda on a global scale," Peter Stano, Mr. Borrell's spokesman at the E.U.'s diplomatic corps, the European External Action Service (EEAS), said in a January 23 statement, while presenting the report about foreign interference and disinformation.

"The Kremlin regime transformed state-controlled media into instruments of information manipulation and information warfare. That is why the European Union banned [a] number of them, including Russia Today and Sputnik from E.U. media space."

Yevhen Fedchenko, co-owner and editor of the Kyiv-based website StopFake, which was founded expressly to try to refute alleged Russian propaganda around the time of Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 with Moscow's support for armed separatism in eastern Ukraine on the rise, told RFE/RL's Balkan Service that E.U. restrictions imposed in 2022 "are now almost nonexistent."

"Russia is quickly rebuilding its capacities understanding that there are no serious efforts to prevent it from occupying European information space using all avail-

able instruments: rearming traditional media like RT or Sputnik; influencers in every part of the world; owning local media companies; and using [the] growing influence of [the] ... Telegram [messaging service] and [the] China-controlled TikTok [social media platform]," Mr. Fedchenko said.

Mr. Borrell has recently warned of the consequences of failure, as massive U.S. and E.U. aid packages remain stalled amid talk of a stalemate in the war and so-called Ukraine fatigue in the West.

"We are much more vulnerable to this threat because information circulates at the speed of light," Mr. Borrell said in January as he announced new measures to tackle foreign interference and disinformation less than five months ahead of European Parliamentary elections scheduled for June.

Major threat to liberal democracies'

An EEAS report issued on January 23 suggested that he and other influential Western allies of Kyiv can't expect to be spared from further Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), specifically by Russia and China.

"The targets of FIMI attacks are truly global. In 49 percent of the cases analyzed according to the common framework, countries or their official representatives across the world were directly targeted 480 times [by FIMI]," the report said. "The country most often targeted was Ukraine, with 160 cases recorded."

But Mr. Borrell added in the foreword to the report that "FIMI poses a major threat to liberal democracies, which rely on free and open information." He went on to call it "a problem we need to address, inside the E.U. and together with our partners."

A number of outside experts say that, in the absence of more strident action, the system of sanctions is outgunned by authoritarian regimes, including when it comes to media.

"Such a system will provide a proportionate and strictly regulated response to malicious propaganda and disinformation activities by third countries that systematically flout freedom of expression," Julie Mazercak of Reporters Without Borders, the Paris-based media watchdog, told RFE/RL.

Terrestrial, cable and satellite broadcasting platforms are generally simpler to police and control than the internet, which can be accessed through a wide range of devices using different operating systems.

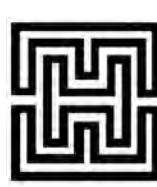
RT's broadcasting in national languages was banned in the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania before the E.U. sanctions that followed the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Experts on behalf of Belgian law firm Simmons & Simmons noted last June that "in light of the war in Ukraine" and an amendment to E.U. regulation No. 833/2014, the broadcasting licenses of Russian broadcasters had been "invalidated" and "broadcasting licenses or authorization, transmission and distribution arrangements with certain media outlets, such as Russia Today and Sputnik, are suspended from 1 March 2022 onwards."

"E.U. member states are not entitled to apply less stringent rules to broadcasters but may impose stricter rules on audiovisual media service providers under their jurisdiction, provided that these do not violate fundamental rights," they added.

(Written by Andy Heil based on reporting by RFE/RL Balkan Service correspondent Gjeraqina Tuhina in Brussels.)

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For more information, please contact atwood@shevchenko.org
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Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

"This is an example of how little Stalin trusts even his own policemen. It also helps to explain why he has never been shot at from a Red Square multitude," the editorial added.

Mr. Raymond noted an incident at Red Square in November 1940 on the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution during

which time people parading were in "an ugly mood." Stalin had just announced that workers were not allowed to change or quit their jobs, and he forbade them from owning guns. To show their disgust, on an occasion that would draw cheers from the crowd, the protesters "used the only weapon left - deadly silence."

Source: "Why doesn't someone kill Stalin?" *The Ukrainian Weekly*, February 26, 1951.

Controversy...

(Continued from page 4)

at times with the former president, but during Mr. Trump's presidency he had Mr. Carlson's full backing, and in November Mr. Carlson endorsed Mr. Trump in his 2024 run to regain the White House.

Mr. Carlson's interview with Putin took place on February 6, according to Mr. Peskov. He spent several days in Russia on a visit that was avidly covered by media outlets there, many of which are state-run or loyal to the state.

Putin has increasingly portrayed the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine as a purely defensive battle to save Russia and, as he put it in a speech last November, to fight "for the freedom of the whole world" from "the dictatorship of a single hegemon" - clearly a reference to the United States. Russian officials, lawmakers and state-aligned media often praise Western critics of the United States and the Biden administration.

Analysts say that, while Russian forces have failed to subjugate Ukraine or force Mr. Zelenskyy's government from power, Putin hopes that Western support for Kyiv and morale among Ukrainians will flag to

the point where his war aims are achievable - and that the U.S. presidential election in November will advance that process.

Tatyana Stanovaya, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center think tank, said that Putin likely decided to do the interview because he sees this year as "pivotal" in shifting the dynamics of the war in Ukraine toward his favor given that the United States is in an election year and Ukraine appears to be "grappling with significant internal political challenges."

"Against this strategic backdrop, Putin badly needs to reach a Western audience. It is probable that during the interview he will attempt to position himself as a friend to the American people, arguing that it is in the U.S.'s interest to cease its support for Ukraine," she wrote on X, adding that "the interview is a platform for Putin to widen his access to American viewers and garner support for his narrative."

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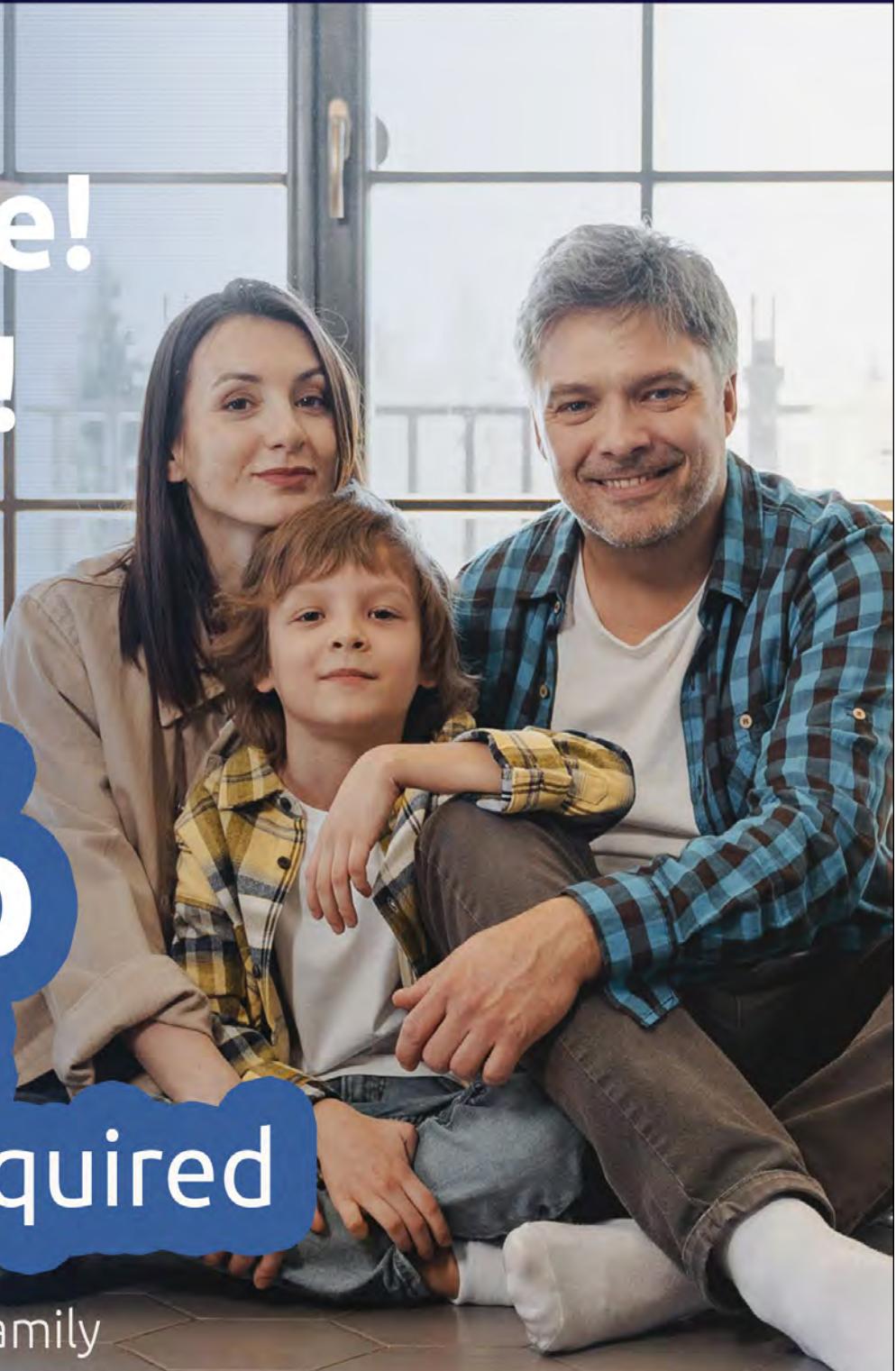


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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

Moscow to return the bodies of dozens of prisoners of war (POWs) that Russia says died in a plane crash last week, contradicting Kremlin statements that no request has been received on the matter. Andriy Yusov, the spokesman for Ukraine's military intelligence, said Kyiv's calls for the return of the remains of 65 POWs Russia claims were on the plane have fallen on deaf ears. He also said in comments on state television late on February 1 that an international probe is needed to establish the facts of the crash of the Il-76 military transport plane that purportedly left 74 dead in total. "Regarding information about the deaths, Ukraine made requests and continues to do so regarding the transfer of the bodies. So far, the Russian side is not going for it. ... So far, Russia has not intensified the process related to an open international investigation," Mr. Yusov added. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on February 2, however, said Moscow had not received a request.

When asked how Russia would react to such a request, Mr. Peskov told reporters in Moscow that Russian law enforcement agencies would have to consider such a request in light of the ongoing investigation into the crash in the Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine. Russia has accused Ukraine of shooting down the military cargo plane on January 24, but Kyiv has yet to confirm that claim or that there were Ukrainian POWs on board who were to be involved in a prisoner exchange. Ukrainian officials say Moscow didn't ask for any airspace clearance, as it has in the past, to allow for the transport and exchange of POWs. Neither side has put forward any evidence to clear up the matter. Aviation experts have told RFE/RL that it was possible a Ukrainian antiaircraft missile downed the plane but added that a Russian antiaircraft system could have been responsible. A Planet Labs satellite image showing the crash site, published by Schemes, the investigative unit of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, shows an approximately 500-meter-long trail left by the plane crash. Schemes journalists previously managed to

establish the names of the crew members of the Russian Il-76 plane, the death of three of whom was confirmed by their relatives. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Russia will 'answer' for deaths of aid workers

France says Russia will have to answer for the deaths of two French nationals killed in a drone attack in the Kherson region of Ukraine as they performed humanitarian duties. Kherson regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin wrote in a post on Telegram that two French nationals were killed and three other foreigners were injured in the attack in Beryslav, a town just outside the southern city of Kherson, on February 1. Mr. Prokudin did not say which humanitarian group the casualties worked for. "Russian barbarity has targeted civilians in Ukraine," French Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Sejourne said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "Russia will have to answer for its crimes," he added. The French remarks come as the United Nations' highest court on February 2 ruled that it has jurisdiction in most aspects of a case filed by Ukraine against Russia shortly after the start of Moscow's full-scale invasion of its neighbor almost two years ago.

The case filed by Kyiv at the International Court of Justice in The Hague accuses Russia of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention by falsely claiming that the February 24, 2022, invasion was launched to curb an alleged genocide of Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a post on social media that "the brave French aid workers assisted people and we will always be grateful for their humanity." Kherson has been the focus of intense attacks by Russian forces for months. Ukraine's military said on February 2 that its air defenses shot down 11 out of 24 Russian drones launched early on February 2 at critical infrastructure facilities in the Dniproprovska, Kherson, Kirovohrad and Kharkiv regions. The strikes hit a thermal power plant in the Kryviy Rih area of Dniproprovska, leaving more than 40,000 people without electricity, regional officials said, while some 100 miners were temporarily trapped in two nearby mines due to the lack of electricity. An unspecified number were later brought to the surface, authorities said, without elaborating. The Energy

(Continued on page 15)

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New Polish...

(Continued from page 2)

The outgoing Law and Justice Party (PiS) government significantly contributed to Ukraine's security and the safety of its population. Poland was the lead donor to Ukraine in 2023 – including refugee costs, bilateral aid amounted to 2.4 percent of GDP (Ukraine Support Tracker, December 7). By September 2023, Poland had accommodated almost one million Ukrainian refugees, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reported that Poland had the highest level of employment of Ukrainian refugees among 12 countries surveyed (NotesFromPoland.com, October 25, 2023).

Warsaw has been a major advocate for Ukraine's NATO membership. It calculated that, together with its own military modernization, Ukraine's accession to the alliance will be crucial in ensuring an effective deterrence against Russia's invasion plans. Warsaw also assisted Ukraine in developing the proficiency of its national guard, border guard and intelligence services to meet Euro-Atlantic standards. Following the Russian invasion in 2022, Warsaw supplied Ukraine with most of its Soviet-era weapons as well as more modern stocks, including tanks, howitzers, artillery and drones. Poland became Ukraine's chief logistics hub, through which most foreign arms deliveries passed. It hosted multinational training for Ukrainian soldiers and was a driving force in creating the E.U. Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (Eeas.europa.eu). Warsaw played a decisive role in the formation of an international coalition of countries to transfer Leopard tanks to Ukraine and was also one of the organizers of a coalition of 11 Western countries that pledged to train Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter aircraft.

Relations between Kyiv and Warsaw deteriorated on the eve of the Polish elections in October 2023, mainly because of disputes over the inflow of cheaper Ukrainian agricultural products that undercut the income of Polish farmers. Another point of tension became the E.U.'s transport regulations, which created unfair competition with Polish truckers. The disputes led to border blockades on the Polish side (NotesFromPoland.com, November 28). Although the quarrels affected all of Ukraine's neighbors,

Poland's position was particularly challenging as the agricultural sector constitutes one of the PiS's main constituencies. The disputes were partially resolved in January when E.U. Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis announced that Brussels would introduce measures to control the influx of farm goods from Ukraine if they risked pushing prices down in Poland and other nearby E.U. countries (Euronews.com, January 23).

During his visit to Kyiv, Mr. Tusk reached an understanding with Mr. Zelenskyy to resolve fully any differences between their countries over grain shipments and trucking. Kyiv offered a mechanism to verify the export of agricultural products in line with the European Commission's decision. Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced that Warsaw and Kyiv planned to introduce joint border and customs control, exchange customs databases, and expand and modernize all border crossing points (Kyiv Independent, January 23). Mr. Tusk also appointed Paweł Kowal, a former deputy foreign affairs minister and current member of parliament, as the government's plenipotentiary for supporting Ukraine's reconstruction (Pravda.com.ua, January 22).

The Tusk government has an opportunity to reinforce Warsaw's lead role in securing Ukraine by expanding Poland's influence in the European Union. Mr. Tusk served as president of the European Council (2014-2019) and the European People's Party (2019-2022) and is well respected in most E.U. capitals. During his Kyiv visit, Mr. Tusk confirmed that Poland was joining the Group of Seven (G-7) Security Guarantees (Interfax Ukraine, January 22). This involves a multi-year agreement to provide "swift and sustained" assistance for Ukraine's defense, including intelligence sharing, cyber security, medical and military training, and defense industrial cooperation. Warsaw and Kyiv also plan to establish a joint consultative group to support Ukraine's progress toward E.U. and NATO membership. Warsaw intends to be active before the NATO summit in Washington on July 9-11 to convince its allies that Ukraine's NATO membership is vital for European security.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

Ministry said there were fires at the power plant and damage to substations. Ukraine is in desperate need of financial and military assistance amid signs of political fatigue in the West as the war kicked off by Russia's unprovoked invasion nears the two-year mark. Kyiv is hoping that a four-year, 50 billion-euro aid package approved by the European Union on February 1 will help bring in fresh supplies of weapons and ammunition as a counteroffensive stalls. They are also hoping it will push U.S. lawmakers toward approving a supplementary spending bill that includes \$61 billion in aid. That package has been stalled in the U.S. Congress amid opposition from Republican lawmakers who want any spending package to also include sweeping changes to border protection policy in the United States. Separately, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry on February 2 said that Toomas Nakhkur, who led the ministry's technical policy and weapons development unit, has been suspended after being named a suspect in an undisclosed criminal case. The move follows an announcement by the Ukrainian Security Service on January 27 that it had uncovered a scheme to embezzle the equivalent of some \$40 million earmarked to buy mortar shells for the country's military. It was unknown if the Nakhkur situation is related. Kyiv is attempting to clamp down on corruption in a bid to speed up its membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Officials from both blocs have demanded widespread anti-graft reforms before Kyiv can join. (RFE/RL)

Court won't cancel sanctions on two Russians

The European Court of Justice on February 7 rejected appeals filed by Uzbek-born Russian tycoon Alisher Usmanov and former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov against European sanctions imposed on them for having close ties with the Kremlin and supporting Moscow's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Usmanov has rejected having any ties with Russian

President Vladimir Putin. In October, authorities in Germany searched several properties believed to be owned by Mr. Usmanov in the Munich and Tegernsee areas in Bavaria. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Putin may sign bill on confiscation of assets

The Russian parliament's upper chamber, the Federation Council, on February 7 approved a bill allowing for the confiscation of property and assets of individuals convicted of distributing "false" information about Russia's armed forces; calls to violate Russia's territorial integrity; calls for sanctions against Russia and its citizens; collaborating to implement decisions by international organizations Russia does not take part in; and the "rehabilitation" of Nazism – all charges related to laws Russia adopted after it launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. President Vladimir Putin is expected to sign the bill into law. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Investigation into Nord Stream blasts ends

Sweden has ended its investigation into the explosions that rocked the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in 2022, saying it has no jurisdiction to proceed. Prosecutors said on February 7 that a preliminary investigation has given authorities "a good picture" of the incident and that nothing has emerged to indicate that Sweden or Swedish citizens were involved in the attack, which took place in international waters. Western officials initially blamed Russia for the blasts, which all but destroyed the pipelines. Moscow blamed the West, saying it had no reason for damaging an energy link vital to bringing its supplies westward. "The preliminary investigation has been systematic and thorough. Among other things, a large number of ship movements have been analyzed in order to understand what has happened. In addition to that, an extensive crime scene investigation has been carried out and several interrogations have been held in the matter," the Swedish Prosecution Authority said in a statement. "Against the background of the situation we now have, we can state that Swedish jurisdiction is missing," public prosecutor Mats

Ljungqvist said in the statement. Two more investigations, one by Denmark and another one by Germany, are still under way. "I can inform you that our investigations are ongoing. No further information will be shared at this point," Germany's Federal Prosecutor-General's press office said in an emailed response to RFE/RL. The blasts, which occurred on September 26, 2022, on the Baltic seabed east of the Danish island of Bornholm, caused massive leaks and were seen as a dangerous attack on European energy infrastructure half a year into Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The blasts were discovered due to the residual gas that was bubbling up to the surface. The source of the explosions, which increased tensions that followed the start of the war, has remained a major international mystery. Nord Stream is majority-owned by Russia's Gazprom and supplies millions of Europeans with gas. The pipelines were built by Russia to bring its gas directly to Europe via Germany, bypassing Ukraine, Poland and other nations that had hostile ties with Moscow. While the first pipeline was operational, the second had not gotten final approval from German regulators. The United States had warned for years that the pipelines were a security risk for Germany and other European nations, making the countries beholden to Russian energy exports. (RFE/RL, with reporting by RFE/RL's Mike Eckel and the AP)

Court issues arrest warrant for Arrestovych

A court in Moscow issued an arrest warrant for the former adviser to Ukraine's presidential office, Oleksiy Arrestovych, on February 6, on charges of calling for terrorism and distributing false information about Russian armed forces involved in Moscow's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. In

October, Russia added Mr. Arrestovych to its wanted list. In May 2023, Mr. Arrestovych's name appeared in Russia's registry of terrorists and extremists. Mr. Arrestovych has regularly given analytical assessments online about Ukraine's resistance to Russia's invasion. (RFE/RL's Idel.Realities)

Belarusians on trial over online chat

Three men went on trial on February 6 in the Belarusian city of Homel over an online chat in which they supported Ukraine's efforts to stand against Russia's ongoing invasion. Zmitser Papkou, Ihar Charnavusau and Uladzimer Kamenau are charged with creating an extremist group, taking part in an extremist group's activities and insulting the country's authoritarian ruler, Alyaksandr Lukashenka. The men were arrested in March of last year. The trial is being held behind closed doors. In a separate case on February 6, police in Homel detained at least seven people on a charge of distributing extremist materials. (RFE/RL's Belarus Service)

Russian-appointed minister killed

A missile attack on a restaurant in Ukraine's Russia-occupied city of Lysychansk killed Moscow-installed Emergency Minister Aleksei Poteleshchenko over the weekend, Russian media reports said on February 5. Russian officials accused Ukraine of targeting civilian buildings in Lysychansk, adding that, in all, 28 persons, including a child were killed in the attack. Ukrainian authorities in the region of Lysychansk said the restaurant's bakery had produced bread for Russian troops invading Ukraine and its premises were used for meetings by occupying Russian officials. Kyiv has yet to comment officially on the deadly strike. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Nina Nalywayko

born in Paryduby, Volyn Oblast, Ukraine, died on Sunday, January 28, 2024, at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital - New Brunswick. She was the beloved daughter of Nikanor and Kateryna (Lampyka) Onyshchuk.

In 1949, after enduring the profound sadness of war and residing in a displaced person camp in Germany, Nina emigrated to the US. She carried with her the rich tapestry of her Ukrainian heritage, a heritage she cherished throughout her life and passed down with pride to her family. Upon arriving in the United States, she settled in Manhattan, graduated college with a degree in Chemistry, a very uncommon feat for women of her generation. That led her to start a career as a Fragrance Chemist working for several years for International Flavors and Fragrances (IFF). During this time, she met her beloved husband, Dmytro. After marrying, they shared many years of joy with their three children, spending most of their time together in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, until his passing in 1996.

When Nina moved to New Jersey, she enjoyed a second chapter in her life, marrying Lewko Maystrenko in 2004. Their life together was filled with laughter and a renewed zest for life until his passing in 2010.

Nina's life was a testament to the importance of family and her beloved Ukraine. She was predeceased by her loving husband, Dmytro, and second husband Lewko, but leaves behind a legacy of love and warmth. She is survived by her devoted children Nick, Natalia Bentley, her husband David, and Walter and his wife, Christina, as well as her cherished grandchildren Nicholas, Halyna, and Maksym.

Nina was not only a dedicated mother and grandmother, but she was also an active member of various Ukrainian organizations. Her commitment to preserving and celebrating her cultural heritage was evident in her involvement and contributions to these organizations. Nina's passion for her roots was an inspiration to all who knew her.

Nina will be remembered for her sharp mind, wicked sense of humor and fierce independence.

Gathering with the family will be Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 10:30 AM at St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church, South Bound Brook, NJ. A funeral liturgy will begin at 11:00 AM, followed by burial in St. Andrew Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to:

- Razom for Ukraine <https://www.razomforukraine.org/>
- The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of USA, Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine at Home | Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA (uocofusa.org)

Michael Shashkewych

(November 1922-January 1994)

Dad,

It has been 30 years since we had to say good-bye. Not a day goes by that you are not remembered for your love and compassion of your family, your friends, and the lives you touched.

You would be proud to see your class, kindness, and enthusiastic love of life live every day in the minds and hearts of your grandchildren and now your beautiful great grandchildren, Nicolas and Natalia.

It has been said "Time heals all wounds", however the wounds remain. Time and mind cover them with scar tissue and the pain lessons, but it is never gone.

May you always rest in peace



Your son, Bohdan Shashkewych with his wife Vera Shashkewych,
Grandchildren: Laryssa Del Guercio with her husband Michael Del Guercio,
Matey Shashkewych,
Great grandchildren: Nicolas Del Guercio, Natalia Del Guercio.



Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Shevchenko new UAF president

The 26th Congress of the Ukrainian Association of Football (UAF) concluded its business on January 25 at the House of Football in Kyiv. During this extraordinary session, Andriy Shevchenko was unanimously elected president of the UAF and the congressional delegates also approved the new composition of the UAF Executive Committee, which includes Shevchenko (president), Pavlo Boychuk (first vice-president), Serhiy Rebrov (vice-president), Oleksandr Shevchenko (vice-president), and members Serhiy Vladyko, Oleksandr Kadenko, Yevhen Dykiy, Mykola Pavlov, Kateryna Monzul, Andriy Poltavets, Artem Stoyanov, Oleksandr Zinchenko. A decision was made to limit the executive committee to 12 individuals.

Acting General Secretary Ihor Hryshchenko was unanimously approved as general secretary of the UAF at the first meeting of the new Executive Committee.

Shevchenko has specified several areas of focus that he would like to address during his five-year term, including transparency, digitization of the association's activities, national team development, brand development, cooperation with Ukraine's football clubs, reforming arbitration, training of specialists, international relations and the use of football for post-traumatic recovery of disabled Ukrainians.

"Ukrainian football should be mainstream and accessible; the national teams should be the pride of every Ukrainian and the clubs should be strong and effective. We plan to implement the best international practices for the rapid development of Ukrainian football and use football to overcome the traumas of war. A lot of work lies ahead," Shevchenko said.

The new president plans to work with Ukraine's Ministry of Digital Transformation to create a database of people involved in Ukraine's football history and digitize records of the association's past.

Shevchenko mentioned a future cooperation and exchange with Croatia's Zvonimir Boban in a project to institute a stronger football development program for Ukrainian youth.



Valerii Chobotar (84 kilograms), seen at the 2023 World Karate Championships, won a gold medal in male kumite at the Karate 1 Premier League Paris tournament on January 26-28 at the Pierre de Coubertin Sports Hall in Paris.

Dalakian loses title in controversial decision

Seigo Yuri Akui put an end to Artem Dalakian's six-year World Boxing Association (WBA) flyweight title and his unblemished record in a controversial manner, benefiting from a puzzling unanimous decision on January 23 at the EDION Arena in Osaka, Japan. Akui (18-3-1, 11 KO), rated The Ring's No. 10 Flyweight, won by scores of 116-112, 117-111 and an absurd 119-109 tally over the 36-year-old veteran Ukrainian. Dalakian (22-1, 15 KO), No. 4 rated by The Ring, seemed to be in control of the distance and pace aspects of the non-eventful bout. He created much discomfort for his 28-year-old Japanese challenger with his jab, lateral and upper-body movement, counterpunching and his unconventional rhythm and style.

With Dalakian appearing to tire in the late rounds, Akui enjoyed most of his success after the eighth round, cornering the Ukrainian for several seconds and landing some right hands and hooks. Media members covering the fight gave the 11th round to Akui, but agreed most of the rounds were fought in a cat-and-mouse style that favored Dalakian.

Dalakian's team is expected to file a formal protest of the decision, which was delivered by three non-Japanese judges, and his team will ask the WBA for an immediate rematch.

Usyk explains true meaning of earring

Tyson Fury continues to toss barbs at Oleksandr Usyk ahead of their colossal heavyweight championship fight on February 17. Fury again commented on Usyk's earring in another attempt to get under the Ukrainian's skin. Appearing on a late January TNT Sports Face Off segment, Fury insulted Usyk with a comment about the single earring the Ukrainian wears in his left ear.

Fury declared that he knows Usyk can't beat him because "a man who wears an earring can never beat Tyson Fury, ever."

A calm and composed Usyk proceeded to explain what wearing a single earring means to him, the Ukrainian people and why he chooses to wear one. The 37-year-old warrior went into detail about Ukrainian cossacks who defended their homeland from enemies for several centuries. Usyk referred to his cossack lineage, saying that cossacks "never lost to anybody" and that there was no beauty or fashion statement in wearing the earring.

After listening to Usyk's explanation, Fury again tried to infuriate Usyk by saying that wearing a single earring holds a different meaning for Fury, who then hurled another insult at Usyk.

Despite the immense hoopla surrounding the bout, it seems as if both boxers are not overdoing it in pre-fight training. Fury claimed he would only train four to five weeks for such a fight while Usyk said he would train non-stop for five weeks.

The fight is scheduled to take place on February 17 at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Skechers signs endorsement deal with Zinchenko

On January 23, Skechers announced it had signed Arsenal and Ukrainian national team defender Oleksandr Zinchenko to its elite pro-athlete stable of product represen-

tatives. Zinchenko joins English football great Harry Kane, National Basketball Association (NBA) players Julius Randle and Terance Mann plus golfers Matt Fitzpatrick and Brooke Henderson.

Zinchenko will compete in the Skechers Razor, an innovative lightweight speed boot made for players who want agility, comfort and touch. Zinchenko is slated to appear in multiple platform marketing campaigns as a brand ambassador supporting Skechers football as part of his long-term contract. He is one of the first players to wear the Razor boot in the recently launched all-white color called the Diamond Ice Pack.

Skechers Football arrived at the start of the 2023-2024 season with the signing of Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane. The company offers boots in three styles and multiple colors for men and women. Zinchenko's Razor is a lightweight speed soccer cleat with an explosive track-inspired design to maximize acceleration and energy return, according to Skechers. It features a carbon-infused sole plate for responsive power and agility during play, the company says.

Russian missile kills family of Ukraine rugby star

The wife and daughter of Ukrainian Federation of Rugby League player Volodymyr Mashkin were killed during a Russian attack on Kharkiv in northeast Ukraine. The 36-year-old Ukrainian international has earned 13 caps for his country, including an international fixture last December against Greece. He debuted on the international stage for Ukraine in 2009 and was expected to represent Ukraine in World Cup qualifiers in October.

His wife, Vitalina, and 8-year-old daughter Kira were among 18 civilians killed in the Russian attack on January 23. The missiles targeted civilian buildings and there were no known military targets in the area.

Ukrainians win five medals in karate

The 2024 karate season kicked off with two tournaments in January: a Series A event in Athens and a Premier League competition in Paris. Ukrainian martial artists won a total of five medals at the two tournaments, a pair in Athens and three in Paris.

The first event of the season was the Series A-2024 Karate 1 event in Athens that took place on January 12-14. More than 1,090 athletes from 81 countries took part in the competition. Ukrainian Heorhii Pasul won gold in the male kumite 75-kilogram division with teammate Erik Razorenko taking bronze in the same weight class. The competition was held in the Ano Liosia Olympic Hall.

Some 376 athletes from 61 countries participated in the Karate 1 Premier League Paris tournament, the first of the season in Karate's first-class series of events, at the Pierre de Coubertin Sports Hall in Paris on January 26-28. Ukrainian Valerii Chobotar (84 kilograms) was a gold medal winner in male kumite, while Dyzvan Talibov (over 84 kilograms) won bronze. In the female kumite competition, Anita Serogina (61 kilograms) won a silver medal.

Ukrainian wrestler wins second sumo title

He is a 5-foot-11-inch, 275-pound Ukrainian wrestler whose real name is Danylo Yavhusishin. He fled the war in Ukraine and maintained a perfect record in claiming the fifth-tier joudan championship at the New Year Grand Sumo



Andriy Shevchenko, elected as president of the Ukrainian Football Association, addresses the organization's 26th Congress on January 25 at the House of Football in Kyiv.

Tournament held in Tokyo on January 14-28. He went unbeaten to win the bottom-tier jonokuchi title in his debut as a ranked wrestler last November and continued his winning ways in Tokyo.

The 19-year-old Aonishiki (his wrestling name) defeated 22-year-old Chiyo Taiko in a championship playoff after both finished the meet with a 7-0 record. He admitted to being quite nervous wrestling in front of so many people at a major tournament.

The youngster moved to Japan in April 2022 with the assistance of a friend he met while representing Ukraine at an international sumo competition. In December 2022, he gained entrance into the Ajigawa sumo wrestlers' stable where he trained under former top sumo wrestler Aminishi-ki Ryuji.

Yavhusishin's hometown of Vinnytsia, Ukraine, was devastated by Russian bomb and missile attacks. His parents fled to Germany where they keep in touch with their son, receiving footage of his bouts and sending him words of encouragement.

His success at the January tournament got him promoted to the fourth-tier sandanme division for the upcoming Spring Grand Sumo Tournament at Edion Arena Osaka in March. His ultimate goal is to become a sekitori, a member of the top two divisions, which would place him on par with Ukraine's other sumo wrestler, second-tier juryo rikishi Shishi Masaru (Serhii Sokolovskiy).

Ukrainian peewee team returns to Quebec's hockey tournament

They were the absolute darlings of last year's Quebec International Peewee Hockey Tournament, a team of preteen Ukrainian hockey players who fled Russia's invasion of their homeland. A new team of Ukrainian children is participating in the 2024 version of the tournament, arriving in Quebec City the first week of February.

Quebec City businessman Sean Berube and his group of volunteers are making it happen again following the success that last year's team had after playing at the Videotron Centre in Quebec City. Team Ukraine Select won two games before losing to a team from Vermont.

In an interview with CTV News Montreal, Berube said the Ukrainian players are

(Continued on page 17)

Yastremska blazes path to 2024 Australian Open semifinal

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Twenty-three-year-old Dayana Yastremska, who qualified for the 2024 Australian Open (as opposed to being granted an invitation), took the competition by storm, winning her way to the semifinal of the major tournament. She was the first qualifier to reach the semifinal at Melbourne Park since 1978. And she was on a mission to ensure people do not forget about the war raging in her homeland.

Yastremska was born on May 15, 2000, in Odesa, Ukraine. She picked up a racket at a very young after her grandfather Ivan introduced her to the sport. She pursued gymnastics and swimming, showing potential in both sports, but opted to focus on tennis from the age of 12 because it was challenging and, in her eyes, a beautiful sport.

It did not take long for her to impress at the junior level, reaching the girls' singles final at Wimbledon in 2016 where she lost to Russian Anastasia Potapova. Yastremska cracked the Top 100 rankings at age 18, entered the Top 25 in 2019 and finished the year at a career-high ranking of No. 22. Since then, she has been ranked anywhere from a top 30 spot to sitting outside of the top 100 before her run in Melbourne.

Her father, Alexander, was a volleyball player and Yastremska credits him and her mother, Marina, for her successful tennis career. Both parents have been part of her coaching team with her mother serving as

her mental coach. After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Yastremska fled to France with her younger sister Ivanna. She later reunited with her mother, as she wanted to have family nearby.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while the sports world was largely paused, Yastremska launched a music career. Her first single, entitled "Thousands of Me," was released in May 2020 and was followed by a dance tune called "Favorite Track" in August 2020. She has hinted that a new release may be coming in February 2024.

In 2021, Yastremska failed a doping test and was provisionally banned from the sport. After six months, it was ruled that she was not at fault and her ban was lifted. She tested positive for mesterolone, a prohibited substance that can boost testosterone. The independent tribunal deciding her case accepted her account of how the substance entered her system and determined that she did not violate any rule.

She has been outspoken about the effect that the ongoing war in Ukraine has had on the country's tennis players and is very supportive and proud of the Ukrainian Armed Forces defending the country. She has said previously that she considers it her mission to continue speaking publicly about the ongoing war in her country, and she scribbled a patriotic inscription on a court-side camera to soldiers back in her war-torn country after notching the most significant victory of her young career: "I'm



Wikimedia

Dayana Yastremska, seen at the 2023 U.S. Open, holds the No. 29 spot in the women's world tennis rankings after she made a name for herself at the 2024 Australian Open where she made it to the tournament semifinal.

proud of our fighting people. Slava Ukraine [she then drew a heart]."

The first Ukrainian semifinalist in the history of the Australian Open was the

fourth player in the last 40 years to reach the Australian Open semifinal round by defeating only Top 50 opponents. She defeated Marketa Vondrousova (No. 7), Emma Navarro (No. 28), Victoria Azarenka (No. 22) and No. 50 Linda Noskova.

When her amazing run at the 2024 Australian Open came to an end following her semifinal loss to Qinwen Zheng, Yastremska dedicated her result to her late grandfather on his January 25 birthday. She credited him for helping her take baby steps and providing her with the proper guidance in tennis. On her Instagram account, she also thanked her fans for their support through.

Even though she was ranked No. 93 in Melbourne and had to qualify for the tournament, Yastremska has already experienced success on the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Tour. She was the first player born in the 2000s to crack the Top 100, which she did in 2018. She hit a career-high ranking of No. 21 at the age of 19, winning three WTA titles before turning 20.

Emerging from qualifying and making it into the main draw as a world No. 93 ranked player, her ranking soared to No. 29 when the updated rankings were released. She earned over \$650,000 for reaching the final four in Melbourne. Her new ranking will allow her to enter all WTA tournaments without needing to qualify.

(Based on reporting by Mail Online and WTA Tour.)

MOSCOW...

(Continued from page 2)

Times, January 23).

In contrast, most Ukrainian and Western analysts view Mr. Zelenskyy's latest decree as having a more limited scope. Above all, they point to the fact that the Ukrainian president explicitly talked about the Ukrainian or formerly Ukrainian regions in Russia along Ukraine's eastern border and made no mention of other "wedges" – Kyiv's term for regions across Russia that, in the past or currently, have sizeable Ukrainian populations (President of Ukraine, January 22; Kavkaz Realii, January 22, January 26). These writers also touch on the notion that Mr. Zelenskyy's actions have broader implications. They discuss how assimilation has reduced the number of Ukrainians recorded by the Russian census from over three million in the early 2000s to under 900,000. Additionally, they

highlight the closing of Ukrainian institutions and restrictions on the Ukrainian language throughout Russia since 2014 (Kavkaz Realii, March 14, 2023; Apostrophe.ua, January 29).

Russian observers are likely to see the arguments of Ukrainian officials and commentators that Mr. Zelenskyy's words are more about attracting Western attention to what Moscow has done as confirmation of their views. They believe that these efforts are an attempt to generate more support for Ukraine in the West and to force more Western populations to accept the fact that Putin's empire is about to disintegrate, just as the Russian Empire did in 1917 and the Soviet Union in 1991 (On Ukrainian efforts to do just that, see the comments of former Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Volodymyr Oryzko at Glavred, January 29).

Kremlin analysts are even more convinced that their assessments of Ukrainian policies are correct based on comments

from Volodymyr Postnikov, a commentator in Kyiv who used to work with ethnic Ukrainians in Russia in the 1990s. In a recent article, Mr. Postnikov speaks to an even deeper fear in the Kremlin and says there are now few committed Ukrainians left in Russia (Censoru.NET, January 29). While he acknowledges that Moscow's assimilation policies have been successful among ethnic Ukrainians in the country, he points out that the Kremlin's success parallels Kyiv's own success with ethnic Russians in Ukraine who are identifying more frequently as civic or even ethnic Ukrainians. Mr. Postnikov argues that Kyiv should not be under any illusions that it can reverse the process in Russia. Still, Moscow should not be under any similar illusions about what it can do regarding ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian analyst, the current realities are the final sorting out of these communities into two nations, precisely the opposite of what Putin has

declared as his goal.

Putin cannot possibly accept Mr. Postnikov's perspective. The Kremlin leader appears more likely to use his favored method of repression to end the history of the Ukrainian community in Russia quickly as part of his war effort against Ukraine. Such an approach will likely backfire, leading more Ukrainians and non-Russians to view Moscow as the enemy, more ethnic Russians in Ukraine to identify as Ukrainians, and more in the West to recognize the Kremlin's true intentions. The current realities in Russia are exactly the opposite of what Putin seeks and are compelling reasons for viewing Mr. Zelenskyy's decree as having far more sweeping intentions and consequences than many in Ukraine and the West now envisage.

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Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 16)

excited about the opportunity to participate in the storied hockey tournament. He sympathizes with the team's plight, which has had to go through similar hardships that last year's squad did as the war with Russia will enter its third year at the end of February. He reasons that the kids will at least enjoy some peace for a few weeks.

For Berube, who played minor hockey in Ukraine as a teenager, bringing these Ukrainian youngsters to Quebec is a way of giving back. This year's recruiting of players was much easier compared to last year when he had to find players from all over Europe. More than half of the team still lives in Ukraine. Players were bused to Romania for three training camp sessions that began at the end of September. Some players fled Ukraine immediately after Russia's invasion and returned a year later. Their fathers are either in the Ukrainian army or have perished in the fighting.

The team of 19 players, including one girl, trained in Romania under their coach, Evgeniy Pysarenko. They arrived in Quebec City on February 2. There was a hiccup with travel authorizations, but they were resolved late in the process. Players are staying with host families and volunteers in Quebec City.

Anxiously awaiting their arrival were six Ukrainian players from last year's peewee team who returned to Quebec City to attend an English high school and play hockey.

Berube started Mission Druzhba, a fund-raising foundation that sells jerseys to ensure a team from Ukraine can take part in the annual tournament while the war continues.

Although last year's tremendous buzz will probably not be duplicated, the event should be packed with rabid hockey enthusiasts.

The 64th edition of the Quebec International Peewee Hockey Tournament is made up of 120 teams from 18 countries and runs from February 7-18. Team

Ukraine plays its first game on February 11.

Dauphin Kings host Ukrainian Night

The annual Dauphin Kings Ukrainian night drew a crowd of 1,953 hockey fans on January 28 in Dauphin, Manitoba. The event was Ukraine-themed and included pre-game events, a post-game kids' corner sponsored by Zirka Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, Ukrainian food served by Temptations Food Services, a kielbasa toss and pierogi shootout during intermission and traditional Ukrainian dance performances between periods. The evening also featured performances by the Bratstva Studios Ukrainian Dance Company, tricycle races and Ukrainian vendors selling food and goods on the arena concourses.

Players were outfitted in specially designed jerseys in blue and yellow colors with Ukrainian symbols. Dauphin Kings' players' names on the backs of their jerseys were translated into Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian national anthem was sung by a group of Ukrainian children and visiting Steinbach Pistons captain Leo

Chambers accepted the traditional Ukrainian greeting of wheat, salt and bread from Connor Boulbria and Lucy Lee as part of pregame ceremonies.

Symbolically, the game's first goal was scored by Dauphin Kings' Ukrainian Havryil Simchuk on the way to the team's 5-2 triumph. The 17-year-old Kyiv-born Simchuk is one of five Ukrainians on Dauphin's roster this season. The others include Carter Zalischuk, Sheldon Shyiak, Riley Borody and Gavin Nemis.

The Dauphin Kings, a Junior "A" hockey team, are members of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League that is part of the Canadian Junior Hockey League. The league is considered to be one level below the Western Hockey League, the Ontario Hockey League and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

(Based on reporting by UAF, The Ring, Express, Business Wire, Total Rugby League, The Japan Times, CTV News Montreal, Dauphin Herald and Ground News.)

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OUT & ABOUT

Through April 28 New York	Exhibit featuring works by Evgeny Kotlyar, "The Light of the Revival: Stained Glass Design for the Restituted Synagogues of Ukraine," Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	February 24 New York	Open House, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org or 212-288-8660
February 12 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "Russia and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Diverging States," with Oxana Shevel and Maria Popova, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu	February 24 Washington	Rally, "Two Years Since Russia's Full-Scale War Against Ukraine," Embassy of Ukraine, Lincoln Memorial, www.ucca.org
February 14 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "The Voices of Babyn Yar" by Marianna Kiyanovska, with Oleh Kostyuba, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu	February 24 Ottawa	Stand with Ukraine Victory Rally, Ukrainian Canadian Congress (Ottawa Branch), Parliament Hill, www.ottawaucc.ca
February 20 New York	Film screening, "Freedom on Fire" by Evgeny Afineevsky, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Nations Headquarters, Trusteeship Council, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	February 24 North Port, FL	Moleben service, "Pray for Ukraine," Ukrainian National Women's League of America (Branch 56), St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, www.uccnp.org or 941-426-7931
February 20-23 Washington	Ukrainian Days advocacy events, Ukrainian National Information Service, U.S. Congressional Offices, Capitol Hill, UkrainianDaysDC2024@gmail.com	February 25 Philadelphia	"United We Win" rally, marking the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Philadelphia Museum of Art, www.philamuseum.org
February 21 Cambridge, MA	Conversation with journalist Terrell Jermaine Starr with Emily Channell-Justice, "Covering Ukraine and the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu	February 26 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "The Psychology of Misinformation" by Jon Roozenbeek, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
February 21 Stanford, CA	Presentation by Halyna Babak, "National Modernism' in Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s," Stanford University, https://creees.stanford.edu	February 26 Somerset, NJ	Commemoration of the second anniversary of Russia's genocidal war in Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., Ukrainian Cultural Center, www.uocofusa.org
February 22 Jenkintown, PA	Award banquet, "Lumen Christi," Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.stbasils.com or 215-379-3998, ext. 17	March 5 Philadelphia	Ballet, "Giselle," Grand Kyiv Ballet, Philadelphia Klein Center, www.grandkyivballet.com.ua
February 23 Online	Online presentation by Fr. Bohdan Hladio, "Ukrainian Winter Festivals: Faith, Music, Traditions," Ukrainian History and Education Center, www.ukrhec.org	March 5 Philadelphia	Concert, "Ukraine in the Eyes of Others," Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, American Philosophical Society, 215-569-8080 or pcmsconcerts.org/ukraine
February 23 Stanford, CA	Presentation by Megan Buskey, "Ukraine is Not Dead Yet: A Family Story of Exile and Return," Stanford University, https://creees.stanford.edu	March 7 New York	Poetry reading, "Songs of Rage and Hope: A Poetry Reading and Conversation with Alex Averbuch," Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu

Entries in "Out and About" are listed free of charge. Priority is given to events advertised in *The Ukrainian Weekly*. However, we also welcome submissions from all our readers. Items will be published at the discretion of the editors and as space allows. Please send e-mail to mdubas@ukrweekly.com.

Mr. Zelenskyy names...

(Continued from page 1)

that Mr. Zelenskyy was strongly considering removing him.

Mr. Zelenskyy said in a message on X, formerly Twitter, that he is grateful to Mr. Zaluzhnyi and he appreciates "every victory we have achieved together." Before announcing the leadership change, Mr. Zelenskyy said he had "candidly discussed" with Mr. Zaluzhnyi issues in the army that require urgent change.

"Starting today, a new management team will take over leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. I had dozens of conversations with commanders at various levels," he said, adding that the move "is not about surnames, and surely not about politics."

The change in leadership is about the management of the military and "about involving the experience of this war's combat-hardened commanders," he said, touting Mr. Syrskiy's successful experience, particularly in the defense of Kyiv and his successful offensive experience, especially in the Kharkiv liberation operation.

Defense Minister Rustem Umerov noted Mr. Zaluzhnyi's role in the first two years of the full-scale Russian invasion, saying that "our soldiers repelled the onslaught of the aggressor, defended our statehood and continue to defend our independence every day."

He said he was grateful for Mr. Zaluzhnyi's achievements and victories, but war changes and demands change.

"The battles of 2022, 2023 and 2024 are three different realities [and] 2024 will bring new changes for which we must be ready," Mr. Umerov said. "New approaches, new strategies are needed."

Mr. Syrskiy was one of the main commanders who led the Ukrainian Armed Forces' fight against the offensives by

Russia-backed separatists that started in 2014 shortly after Russia illegally annexed Ukraine's Crimea.

After Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Mr. Syrskiy led the Ukrainian Armed Forces' successful counteroffensive to regain control over the Kharkiv region in September of that year.

In April 2022, Mr. Syrskiy's successful leadership in defending the Ukrainian capital earned him the title Hero of Ukraine, bestowed under a decree signed by Mr. Zelenskyy.

Mr. Zelenskyy met earlier on February 8 with Mr. Zaluzhnyi and said he had asked him to remain "on the team," though he didn't say in what capacity.

Mr. Zaluzhnyi wrote on Telegram on February 8 that he and Mr. Zelenskyy "made a decision on the necessity to change approaches and strategy" in Ukraine's fight against Russia's ongoing aggression.

Speculation had swirled for weeks that Mr. Zelenskyy would remove Mr. Zaluzhnyi over differences in strategy and Ukraine's struggle to hold battlefield positions after a failed counteroffensive last year.

Tensions between Messrs. Zaluzhnyi and Zelenskyy surfaced in November after the commander-in-chief published an opinion piece in *The Economist* saying that the war had entered a stalemate and only a technological breakthrough would allow Ukraine to achieve its goals of liberating occupied territory.

Mr. Zelenskyy's office was quick to reject that battlefield assessment.

Polls showed earlier that Mr. Zaluzhnyi's popularity in the country is as high, if not more so, than Mr. Zelenskyy's, and some experts suggested that if Mr. Zelenskyy decided to oust Mr. Zaluzhnyi, it would demoralize some of Ukraine's troops and undermine national unity.

Mr. Zelenskyy said in his message on X that in his discussion with Mr. Zaluzhnyi on February 8 he proposed that the general continue working "on the Ukrainian state team" in an unspecified capacity.

"I will be grateful for his acceptance of this proposal," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

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The situation...

(Continued from page 4)

be a great victory for the Russian army."

"The situation around Avdiyivka is, I would say, stable but stably bad and trending for the worse," Michael Kofman, a defense analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said in a podcast released on January 30. "Since the Russian forces are making incremental gains ... I still hold to my earlier judgment back in the fall that there's a good chance Avdiyivka will eventually be lost."

Legislative paralysis

The battlefield setbacks dovetail with legislative paralysis in Washington, D.C., which has been the largest single source of weaponry and military equipment for Ukraine since the launch of the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Despite President Joe Biden's entreaties, Republican lawmakers have refused to authorize a new \$60 billion weapons package for Ukraine, tying it to an overhaul of U.S. immigration policy whose prospects for passage are now also deeply clouded. It's unclear whether lawmakers and the White House will be able to end the standoff, which has also frozen military aid to Israel.

Ukrainian troops, and Ukrainian society more broadly, are also bracing for the expected ouster of the country's top military commander, Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi. In

an interview broadcast on February 4 on Italian television, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signaled that he was considering pushing out Mr. Zaluzhnyi, who is widely popular, as part of a bigger shakeup of the military and civilian leadership.

Ukrainians by and large continue to support both Mr. Zelenskyy's government and the overall fight against the Russian invasion, according to a poll released in December by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. The poll, however, also shows slipping optimism compared with the previous year, when Ukraine managed two successful counteroffensives in the Kharkiv region and in the south, in Kherson.

For his part, Mr. Zelenskyy has sought to bolster troops' morale, making visits to potentially dangerous frontline locations including Avdiyivka in the last week of December, and more recently to Robotyne, a Zaporizhia region village where Russian forces have been conducting probing attacks.

"Russia currently holds the strategic initiative," Mick Ryan, a retired Australian army major general, said in an article published on February 5 by Foreign Affairs. "Unfortunately, defeat [for Ukraine] is still a possible outcome."

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