

## INSIDE:

- Ukrainian refugees foster community, culture above Arctic circle – page 3
- Reporters at London's Frontline Club discuss how Ukraine can win the war – page 3
- Largest exhibit of Prymachenko's art on display at The Ukrainian Museum – page 11

# THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

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## Ukraine says strike on Russian troops in Kherson kills scores

### Denies losing bridgehead on Dnipro left bank

RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian Services

Ukraine's military has acknowledged it struck a training ground in occupied Kherson where Russian troops were preparing for an assault on Ukraine's bridgehead at Krynka on the left bank of the Dnipro River, the second time this week a strike has killed scores of Russian personnel.

At the same time, Kyiv denied Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's claim that Russian forces had captured the Ukrainian bridgehead at Krynka.

"There were at least three strikes on the concentration of Russian troops at the training ground near Novaya Kakhovka," Nataliya Humenyuk, spokeswoman of the Defense Forces of Southern Ukraine, told RFE/RL on February 22.

"The Russian military was preparing to storm Krynka, which they claimed had already been captured. ... According to preliminary data, commanders of the Dnipro group [of Russian forces] were also there. The information is still being checked," Ms. Humenyuk said.

In a separate statement made to Suspilne, Ms. Humenyuk said at least 60 Russian soldiers were killed in the attack.

Russia has not commented on the strike, which was first reported by both the Ukrainian Telegram channel DeepState and Russian pro-war bloggers who said that it resulted in heavy losses. A video of the purported attack consisting of three strikes

was also published on Telegram channels.

However, the information could not be independently verified.

At a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 20, Mr. Shoigu said Krynka "has been cleared," but Ukraine's military said his statement was "a falsification of the facts."

Ukrainian forces in November 2022 liberated Kherson city and the rest of the region on the right bank of the Dnipro forcing Russian troops across the river. Last year, Kyiv's troops also managed to establish a small bridgehead on the Dnipro's left bank, which has come under constant Russian attacks.

The purported Ukrainian strike on Russian forces in Kherson was the second in as many days in which a large number of Russian troops were reportedly killed.

On February 21, BBC Russia reported that a Ukrainian strike on a training ground in Moscow-occupied Donetsk had killed at least 60 Russian troops.

According to the report, Russian soldiers from the 36th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade had been lined up and were waiting for the arrival of Maj. Gen. Oleg Moiseyev, commander of the 29th Russian Army, when the strike occurred on February 20.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine has commented on the report. Pro-Russian social media outlets posted videos and photos purportedly showing dozens of uniformed

(Continued on page 17)

## Kyiv loses first battle in nine months as Russia war enters 10th year

### Ukraine loses momentum amid shortage of Western weaponry



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (center) visited a battalion command post of the 14th Mechanized Brigade in Kupiansk, Kharkiv region, just 1.5 miles from the front line in the eastern Kharkiv region of Ukraine on February 19.

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – Russia's overall strategy of subjugating Ukraine remains unchanged as another population center fell into Moscow's hands after nearly five months of fierce fighting.

This week, Avdiyivka, an industrial town with a pre-war population of 30,000 people in the Donetsk region, was conquered. It marked the first Russian battlefield success since Moscow took control of Bakh-

mut in the same region nine months ago.

"Russian forces appear to have temporarily established limited and localized air superiority and were able to provide ground troops with close air support during the final days of their offensive operation to capture Avdiyivka, likely the first time that Russian forces have done so in Ukraine," the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said.

Ukraine's Armed Forces estimated that Russia lost three times the number of military personnel that perished in the decade-long Afghan War as it did on October 3 through February 17 in Avdiyivka.

In total, 47,186 Russian casualties were reported, as well as 364 tanks, 748 infantry fighting vehicles, 248 artillery systems and five strike aircraft were rendered combat ineffective.

At last week's Munich Security Conference, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the ratio of Russian to Ukrainian losses "was seven to one."

"The Russians have regained momentum," former CIA director and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told The Washington Post's David Ignatius in an interview streamed online. "Everything I'm reading is that the Russians are on the offensive along the 600-mile front."

The White House and Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba, in turn, blamed the U.S. Congress for the battlefield loss as Kyiv has had to ration the use of weapons, especially artillery, amid supply

(Continued on page 16)

## U.K. announces new Russia sanctions to mark Ukraine invasion anniversary

### As U.N. rights chief says war has exacted 'horrific' cost on civilians

RFE/RL and RFE/RL's Russian Service

Britain has expanded its sanctions against Russian companies and individuals and entities outside Russia that are suspected of aiding in the circumvention of existing sanctions, the United Kingdom government said on February 22.

In a statement issued two days before the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Foreign Affairs Secretary David Cameron said the move adds more than 50 individuals and entities to its sanctions list as it seeks to restrict and weaken the Russian defense industry.

The package also takes aim at companies in China, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and other countries accused of circumventing previously imposed sanctions.

"Two years on, we stand united in support for Ukraine. Our international economic pressure means Russia cannot afford this illegal invasion. Our sanctions are starving [Russian President Vladimir] Putin of the resources he desperately needs to fund his struggling war," Mr. Cameron said in a statement.

Mr. Cameron said the sanctions will disrupt Putin's ability to equip his military with high-tech equipment and weaponry

and block him from "refilling his war coffers while Ukraine defends itself."

There are now more than 2,000 Russian individuals, companies and groups on Britain's sanctions list.

One of the largest companies included in the update is the Novatek project Arctic LNG-2 for the production of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Sanctions were also imposed against Arctic LNG 2 and its general director, Oleg Karpushin, and other top managers of Novatek, the majority owner of Arctic LNG 2.

Britain said Arctic LNG-2 is one of the

(Continued on page 10)



## NEWS ANALYSIS

## Water shortages in Russian-occupied Crimea set to trigger mass outmigration

by Paul Goble  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Since at least 1945, the demand for water stemming from agriculture, industry and the peninsula's population has outstripped Crimea's local supplies (see Black Sea Battleground, January 21, 2022; Crimean Tatar Resource Center, July 2022). Both global warming and Russia's occupation of the peninsula following their incursion into Ukraine in 2014 have made the situation much worse (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 26, 2020). Moscow hoped that it could overcome this problem when it expanded its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This move was intended, at least in part, to break the water blockade Kyiv put in place against Crimea eight years earlier. Some experts suggested that getting water to Crimea was a major cause of Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to launch his expanded attack on Ukraine in February 2022 (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 21, 2020; Apostrophe.ua, March 8, 2021; Gordon, April 14, 2021). Over the last two years, however, Moscow's chronic mismanagement, failure to fund alternative sources of water, diversion of resources to the military, widespread corruption among its officials and continuing destruction of reservoirs and canals have made the situation in Crimea and adjoining regions even worse (Svoboda, May 7, 2023; Window on Eurasia, February 3; Versia, February 13). The most notorious example of this final

point was Russia's bombing of the Kakhovka dam in June 2023 (Ekho Roccii, October 15, 2023).

Occupation officials have been forced to acknowledge that ever more villages and major cities in Crimea are suffering serious water shortages. Moscow continues to claim that it is on course to solve the problems in the region this year, as the earlier drought has eased. Occupying authorities have had to impose increasingly draconian restrictions on water use, at times going so far as to cut off supplies for days at a time in the largest urban centers to ensure there is enough water for Russian military units (IA Rex, June 7, 2023; MKRU Crimea, January 24; Krasnaya Vesna, February 12; Krimskoye Informatsionnoye Agentstvo, February 13; SevastopolMedia, February 13, February 13; RIA Novosti Crimea, February 15). Some experts project that these water shortages may force as many as one-fifth of Crimean residents – some 500,000 people – to leave. This situation is already creating serious problems for the Russian occupation authorities but will additionally have serious consequences for Ukraine as well, regardless of who controls the peninsula (Krim.Realii, February 10).

Moscow blames the current Crimean water shortages on many different issues, none of which involve Russia. They blame Ukraine for blocking water flow to the peninsula from the mainland, as well as recent

(Continued on page 12)

## Kremlin seeks to control Russian internet usage

by Luke Rodeheffer  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

The continued conflict in Ukraine has served as an excuse for an unprecedented crackdown against internet freedom in Russia. The Kremlin took additional measures throughout 2023 to restrict access to uncensored information and the use of internet encryption by civilians, adding 529,000 websites to the Russian Communications Authority blacklist (Kommersant, December 28).

The initial invasion of Ukraine set off a scramble among privacy-savvy Russians who wanted to access the internet and obtain uncensored news about the war. These users turned to Virtual Private Networks (VPN), which protect an individual's internet usage from their Internet Service Provider (ISP). Analysis of VPN adoption rates by the provider AtlasVPN showed that virtual private networks were downloaded 33.5 million times in Russia in 2022 – the highest number after India, despite having a substantially smaller population (AtlasVPN, accessed February 15). Data from 2023 shows that the Russian population continued to download VPN technology, with apps for the networks being the most popular items on Google Play and Apple's App Store, according to data provided to the Russian newspaper Vedomosti (Vedomosti, January 12).

Aware of the drive for encryption to bypass the closure of independent media, Russian officials have stated that they are pursuing machine learning technology and Deep Packet Inspection. These are used to detect the presence of VPN encryption protocols and block them, similar to the capa-

bilities China's Great Firewall introduced in the last several years (RIA Novosti, October 25). As a result of the state's increasing capacity to target encryption with new means of surveillance, Ruskomsvoboda, an NGO focusing on internet freedom in Russia, estimates that 8 of the 15 most popular VPN services in Russia are now inaccessible (Ruskomsvoboda, November 14). The organization notes that VPN providers can continue introducing new technology to avoid the blocks. Still, there is a significant risk that many ordinary users will give up after too many attempts to bypass censors.

Russian lawmakers are also preparing new legislation for March to attempt to force VPN services operating in Russia to comply with the blacklists or be banned from the country (IT-World, November 27). Previous legislation tried to accomplish the same goal. Still, international VPN providers ignored Russian state demands to comply, and the United Kingdom-based Kaspersky VPN company shut down its service in Russia (SPBit, November 9, 2022).

Another prong of the assault on internet freedom by the Kremlin is the development of separate internet infrastructure under state control. Transport Layer Security (TLS) certificates are vital technologies enabling a secure internet by encrypting the HTTP traffic, which serves as a basis for the World Wide Web. Leading TLS certificate issuing authorities promptly exited the Russian and Belarusian markets in 2022 as part of a mass exodus of Western technology companies from Russia (Forbes.ru, October 21, 2022). The Kremlin's National Security Council first explored the subject

(Continued on page 16)

## NEWSBRIEFS

### Stepan Khmara dies at 86

One of the most prominent Soviet-era dissidents of Ukraine, Stepan Khmara, has died at age 86, his wife said on February 21 without giving the cause of death. Mr. Khmara was involved in human rights activities as a university student. In 1980 he was sentenced to seven years in prison on a charge of disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda. After his release in 1987, he co-founded Ukraine's Helsinki Committee and openly supported the idea of Ukraine's independence. Mr. Khmara was a lawmaker after Ukraine gained independence in 1991. In 2006 he was awarded the title Hero of Ukraine. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Zelenskyy calls on Polish, E.U. leaders to meet

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on February 21 called on Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, President Andrzej Duda and members of the European Commission to meet with him and members of his government at the Ukrainian-Polish border by February 24 amid ongoing tension caused by Polish farmers' protests against Ukrainian food imports that they say are impacting the prices of their output. Mr. Zelenskyy stressed that the issue must be addressed as soon as possible, saying it could affect Ukraine's national security. (RFE/RL)

### E.U. approves sanctions packages against Russia

The European Union has approved a new package of sanctions against Russia, its 13th since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine almost two years ago, in what the bloc's rotating Belgian president said was "one of the broadest approved by the E.U. [European Union]." The new package, agreed to on February 21, will add nearly 200 more entities and individuals to the list and will include restrictions aimed at blocking the purchase of "drone components that end up in the Russian military complex and then on the battlefield in Ukraine," E.U. diplomats were quoted as saying, adding that the list includes several Russian companies, as well as third countries. The Belgian presidency said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that the package will be formally approved for February 24, the second anniversary of the start of Russia's invasion. RFE/RL journalists who saw the

sanctions list as it was being prepared for publication said sectoral sanctions apply to 27 companies, among them some from China, India, Turkey, Serbia and Kazakhstan. The E.U. ambassadors also reportedly rejected an attempt by Hungary to strike down the names of three Russian oligarchs – Alisher Usmanov, Vyacheslav Kantor and Dmitry Mazepin, Jr. – from the lists. The list includes the names of 48 heads of military companies as well as more than 50 companies that produce heavy and light weaponry and their components as well as IT and logistics firms that cooperate with the Russian Defense Ministry and the firms' chiefs. It also includes 12 individuals who hold self-styled positions of judges and ministers in the Russian-imposed institutions in occupied territories in Ukraine. Among them is Valentina Lavryk, the so-called minister of education, science and youth in occupied Crimea who "controls the implementation of the militarization of education for Ukrainian children in ... Crimea, as well as the suppression of the Ukrainian language and culture for these children," according to the document that justifies the sanctions. Ms. Lavryk, the document adds, was "responsible for the coordination and supervision of the transfer of children from the illegally occupied regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia to camps located in Crimea," the document says. The list also includes the so-called acting ministers of health, labor, education, youth policies and industry of the Russian-occupied part of Ukraine's Kherson region. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by Reuters)

### Zelenskyy steps up pleas for Western arms

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned again of "extremely difficult" conditions and dwindling ammunition on the front lines following his military's decision to withdraw from the strategic southeastern city of Avdiivka to save lives and materiel in the face of the latest Russian onslaught. "The situation now is extremely difficult in several parts of the front line, where Russian troops have specifically concentrated maximum reserves," Mr. Zelenskyy said late on February 19 follow-

(Continued on page 14)

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## ADMINISTRATION OF THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY AND SVOBODA

Walter Honcharyk, administrator  
and advertising manager

(973) 292-9800, ext. 3040  
fax: (973) 644-9510  
e-mail: [advertising@ukrweekly.com](mailto:advertising@ukrweekly.com)

Subscription Department

(973) 292-9800, ext. 3040  
e-mail: [subscription@ukrweekly.com](mailto:subscription@ukrweekly.com)



# Displaced by war, Ukrainian refugees foster community, culture above Arctic circle

by Roman Tymotsko

TROMSØ, Norway – During the two years of Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine, the number of Ukrainians in the Arctic city of Tromsø increased nearly tenfold, according to different estimates by local authorities and Ukrainian activists.

The Norwegian government has said it wants to bring more young people to the city, which has become an important hub amid growing geopolitical tension over the region. Young, energetic, well-educated



Albina Mahomedova, head of the local Ukrainian Association, with her dog Yorick stand in front of the Ukrainian House in the city center of Tromsø, Norway’s largest city above the Arctic Circle.

Ukrainian refugees have begun to answer the call.

With a population of around 60,000 people, Tromsø is among the world’s largest cities above the Arctic Circle. It is also famous as among the best places in the world to witness the Aurora Borealis, known also as the Northern Lights.

Speaking with a correspondent for The Ukrainian Weekly, the city’s mayor, Gunnar Wilhelmsen, said that Tromsø is proud of being a multicultural town, with people from 140 different countries living here.

As a result, integrating the influx of Ukrainians into the town has progressed more quickly than it might have elsewhere, as residents here are used to people from different countries and cultures. Around 800-1,000 Ukrainians now live in Tromsø, and some of them have taken an active role in the local Ukrainian association, which is currently led by Albina Mahomedova.

Ukrainian “Spilka,” as the organization is known, helps Ukrainian displaced persons improve their living conditions in their new homes far from Ukraine. It also aims to preserve and promote Ukrainian culture in northern Norway.

“We established the organization in April 2022, after the full-scale invasion had already begun. At that time, the first Ukrainian refugees arrived, and we started helping them. Before that, there was no officially registered Ukrainian organization, and about 80 Ukrainians lived here. About 20 actively participated in the community’s life, and I haven’t met others. They all came 10-20 years ago. Tromsø has no history of Ukrainians. It is a new community,” Ms. Mahomedova said.

Having a registered organization helps Ms. Mahomedova and her team advocate for Ukrainians in the city.

“Introducing myself as the head of the Ukrainian association gives more legitima-

cy than being just a local activist,” she said. This opens more doors and gives more opportunities to help Ukrainians who end up in the Tromsø community. Around 100 people are official members of the Ukrainian association.

“Over these almost two years, we have held many rallies. We tried to make sure that the voices of Ukrainians were heard. That is, we participated in rallies dedicated to Ukraine, and we organized them. After the events in Bucha and Irpin [in Ukraine], we organized a big performative action – we laid out strollers and other child items on the ground to send the message. We tried to convey to people that Russian terrorism can come here if the war is not stopped,” Ms. Mahomedova said.

“It is crucial to remind Norwegians living in the north that Norway borders Russia. Here we have a specific context, probably not without work of Russian propaganda: Norwegians are very much convinced that it was the Russian army that liberated northern Norway from the Nazis during World War II. Even professors make the mistake of using the term ‘Russian army.’ And when you correct them, they’re like, ‘Yes, yes, Soviet, Soviet.’ I tell them that they are victims of propaganda. The Red Army had representatives of many nationalities, with a huge part of Ukrainians,” Ms. Mahomedova said.

“Only a delusional person cannot support Ukraine. Almost everyone here sympathizes with Ukraine, but only a small part of society does something to help. But some do a lot for Ukraine: they raise funds for the army, send humanitarian aid and advocate for the support of the state. They are not indifferent. However, there is a big problem with Russian propaganda, and, unfortunately, it works. There are Norwegian-language media outlets that spread Russian narratives. And they cannot be closed down



Albina Mahomedova stands inside Tromsø’s Ukrainian House as she holds a Christmas star.

because of ‘freedom of speech,’” Ms. Mahomedova said.

“There are people who understand perfectly well what it means to have a border with Russia and what threats it poses. And there are people at the other end of the spectrum who love everything Russian, support Russia, believe that Russia liberated them from the Nazis, and are very, very sentimental about everything Russian,” Ms. Mahomedova said. Fortunately, there’s just a handful of the latter,” she added.

“There is even a Communist Party here, which from time to time comes out with its tent in front of the shopping center, a red tent with a hammer and sickle, and when you approach them and ask what the hell

(Continued on page 19)

# Reporters at London’s Frontline Club gather to discuss how Ukraine can win the war

by Nicholas Gordon

LONDON – Ukrainian writer and historian Dr. Olesya Khromeychuk took issue with the title of the panel discussion “How does Ukraine plan to survive in 2024?” in which she and three reporters took part at the Frontline club in London on February 11.

“Why is it only up to Ukraine to survive? What is the rest of Europe going to do to help Ukraine survive? And why is survival the only goal?” Ms. Khromeychuk asked, adding that she was glad that such a big crowd at the event invested in the future of Ukraine. “When we ask those questions, we’ll be able to see a different picture,” Ms. Khromeychuk said.

Approximately 50 people attended the event.

Ms. Khromeychuk was joined on the panel by Christopher Miller, the Financial Times Ukraine correspondent who has been reporting from Ukraine since 2010; Catherine Belton, an investigative reporter for The Washington Post who reports on Russia; and event moderator Luke Harding, the senior international correspondent for London’s Guardian newspaper who served as the Moscow bureau chief from 2007 to 2011. He was expelled from Russia and blacklisted by the Kremlin in 2022 for his reporting.

Mr. Miller, who arrived in London from Ukraine the day before the panel, said that Ukraine is facing significant shortages in manpower and ammunition.

“Ukraine is in a critical moment right now and it’s a very dynamic situation on



Panelists at the event “How does Ukraine plan to survive in 2024?” at the Frontline Club in London, England, on February 11 were (from left to right) Luke Harding, Olesya Khromeychuk, Christopher Miller and Catherine Belton.

the frontlines,” Mr. Miller said, noting the urgent need for U.S. military assistance, which has been delayed by Republicans in the U.S. Congress. “The Ukrainian army is undermanned five to one, and the brigades on the frontlines are being decimated,” Mr. Miller said.

Mr. Miller is the author of the book “The War Came to Us: Life and Death in Ukraine.”

When Mr. Harding posed the view that Ukraine’s older army, with soldiers at an average age of 43, is at a disadvantage, Ms. Khromeychuk countered by saying that the older army is highly motivated to fight, as opposed to younger conscripted soldiers who often don’t want to fight.

Ms. Khromeychuk is the author of the book “The Death of a Soldier Told by His Sister.” Her brother was killed in 2017 defending Ukraine from the Russian attack in the Donbas region.

Ms. Khromeychuk, who has taught the history of East-Central Europe at the University of Cambridge and the University of London College, said that, for all the challenges of mobilization, Ukraine doesn’t have the problem of “draft dodgers” that Russia is facing.

“Most of my cousins have been drafted from their villages and they’ve all gone willingly to fight,” she said.

Ms. Belton further outlined some of Russia’s problems with the protracted war, including infrastructure and economic issues, limited resources for defense and the protesting Russian mothers and wives of soldiers sent to the war.

“The dissent from families of soldiers is a real warning sign for the Kremlin about the danger of prolonging the war,” said Ms. Belton, who is the author of the book “Putin’s People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West.”

Can Ukraine win the war and what would that look like? Mr. Harding asked the panelists.

“Yes, but it depends on what weaponry the West supplies Ukraine,” Ms. Belton said, noting that there’s a grave danger in the potential waning of support for helping Ukraine.

“Russia could now feel that we don’t have the wherewithal or capacity to see this through, that time is on their side,” Ms. Belton said, adding that she feels there will ultimately be some kind of negotiation for the war to end.

Mr. Miller had a mixed view, stating that on the one hand victory for Ukraine is possible, but probably not without the U.S. playing a major role. Unsure if the Ukrainian “maximalist goal” of retaking all of Crimea and occupied territory is possible, Mr. Miller offered the sobering assess-

(Continued on page 7)



# In Munich, strong rhetoric and lack of action, with bad news in between

by Rikard Jozwiak  
RFE/RL

MUNICH – If the Munich Security Conference last year felt optimistic, with Ukraine not only capable of resisting Russia's full-scale invasion of the country but also pushing back, with budding hopes that the summer offensive of 2023 would be a roaring success, this year's event in the Bavarian capital felt like the polar opposite.

Taking place over the weekend of February 16-18, the conference – often billed as the world's leading forum for debating international security policy – was supposed to bask in the glory of its 60th edition. Instead, it seemed as if the bad news never stopped.

All the talk leading up to the event was about a recent comment by Donald Trump, the front-runner for the U.S. Republican presidential nomination, who questioned defending North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies who failed to spend enough on defense from a potential Russian invasion.

This, combined with the inability of the U.S. House of Representatives to pass a \$60 billion Ukraine aid package and instead go into recess until the end of the month, made people at the conference loudly question whether Washington was still committed to both Ukraine and transatlantic relations in general.

But this was just the start.

## More and more bad news

During the same weekend, Ukraine announced the strategic withdrawal of its troops from Avdiivka, a city it had defended from Russian attacks for months. And then, on the first day of the gathering, news emerged that Russia's foremost opposition politician, Alexei Navalny, had died in a Siberian prison.

The Kremlin opponent's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, was present in Munich. Just hours after the news broke, she took the main stage at the conference and, in the most poignant moment of the entire weekend, laid the blame on the Russian president.

"I want [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and everyone around him, his friends and the government, to know that they will be held accountable for what they did to our country, to my family, and my husband," she said, before adding, "That day will come soon."

From then on, it felt that most of the panel discussions, roundtables and chit-chat in the corridors of the venue really circled around the two persons who weren't present: Putin and Mr. Trump.

So, it was left to the people actually present in Germany to put on a brave face, starting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who noted dryly with a not-so-subtle hint at the U.S. Congress that "dictators don't go on vacation."

Possibly aiming at those who want Kyiv to negotiate with Moscow, he added, "Don't ask Ukraine when the war is over; ask yourselves why Putin can continue."

He then outlined a number of things that the West could do to help Ukraine – most of which won't be delivered any time soon. Take, for example, Western sanctions on the Russian nuclear industry, which Mr. Zelenskyy said he hoped for. While the European Union is poised to impose more sanctions on the Kremlin in the coming days, it will be a rather symbolic package without hitting Russian economic sectors.

Or take the confiscation of frozen Russian assets in the West, which he also alluded to. While work is underway in the E.U. to use some of the proceeds of those frozen funds to help Ukraine, it is unlikely to move much beyond that.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country holds the majority of Russian assets in the bloc, told the Munich crowd that his country cannot "do it on its own" and that a Group of Seven (G-7) framework was necessary. An E.U. official told me afterward that there wasn't much appetite in the group of leading industrial nations for this now.

Mr. Zelenskyy was asked about Ukrainian NATO membership, with the military alliance holding a key summit in July in Washington, but even he admitted that not all members were ready to extend such an invitation – something that Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in a separate discussion hammered home matter-of-factly: "As long as war is raging, Ukraine cannot become a member of NATO. We cannot overpromise."

Instead, Kyiv will focus on signing so-called "security pacts" with key Western allies, which essentially means assurances of a steady stream of arms in the future. Mr. Zelenskyy came to Munich directly after inking such deals in both Berlin and Paris. A Ukrainian official told me that pacts with France and Germany were worth billions, but they will be "staggered," meaning that they won't cover the immediate military aid Kyiv is craving right now.

When German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was asked if Germany was ready to provide Ukraine with the long-range Taurus cruise missile, he was simply noncommittal, saying that the "right moment was needed."

## Eyes across the Atlantic

So, what about the specter of a Trump presidency next year?

Mr. Zelenskyy simply responded that he would take him to the front lines and show that the war was real. Mr. Rutte berated the crowd, arguing that "we should stop moaning and whining about Trump" and that

"we have to work with whoever is on the dance floor," while E.U. foreign policy chief Josep Borrell simply noted that, "I am happy underneath the American [security] umbrella, but the umbrella might not be open all the time."

The crowd of U.S. politicians in Bavaria, especially Democrats, were understandably less enthusiastic about a return of Mr. Trump. Hillary Clinton, who was defeated by Mr. Trump in the 2016 presidential race, warned at a side event organized by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation to take Mr. Trump "literally and seriously" and continued, "He will be an absolute authoritarian leader if given the chance to be so."

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, with Mr. Trump's recent NATO comments clearly in mind, noted: "Imagine we went easy on Putin, let alone encouraged him. History offers a clue: If we stand by, they will keep going. And in the case of Putin, that means all of Europe will be threatened."

The problem appeared to be that while everyone seemed to agree that Russia might continue to attack other European countries in the near future if successful in Ukraine, concrete action on the ground tells a different story. Part of it seems to be that the general public in the West doesn't appear to take the threat from Moscow seriously.

The Munich Security Report (perhaps aptly this year titled Lose-Lose?), published in the days before the conference, notes that the perceived threat from Russia has abated compared to last year, when respondents in five out of seven G-7 countries saw the Kremlin as the No. 1 threat. This year it was only No. 2. Interestingly, German citizens now only see Russia as the seventh-greatest concern, and Italians see it as the 12th.

The trick then by politicians, especially in Europe, is how to try to "sell" the need to help Ukraine to what appears to be an increasingly skeptical audience.

## It's just business

And here, a new strategy may be emerging: Use the war in Ukraine as a pure business opportunity. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg spoke about the need to "expand the transatlantic industrial base" to refill arms stocks in the alliance and to send stuff to Ukraine, saying this would mean highly skilled jobs. Being in Munich, after all, he pointed to the building of a new high-tech production line in Bavaria to produce Patriot missiles as an obvious example.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was even more open in her sales pitch, saying that she, in early March, would propose a new military-industrial strategy for the bloc in which more money would be invested and joint procurement between European countries would be encouraged by offering "off-take agreements," meaning that there will be an advanced commitment to buy even if the product isn't ready yet.

More importantly, she pointed out that "we want a return on our taxes" – essentially saying that the good jobs must be in Europe, even though not necessarily provided by E.U. companies. She added that the move is fully aligned with NATO and that Ukraine will be integrated into the bloc's defense program.

When I later asked an E.U. official why this is happening only now, two years into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, I got the sad but telling reply: "The truth is that Europeans didn't expect the war to last so

(Continued on page 16)

## FOR THE RECORD

### UWC partners with Ukrainska Pravda on war anniversary global rally map

The Ukrainian World Congress released the following statement on February 20.

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), the international organization for the Ukrainian diaspora, and Ukrainska Pravda, a leading Ukrainian media outlet, have developed an interactive map of countries, cities, locations, dates and times of the worldwide global rally planned for February 24 to mark the second anniversary of Russia's brutal escalation of its war against Ukraine that begun in 2014. This interactive map of Ukrainian diaspora activities is an action that is part of the UWC's global StandWithUkraine advocacy campaign.

The main objective of the StandWithUkraine campaign is to raise awareness about the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine among global civil society, media, world leaders and governments. The campaign highlights the necessity for increased global support for Ukraine during this ongoing, vicious war.

The StandWithUkraine global map displays the locations where Ukrainians worldwide will broadcast their voices and influence to advocate for support during these challenging times. More than 150 cities have seen Ukrainians register their rallies already.

Check if peaceful rallies and events in your city and/or country are already on the interactive world map: <https://stand-withukraineworld.ukrainianworldcongress.org/>. If not registered, please register now. Even if your event is registered on a local calendar, please take the time to also register on the StandWithUkraine global map.



gress.org/. If not registered, please register now. Even if your event is registered on a local calendar, please take the time to also register on the StandWithUkraine global map.

"Without international support, Ukraine is in danger," stated UWC President Paul Grod, "and it's our responsibility to ensure that support is there. In these uneasy times, we must stand strong, united and do our part responsibly. Ukraine needs all of our voices, support and pull around the world."

"We do not have a chance to let the world get tired of our war. That is why the active position of Ukrainians and friends of Ukraine around the world is so important today. The world needs to see that we are not tired of fighting for our country,

our freedom, equality, respect and democracy. We are doing it in the face of a difficult, bloody war and witnessing our struggle with millions of voices worldwide," said Sevgil Musayeva, editor-in-chief of Ukrainska Pravda.

UWC urges Ukrainian communities and organizations globally to keep registering their peaceful rallies and events scheduled for the week leading up to February 24 as well as immediately afterwards by using the form provided at the link. This will ensure that Ukrainians can collectively and globally remind the world in a unified voice about Russia's ongoing genocidal war on Ukraine.

Register an event in your city and join the global Ukrainian community to let the world know that we StandWithUkraine.



INTERVIEW

# Putin's strategic mistake was to choose West as an enemy, Snyder says

by Vazha Tavberidze  
RFE/RL

Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to be remembered as a great ruler of Russia. History professor Timothy Snyder believes he will rather go down as a ruler who severely weakened his own country by choosing to have the West as an enemy and China as a patron.

Mr. Snyder, an author and expert on Central and Eastern Europe, spoke to RFE/RL at the Munich Ukrainian Lunch on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on February 17 following the announcement of the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in an Arctic prison.

**RFE/RL:** How do you think Alexei Navalny will go down in history?

**Mr. Snyder:** I think that's a very Russian question because Russians remember the people who die in camps, people who die in prison, in a very special way. Putin wants to be remembered as a ruler of Russia, but Navalny is going to be remembered in a different way because Navalny died for his country, rather than killing other people.

As a historian, I think Navalny's significance is that he tried to show that other things were possible, you know. We'll never know what kind of leader he would have been. But he, the message that he had, was a message that you have to be courageous. Not everyone has to be as courageous as he was, but you're not going to go anywhere unless you're a little bit courageous. And that's a very important message for the future of Russia, because people are going



History professor Timothy Snyder believes Russian President Vladimir Putin will be remembered by history as a ruler who severely weakened his own country by choosing to have the West as an enemy and China as a patron.

to have to be a little bit courageous.

**RFE/RL:** You already mentioned what kind of place Putin wants to have for himself in history, but what do you think history has in store for him? How will he be remembered, depending on the outcome in Ukraine?

**Mr. Snyder:** Well, look, he wants history to be about things like Russian rulers. But history is about other things besides Russian rulers; history is about human experience. It's about wealth and who has it. And I think that historians of the 21st century will be writing about the inequality of wealth. And in that history, he's certainly

one of the major villains. He's one of the most important oligarchs in the world. He's someone who's – if you're an oligarch, you're allowed to have strange fantasies, no one can stop you. And then those fantasies you have end up affecting the world. So, various oligarchs have various different fantasies. One of his is that Ukraine doesn't exist. And that's a fantasy which is causing tremendous harm in the world.

But what I'm trying to say is that historians aren't all historians of Russia. Historians are historians of other things, and historians of society and historians of economics are going to remember him as an example of an oligarch whose strange

fantasies damaged the world. Historians are also historians of ecology. They're historians of nature, historians of climate. And Putin's power is based on hydrocarbons, is based on natural gas and oil. There are other villains, but he's one of the major villains of that story, of keeping the world dependent on those things, from what you really have to move on.

As far as the history of Russia is concerned, I think he will be remembered as someone who made the Russian state much weaker, because I think he made, already more than 10 years ago, a profound strategic mistake, which was to choose to have the West as an enemy. That was a choice he made, and choosing to have the West as an enemy means choosing to have China as a patron. And I think having China as a patron is a much weaker situation for Russia than trying to be between China and the West.

So, I think he'll be remembered as someone who made a basic strategic mistake.

**RFE/RL:** Even if he tries to emerge victorious on his own terms in Ukraine?

**Mr. Snyder:** A Russia that emerges from the war in Ukraine victorious will still be a Russia which is doing China's work for China, by destabilizing the West, by weakening the West. Even a Russia that invades other countries is still fundamentally doing China's work.

So, I think regardless of how Ukraine turns out, the mistake is deeper. The mistake is not just that Russia never had to

(Continued on page 12)

## Ukraine has no navy. But it's hammering Russia in the Black Sea

by Mike Eckel  
RFE/RL

The grainy black-and-white video showed what appeared to be a fast-moving speedboat bobbing on the nighttime waves, swerving back and forth as it approached a much larger warship. The ship then explodes spectacularly, and the nearly 3-minute video ends with a vessel seen rolling onto its port side just before it sinks.

The speedboat was in fact a Ukrainian-designed unmanned maritime drone packed with explosives, known as the MAGURA-V. The warship purportedly was the Tsezar Kunikov, one of just a handful of heavy landing ships in Russia's Black Sea Fleet. It sank off the southern coast of Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula Russia seized 10 years ago. The fate of the ship's crew, estimated at around 70, was unclear.

One day after, the admiral in charge of the Black Sea Fleet was reportedly stripped of his command.

The Tsezar Kunikov is one of nearly two dozen Russian warships that Ukraine has seriously damaged or outright sunk since Russia began its full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022.

Oryx, a Dutch open-source website known for verified tallies of Russian and Ukrainian equipment losses, put the figure at 21 Russian warships and one submarine destroyed, not including the Tsezar Kunikov. Ukraine's general staff has a slightly higher count: 24 Russian ships and one submarine.

That works out to approximately a third of the entire fleet, which numbers around 74. Those figures do not include smaller



A Ukrainian military intelligence image of what is purportedly the Tsezar Kunikov shows the vessel sinking in the Black Sea, stern up.

craft such as shallow-draft coastal patrol boats or auxiliary vessels.

No matter how you count it, it's an extraordinary set of naval losses inflicted by a country that currently does not have a navy. Naval and military experts around the world have taken note.

"Ukraine's success in the Black Sea this year certainly came as a surprise to many of us. At sea, the Ukrainians have proven to be much more technologically and tactically innovative than the Russians have," said Michael Petersen, director of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College, in Newport, R.I.

"The daring innovation they have displayed is in contrast to the [Russian] Black Sea Fleet, which has proven to be extremely risk averse and lacking in imagination," he said.

"Ukraine has prosecuted a classic asymmetric campaign against what was a significantly stronger opponent," said Mike Plunkett, senior naval platforms analyst at Janes, a defense intelligence research company.

Russia "has gone from being the indisputable maritime power in the Black Sea – on paper at least – to being pinned back into the eastern portion and unable to exert sea control over the region," he said.

### Barrages and blockades

Before February 2022, Ukraine's navy was largely made up of Soviet-era surface ships and some onshore infrastructure that it inherited in the late 1990s when Kyiv and Moscow agreed to divide up the Soviet Black Sea fleet.

The two countries' fleets were housed

close to one another in Crimea, including at the peninsula's historic main port, Sevastopol.

Ukraine's budget problems, along with corruption in military and civilian procurement, however, meant its fleet, including combat and auxiliary ships, could barely stay afloat and was perennially underfunded.

After Russia seized Crimea in 2014, Ukraine moved its serviceable fleet, including four corvettes and its flagship, the frigate Hetman Sahaydachniy, to the port of Odesa, to the west.

Ukraine began losing access to its other major ports, Berdyansk and Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, in the run-up to Russia's invasion. Russia had imposed what amounted to a naval blockade of the Sea of Azov, using the Crimea Bridge as a gateway to choke passage through the Kerch Strait, the only waterway linking it to the Black Sea and the world beyond the Bosphorus.

With the onset of the invasion, Ukraine scuttled the Hetman Sahaydachniy in Mykolayiv, a port on the Pivdenniy Buh River, where it was undergoing repairs. As many as a dozen other Ukrainian ships were damaged or sunk around the Black Sea.

In the end, Russia imposed a virtual blockade of Ukraine's ports, including the largest one still under its control, Odesa, with surface ships blocking foreign cargo ships from loading up and exporting Ukrainian grain. Global grain markets reeled, and United Nations officials warned of potential famine in some Mediterranean

(Continued on page 9)



## THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

### Ukraine's resilience shines bright

Two years have passed since Ukraine faced one of its greatest challenges in modern history – the full-scale invasion of its sovereign land by Russia and its dictatorial, genocidal president, Vladimir Putin. As we mark this solemn occasion, it's imperative to reflect on Ukraine's remarkable resilience and the global significance of its ongoing struggle for freedom and democracy.

In February 2022, Russia launched a brazen attack on Ukraine, seeking to destabilize its democratic institutions and undermine its sovereignty. What followed was a testament to the unwavering spirit of the Ukrainian people and their unyielding determination to defend their homeland against aggression.

The Ukrainian military, though outnumbered and outgunned, displayed unparalleled courage on the battlefield. Soldiers and civilians alike stood shoulder to shoulder, united by a common purpose: to safeguard their nation's independence and preserve the values of democracy and freedom.

The conflict exacted a heavy toll on Ukraine, both in terms of human suffering and material destruction. Cities and towns have been reduced to rubble, families have been torn apart, and countless lives have been lost. Yet, amid the devastation, the Ukrainian people have not wavered in their resolve to resist Putin's attempt to impose not only oppression and tyranny on the Ukrainian people, but to destroy them and Ukrainian culture entirely.

The international community has rallied behind Ukraine, condemning Russia's flagrant violation of international law and imposing sanctions aimed at holding the aggressor accountable for its actions, but more must be done. Diplomatic efforts were intensified to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict, but there is no road to peace in Putin's mind. And so Ukraine and its people must fight until the war is won and Putin is deposed from power.

Despite the immense challenges it faces, Ukraine has emerged from the crucible of war as a beacon of hope and resilience. Its people have shown the world the true meaning of courage and defiance in the face of adversity, inspiring countless others to stand up for their rights and freedoms.

The second anniversary of Ukraine's heroic effort to beat back Russia's invasion serves as a solemn reminder of the ongoing struggle for peace and justice in the world. It is a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit and the indomitable will of those who refuse to surrender to oppression and tyranny.

As we reflect on this momentous occasion, let us reaffirm our unwavering support for the people of Ukraine in their quest for freedom and self-determination. Let us stand in solidarity with them as they continue to rebuild their nation and chart a path toward a future of peace, prosperity and stability.

The lessons of Ukraine's struggle resonate far beyond its borders, reminding us of the importance of defending democratic principles and upholding the rule of law in the face of aggression and injustice. It is incumbent upon the international community to remain steadfast in its support for Kyiv and to work tirelessly toward a decisive Ukrainian victory. The world will be a safer place with Russia soundly defeated and Putin removed from power.

On this solemn anniversary, let us honor the sacrifices of those who have fallen in defense of Ukraine's freedom and sovereignty. Let us draw inspiration from their courage and resilience as we strive to build a world where the ideals of democracy, human rights and justice prevail.

In the face of adversity, Ukraine has shown us that hope endures, that courage triumphs, and that the human spirit is truly indomitable. As we look to the future, let us take heart in the knowledge that, no matter how daunting the challenges may be, the quest for freedom and justice will ultimately prevail. Slava Ukraini! Heroim Slava!

Feb.  
27  
2014

### Turning the pages back...

Ten years ago, on February 27, 2014, an interim government for Ukraine was formed just six days after President Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia, resigned on February 21.

The interim government was elected by members of the Verkhovna Rada to serve until the next government was formed after the scheduled May 25, 2014, presidential election.

Nominees were announced on February 27, and the bulk of the appointments were made on February 27. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk called it "the government of political kamikazes." Verkhovna Rada Chairman Oleksander Turchynov was named the acting president of Ukraine.

"We stand before inconceivable economic challenges. In order to conquer them I declare from this high tribune: we don't have any other way out besides making extremely unpopular decisions," Mr. Yatsenyuk said. "These decisions will apply to [state] subsidies; these decisions will apply to [utility] rates; these decisions will apply to cuts in social programs; and these decisions will apply to preserving the country's financial system."

A new majority party was formed in the Verkhovna Rada. Called the European Choice Coalition, the collection of political parties was made up of members from the Batkivshchyna, Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform and Svoboda factions, as well as the Economic Development and Sovereign European Ukraine groups of independent deputies and a handful of Party of Regions defectors.

Besides Messrs. Turchynov and Yatsenyuk, positions in government were held by: Vitalii Yarema (first vice prime minister for law enforcement); Borys Tarasyuk (vice prime minister for European integration); Volodymyr Hroisman (vice prime minister for regional policy); Arsen Avakov (internal affairs minister); Oleh Mikhnitskyi (procurator general); Valentyn Nalyvaichenko (director, Security Service of Ukraine); Andrii Parubii (National Security and Defense Council); Ihor Teleniukh (acting Minister of Defense); Andrii

(Continued on page 11)

## What Navalny's death could change – or not

by Steve Gutterman  
RFE/RL

For more than a decade, and even since his jailing over three years ago, Alexei Navalny, who Russian authorities say died in prison, had been a crucial driver of Kremlin policy – an uncompromising opponent whose vision for a different Russia has been a chief target of President Vladimir Putin's ever-increasing efforts to quash protests, stamp out dissent and tightly control politics across the country.

The report of Mr. Navalny's death comes as Putin's Russia continues to take shape as a place where independent voices are not tolerated, elections are closely managed to avoid even the impression of an alternative and the country is two years into a full-scale invasion that has cast a massive shadow of death and destruction over Ukraine and had long-lasting effects at home.

Does the demise of the Kremlin's most vocal critic change any of this – and in what way? Could it bring any hint of the change for which Mr. Navalny advocated, or just a further tightening of the screws?

The first thing to watch is the campaign for the March 15-17 Russian presidential election, now just one month away. Given the state's tight grip on politics and the media, Putin is certain to win barring a major unexpected development – but analysts say the Kremlin wants him to win by a margin that demonstrates to Russians, and to the world, that there is no alternative.

That apparent desire seemed all the more evident when Boris Nadezhdin, the only would-be candidate who is a critic of the war on Ukraine, was barred from the ballot this month – after long lines of Russians showed up to support his signature-gathering campaign, possibly spooking Putin and the Kremlin with the prospect that a challenger could gain a substantial chunk of votes.

Mr. Navalny, who himself was prohibited from challenging Putin in the last election, in 2018, voiced support last week for an initiative calling on Russians to show up at their polling places at 12 p.m. on the last day of the upcoming vote – a protest effort dubbed Noon Against Putin.

Amid widespread suspicions of foul play – or the pernicious effects of prison conditions and harsh treatment that Mr. Navalny said was aimed to kill him – several analysts and Kremlin critics linked his reported death directly to the election in which Putin, who has been president or prime minister since 1999, is set to secure a six-year term.

"On Tuesday I heard an audio recording of his voice from one of the many court hearings that he has participated in. It was the voice of a cheerful, energetic, healthy man," political scientist Yekaterina Shulman told Deutsche Welle. "This means that he was killed. He was killed so that he would not interfere with the election campaign. This is what sits on the surface and what cannot be ignored."

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the exiled former oil tycoon who spent a decade in prison following convictions that he and supporters say were part of a Kremlin-orchestrated campaign to punish him for venturing into opposition politics and to bring his company's assets into state hands, urged Russians to write Mr. Navalny's name on their ballots when they vote.

But any such effort – let alone street protests over the election, Mr. Navalny's fate or the war against Ukraine – is a major risk for Russians who join it.

"On the one hand, people will now have even less desire to vote for Putin; on the other hand, actively acting against [the

election] will become even more frightening," political analyst Abbas Gallyamov wrote on Telegram.

"An optimistic view is that [Mr.] Navalny's death may inject a new life into [Mr.] Nadezhdin ... and give birth to a real movement. A pessimistic view would see [Mr.] Nadezhdin being silenced, either out of fear or [by] more radical and potentially permanent methods," said Samantha de Bendor, an associate fellow at the British think tank Chatham House.

In fact, the death of a man who symbolized opposition to the noncompetitive elections held under Putin might only serve to enhance the risk of protesting over the election – or anything else.

"At one point, [Mr.] Navalny was useful to Russia as a sign that opposition to Putin was tolerated. That usefulness came to an end long ago," said Keir Giles, senior consulting fellow at Chatham House. "And by now, Russia has abandoned any pretense that it is anything other than a repressive regime. Russia is back in its historical comfort zone of murdering opponents at home and abroad without qualms and without a care for international condemnation."

Mr. Navalny became a vocal critic of Russia's war against Ukraine, and his reported death seems unlikely to have any effect on the Kremlin's pursuit of its goals in the invasion. But reverberations abroad could play into the crucial issue of Western support for Ukraine's defense, amplifying calls for additional pressure on Russia and potentially affecting the fate of a \$60 billion U.S. package of mostly military aid that has been stymied in Congress for months.

Whatever the cause of Mr. Navalny's reported death, it poses a challenge for Putin and the state, according to Tatyana Stanovaya, an expert on the Kremlin and an analyst at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

"Mr. Navalny emerged as a seminal and historical figure, embodying an unyielding anti-Putin political stance and representing the most substantial alternative to Putin's regime since 2000. His unmatched recognition, significance to the elites and involvement in domestic politics distinguished him from any other opposition figure, cementing his status as an outstanding politician," Ms. Stanovaya wrote on Twitter. "And this creates a significant political problem for the regime – they will have to deal with [Mr.] Navalny's legacy."

But the way the Kremlin will try to address this challenge is not hard to predict, she added.

"I have no doubt that very soon we'll witness a significant wave of anti-Navalny repressions, raids after indignations in social networks, criminal cases and arrests," she said.

Numerous observers made clear that whether or not the death of Mr. Navalny would bring any change, it would be one of the darkest signs of a dark time.

"Mr. Navalny was fighting for a 'beautiful Russia of the future' and was crushed by the terrible Russia of the past & present. A future for this Russia exists for one man only – Putin," said Alena Epifanova, a research fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations. "He is ready to kill anyone who stands in his way. Today he proved it again."

(Mike Eckel contributed to this report.)

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COMMENTARY

To defeat Russia, Ukraine must shift to a strategy of defense

by Ihor N. Stelmach

As Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine passes the two-year mark, Ukraine's leadership needs to learn from and react to events in 2022 and 2023. Perhaps the most significant lesson to learn from the past two years of conflict is the superiority of a defensive strategy over offensive warfare. Defensive operations have shown to be consistently more effective, going back to Vladimir Putin's failed initial onslaught in the first few weeks of the war in which Ukraine mounted a heroic defense of the capital.

Another important lesson is the need to balance political objectives with military capabilities. Again, going back to February 2022, political goals have pushed Russia and Ukraine to engage in unfortunate military offensives with inadequate forces, resulting in heavy losses.

Ukraine's long-term desired result is still a total liberation of its territory from the Russian occupiers. However, present conditions do not advocate daring offensive operations. Assistance from the U.S. and European Union countries has experienced recent stumbling blocks while the attempt to increase the production of artillery shells and supply military equipment has not kept up with Ukraine's needs on the battlefield. Rising casualty rates and a shortage of soldiers in Ukraine pose deep concerns for Kyiv and its effort to win the war.

As a result, Ukraine's military game plan for 2024 should focus on holding its position along the frontlines and maintaining continued control over the approximately 82 percent of the country that it still controls. A calculated shift to a strategy of active defense would allow Ukraine to maximize its strengths and give it precious time to reorganize and rearm ahead of potentially more fortunate conditions in 2025.

Additionally, a strategy focused on defense would permit Ukraine to capitalize on the Kremlin's urgent need for victories. With Putin's armed forces under great pressure to advance, the Ukrainian military would have many opportunities to uniformly drain the Russian invaders, similar to what they did in Avdiyivka, where Russia has reportedly suffered massive casualty rates.

By incorporating a focused strategy of defense in 2024, Ukraine can accomplish two major goals: stop any major Russian

Ihor N. Stelmach may be reached at [iman@sfgsports.com](mailto:iman@sfgsports.com).

**Reporters...**

(Continued from page 3)

ment that he does not believe at this point Ukraine will be whole again.

"But then, Ukraine has shown myriad ways of surprising us in this war so far," Mr. Miller said. "Ukrainians have outperformed all of our expectations."

Ms. Khromeychuk said that Ukraine has to win the war on its own terms to survive.

"There has to be justice and accountability for Russia's impunity because without it that's what encourages Putin's aggression," she said. "It's an existential war for Ukraine, but it's also a war to preserve democratic order."

Ms. Khromeychuk also spoke about holding our leaders accountable for the

offensives and establish an environment that vigorously favors Ukraine in what has become a war of attrition. Such a scenario would allow Kyiv time to return to an offensive push in 2025.

A successful strategy of defense in 2024 will depend significantly on a high level of support from Ukraine's allies. Large amounts of artillery and ammunition, electronic warfare systems, drones, greater air defense capabilities and long-range missiles must be prioritized as essential aid the West must provide Ukraine. The much-anticipated appearance of F-16 fighter jets in the next year should crucially strengthen Ukraine's ability to take control of the skies over the country.

Assuming this military assistance arrives, Ukraine will find itself in a position to implement a defensive game plan while concurrently preparing for future offensives. Such preparations should feature expanded training programs for Ukrainian soldiers in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. Despite tens of thousands of Ukrainian military personnel being trained in NATO countries over the past two years, frontline complications in the second half of 2023 revealed some deficiencies in these endeavors. The issue here is time – more of it is required to teach Ukrainian soldiers the skills needed to triumph on the modern battlefield.

Switching to a defensive strategy in 2024 does not mean Ukraine cannot go on the offensive. Ukraine will continue its offensive operations in Russia-occupied Crimea as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during a New Year's day interview with The Economist.

A methodical dismantling of Russia's military potential and logistics in Crimea during 2024 would accomplish a pair of major objectives. First, it would assist in obtaining navigational freedom for shipping in the Black Sea and continue Ukraine's progress in fracturing Russia's naval blockade of its ports. Second, it would impede Moscow's attempts to reinforce the Russian army in southern Ukraine, possibly producing weak areas on the frontlines of the battlefield.

Ukraine's achievements in the Black Sea have demonstrated the strength of the West's armaments when paired with the expertise and creativity of Ukraine's military. Additional advances in Crimea and in naval operations in 2024 will depend on

(Continued on page 9)

current crisis of Russian aggression.

"The Russian nation has metastasized into something dangerous and hostile to the EU [European Union], and we essentially let Putin get away with that," Ms. Khromeychuk said. "We need to ask ourselves, what have we done to prevent this, or to enable it?"

When Mr. Harding asked the panelists if they could tell him something positive on which to end the discussion, Ms. Khromeychuk's words received resounding applause from the audience.

"Ukrainian people are completely exhausted by the war, by losing loved ones, by all of the retreats to bomb shelters. But they're still determined to fight, to hold on to their unity. They've made us all reevaluate the meaning of freedom. Ukrainians are driven by love, and for that reason they're invincible," she said.



Now more than ever, Congress must stand with Ukraine

Not providing desperately needed assistance to Ukraine would be a radical departure from Congress' historical bipartisan support for Ukraine's freedom. And the stakes have never been higher – for Ukraine, for the United States, and for European and global security.

So why do I say this? Where are we now, and what can we do?

Even before Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, Congress pressed Moscow to release imprisoned Ukrainian human rights activists, who constituted a disproportionate share of Soviet political prisoners. It called on Moscow to legalize the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, at the time the largest banned religious denomination in the world. Congress passed legislation encouraging a reluctant Bush Administration to recognize Ukraine's independence. Post-independence, Congress has provided substantial aid to bolster Ukraine's independence and democracy.

I witnessed this up close while working for 35 years at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (aka the U.S. Helsinki Commission), whose membership consists of both U.S. Senators and Representatives. It did not matter one iota if they were Democrats or Republicans, conservative, centrist or liberal – all were united in supporting freedom and democracy in Ukraine. And there were no divisions when it came to calling Moscow out for its numerous violations of international agreements, be it in Russia itself, Ukraine or elsewhere.

We live in a different world now.

While the Senate, after a torturous process filled with twists and turns, has manifested this bipartisan commitment to Ukraine, funding languishes in the House. As President Joe Biden has said, "History is watching the House of Representatives. The failure to support Ukraine at this critical moment will never be forgotten; it's going to go down in the pages of history. ... This has to happen. We have to help now. We have to realize that we're dealing with [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

The initial version of the Senate supplemental foreign aid package on Ukraine, Israel and the Indo-Pacific included changes to secure our southern border, which Republicans had demanded be included in exchange for their votes. But this legislation failed in early February, notwithstanding that it had some of the toughest border security provisions in decades. A major factor in its defeat was Donald Trump's opposition, who complained that border reforms would help President Biden and the Democrats politically. I feel sorry for Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), a staunch conservative who spent months negotiating the border compromise, only to be abandoned by most of his Republican Senate colleagues.

In any event, the Senate, on February 12, after an almost unheard-of Super Bowl Sunday weekend session, and minus the border provisions, voted to support a massive \$95 billion aid package with \$60 billion of that for Ukraine. The vote was 70-29, including nearly half of Republican Senators. Unfortunately, the lack of border language made it dead on arrival in the House, with Speaker Mike Johnson saying that border issues need to be addressed

before any foreign aid is approved.

As I write this, Mr. Johnson – under pressure from his MAGA isolationist wing, and with the anti-Ukraine-aid Trump lurking ominously in the background – refuses to put the aid package up for a floor vote. Such a vote would have a high likelihood of success, enjoying support from nearly every Democrat and a substantial number of Republicans.

But there are countervailing pressures to those opposing assistance, including from pro-Ukraine House Republicans. Alternatives are being actively discussed, including compromise legislation with reduced aid (in Ukraine's case, \$48 billion vs. \$60 billion), but that includes border security language. Also being discussed as a "nuclear option" is a discharge petition, a rarely used procedural gambit to force a floor vote.

I do not envy the speaker from a political perspective, but here is his chance to do the right thing – to be a real statesman, a true leader.

It would be a tragic abandonment of Congress' long-standing bipartisan support for Ukraine's freedom if one wing of one party, largely in one chamber, were to block funding for Ukraine at this critical time.

As Ukrainians are fighting not only for their freedom and security but also ours, Congressional inaction would be a profound betrayal of our national interests, the rules-based international order and the values we have long espoused.

If there were ever a time to advocate – specifically, to contact your Representative in Congress – the time is now. Organizations such as Razom for Ukraine and the American Coalition for Ukraine, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the Ukrainian National Information Service (UNIS), the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA) and others have mounted campaigns urging grassroots advocacy. These organizations provide specific suggestions on steps people can take that even make it easy to do so.

If you have not already made it your practice to make your voice heard with your Representative in Congress, please do not hesitate to do so. Your message, either via phone or email, should be short and sweet – simply urging them to support aid for Ukraine is sufficient. Even if your House member has a solid track record of support, it never hurts to thank them and encourage further support. It's a form of reinforcement, of letting them know that, as a constituent, you have their back.

Having been involved in policy advocacy both in and out of government for half a century, I've found that all too often people think that their voice doesn't matter. It does. Every little bit helps. It's not enough just to write comments on email chains or on social media or to think someone else will do it so you do not need to. It's not enough to just wish or pray that Ukraine obtains this desperately needed funding. In fact, think of advocacy on behalf of Ukraine fighting for its freedom and very existence against a brutal, evil aggressor, as a noble form of prayer and a way to practice what we preach.

Orest Deychakiwsky may be reached at [orestdeychak@gmail.com](mailto:orestdeychak@gmail.com).



# Panel focuses on Russia's war of aggression and genocide of Ukrainian people

by Victoria A. Malko

FRESNO, Calif. – To draw the attention of American academia to the second anniversary of Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine, the Department of History at California State University, Fresno, held a teach-in webinar on February 20.

The webinar, titled "Russia's War of Aggression and Genocide of the Ukrainians: Two Years On," served as a solemn reminder that on February 20, 2014, known as Bloody Thursday, more than 100 protesters were shot by snipers on Ukraine's Independence Square (known also as Maidan) during the culminating hours of the Revolution of Dignity. It was moderated by Dr. Victoria A. Malko, a professor in the History Department at California State University, Fresno.

The webinar participants honored those who died on that day, known as the Heavenly Hundred, with a minute of silence.

Dmytro Koval, an associate professor of international law at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, spoke about the Russian neo-imperial genocidal campaign in Ukraine within the context of contemporary international law.

As the legal director at Truth Hounds, the representative of Ukraine in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Protocol 1999 Committee, and a member of the international advisory council of the Prosecutor's General Office of Ukraine, Dr. Koval drew parallels with past genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur, highlighting the role of colonial history in understanding genocidal rhetoric and grievances.

Dr. Koval argued that, unlike previous



A promotional flyer shows the four speakers who took part in a panel discussion on Russia's war of aggression and the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

instances, Ukraine may be facing neo-imperial genocide rather than traditional genocide, with Russia employing rhetoric reminiscent of colonialism and denying Ukraine's right to self-determination.

He also examined the use of dehumanizing language, emphasizing its connection to genocide and the need to distinguish it from ethnic hate speech. Additionally, he explored political statements and policies contributing to violence, such as denying Ukraine's nationhood and using dehumanizing terms to justify actions against Ukrainians. The speaker underscored the importance of recognizing and addressing these dynamics within the framework of international law to prevent further atrocities.

Elizabeth M. Zechenter, visiting professor in the Faculty of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw in Poland, spoke

about the uses of rape as a weapon of war by the Russian military in Ukraine.

In her presentation, Dr. Zechenter quoted Pramila Patten, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, stating that the U.N. had the first verified cases of rape reported three days after the Russian invasion in February of 2022.

She observed that maintaining reliable statistics is difficult during an active conflict, and sexual violence against women is largely a "silent crime."

In March 2022, the International Criminal Court opened an investigation into alleged serious sexual crimes in Ukraine. In January 2023, the office of Ukrainian Prosecutor Iryna Didenko opened prosecutions into acts of sexual violence committed by Russian soldiers. Russian commanders in occupied Ukrainian

territories encouraged sexual violence to intimidate and demoralize Ukrainian civilians, with the youngest victim reported to be just four and the oldest over 80 years old.

Dr. Zechenter argued that the Russian military has a long and inglorious history of mass rape during World War II. Historical sources reveal that two million women in Germany were raped. Mass rapes by the Russian "liberators" were reported everywhere they went while advancing toward Berlin, including Poland, without sparing women victims of Nazi concentration camps.

Rape not only shames and humiliates and breaks the nation's spirit; it is an act of genocide because it destroys the biological potential of the nation, she said. Unfortunately, international law has been slow in recognizing, criminalizing and preventing the use of rape during wartime. Sexual abuse is not an inevitable byproduct of war; it is a violent crime. The speaker urged the international legal community to change the appalling reality that rape remains a low-risk, cost-free crime to most perpetrators and their leaders.

Ukrainian lawyer and migration expert, Kateryna Krakhmalova, shared her findings as a co-investigator in the project on children and migration at the University of Warsaw's Centre of Migration Research.

In her presentation, Dr. Krakhmalova focused on two issues: one was war-forced mobility, including internal displacement, evacuations, crossing the border and refugees abroad; and the other took up the issue of specific war crimes, including the forced transfer and deportation of

(Continued on page 14)

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STAND WITH UKRAINE



# Ukraine has no navy...

(Continued from page 5)

and African countries that heavily rely on Ukrainian grain.

The blockade worsened for Ukraine and other Black Sea nations after floating land mines began to drift, some breaking free of their moorings. Kyiv and Moscow have blamed each other for allowing the mines to drift.

Russia used its Black Sea surface and submarine fleet – around 80 vessels in total, according to Ukrainian estimates – to fire some of the missiles that barraged Ukrainian cities and towns, terrorizing the population.

The Russian fleet's flagship, the guided missile cruiser Moskva, played a leading role in the amphibious assault on Snake Island. A small garrison of Ukrainian border guards stationed on the strategically located island about 140 kilometers south of Odesa were captured by Russian forces on the first day of the full-scale invasion.

Nearly two months later, on April 13, as the Moskva steamed east of Snake Island, it was hit by what turned out to be two land-launched Neptune anti-ship missiles. The ship sank less than a day later. At least 18 sailors were killed, though outside estimates say the death toll was likely significantly higher.

It was the largest Russian or Soviet warship to have been sunk since World War II.

"Just because your opponent doesn't have a meaningful navy, do not assume you have complete freedom of movement and action at sea," Mr. Plunkett said.

## Destroyed dry dock

For many experts, Ukraine's sinking of the Moskva showed ingenuity and a willingness to take risks.

"They tried something, it worked even better than they hoped, with the Moskva sinking," said Dmitry Gorenburg, a senior research scientist at the Center for Naval Analyses, a think tank based near Washington, D.C. "And then they said, 'Oh great! And let's build on that!' and they've been working on that for the last two years."

"I doubt the Ukrainians ever expected to hit, let alone sink Moskva, but the fact they did made their point in the clearest way possible," Mr. Plunkett said. "It had the desired effect as well, with Russia pulling its surface fleet back into the central Black Sea and away from Ukraine."

About three weeks before the sinking of the Moskva, on March 24, 2022, a landing ship called the Saratov exploded while docked in the Russian-occupied port of Berdyansk. Ukraine later revealed it had used a short-range Tochka-U ballistic missile to target the ship.

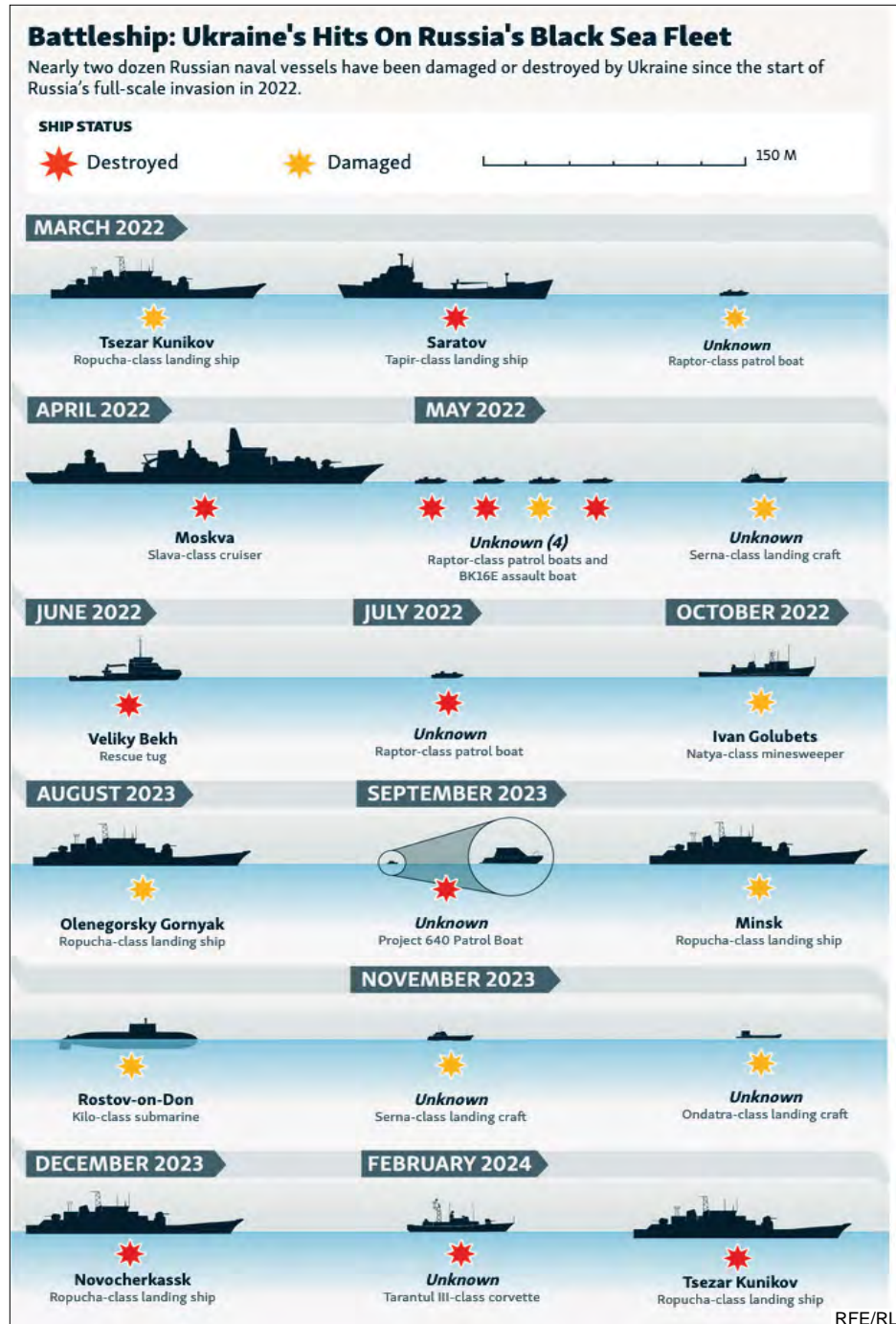
Two other landing ships that were docked close by at the same time – the Tsezar Kunikov and the Novocherkassk – managed to escape with minimal damage.

Other Western-supplied weapons have further supported Ukraine's creativity.

In May 2023, Britain announced it would supply Kyiv with Storm Shadow cruise missiles, an air-launched missile with a range of around 250 kilometers. France supplied a French version of the missile, known as SCALP.

The missiles were employed to hit several bridges in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine. But on September 13, Ukraine fired a series of missiles at a dry dock repair facility in Sevastopol, seriously damaging, and possibly destroying, the landing ship Minsk and a submarine, the Rostov-on-Don. The port's repair facilities were also badly damaged, posing complications for repairing the fleet's larger warships and submarines.

Nine days later, Ukrainian jets fired multiple Storm Shadows at the headquarters of the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. Ukrainian authorities claimed dozens of officers were



killed or wounded in the strike. Russia has never confirmed the toll.

On December 26, the Novocherkassk, which had escaped the March 2022 attack on Russian vessels in occupied Berdyansk, was hit and reportedly sunk while berthed at a repair dock in the eastern Crimean port of Feodosia. Ukrainian officials suggested Storm Shadow or SCALP missiles were used in the attack.

The ship reportedly had a crew of 77 at the time of the sinking. As of February 12, 33 sailors remained missing, according to Russian war bloggers. The Defense Ministry has released no official tally.

## Enter the unmanned sea drone

Ukrainian creativity also gave rise to another potent naval weapon: the unmanned maritime drone, essentially a high-speed, pilotless boat packed with explosives. Ukrainian authorities publicly announced the push to develop such weapons in November 2022.

The first Russian vessel believed to have been targeted with a maritime drone was another heavy transport landing ship, the Olenegorsky Gorniyak. On loan from the Northern Fleet, the Gorniyak was seriously damaged on August 4, 2023, when it was targeted in Novorossiisk, a Black Sea port about 425 kilometers east of Sevastopol.

Three months later, Ukraine's military intelligence claimed that two other landing ships were damaged and possibly sunk near Chornomorske, on Crimea's west coast.

February was a particularly cruel month for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. On February 1, the guided missile corvette Ivanovets was attacked and sunk as it stood at anchor near the western Crimean settlement of Okunivka. Grainy black-and-white video released by Ukrainian military intelligence shows the Ivanovets listing and then sinking below the surface, stern up. A spectacular series of explosions suggests the

ship's magazine detonated.

Ukraine followed up 13 days later with the purported sinking of the Tsezar Kunikov, which, like the Novocherkassk, had escaped the March 2022 attack on Berdyansk. If confirmed, the Kunikov would be the fifth such landing ship – known as the Ropucha-class – to have been put out of commission by Ukraine.

The Kremlin declined to comment on the sinkings, deferring to Russia's Defense Ministry, which has said nothing.

On February 15, multiple Russian war bloggers reported that the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Adm. Viktor Sokolov, had been stripped of his duties.

The head of Ukraine's military intelligence agency, Kyrylo Budanov, said later that the homegrown Ukrainian drone called the MAGURA-V was responsible for the attack.

## 'The Russian navy is far from beaten'

Russia's other fleets – the Northern Fleet and the Pacific Fleet – remain potent tools for the Kremlin. Russian ships have played a key role in ferrying personnel and weaponry to Syria, where Russian forces helped tip the scales in favor of the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad.

# Reporters...

(Continued from page 7)

the inclination of Ukraine's allies to further supply the needed long-range missiles and other munitions.

That Ukraine should take up an active strategy of defense seems contrary to the confidence that flourished throughout the country in early 2023 after impressive Ukrainian victories in Kharkiv and Kher-son. Although some will surely view this

Its submarines, particularly its nuclear-capable ballistic missile ships, are powerful, stealthy and arguably a match for the other submarine fleets, including the U.S. Navy.

"For all of its losses since the start of the war, the Russian Navy is far from beaten, and still presents a significant challenge to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] navies," Mr. Plunkett said. "So no, the Russian Navy is far from dead, even as it has suffered in the Black Sea."

The loss of five landing ships like the Tsezar Kunikov would sharply limit the Russian military's ability to ferry heavy equipment like tanks or armored personnel carriers, as well as men and supplies, to shorelines on the Ukrainian mainland and – a bigger problem for Russia – to Crimea. If the bridge linking Crimea to Russia is destroyed or damaged, that poses a potential risk for Russian forces on the peninsula.

But while the Russian fleet's losses may have curtailed its operations, they certainly have not ended its threat.

On February 15, at least two sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles were fired at Ukrainian targets from somewhere near Novorossiisk, according to Ukraine's military.

Still, the Ukrainian achievements are both a moral victory and a broad tactical victory: Russia's Black Sea operations have been markedly affected, forcing the fleet to sail further away from Crimea and the shores of mainland Ukraine.

"Ukraine's success at sea has little effect on the course of the ground war, and it certainly won't win the ground war. But it has created an incredibly important economic lifeline that can only offer Kyiv a greater chance at holding out longer," Mr. Petersen said.

Using sea-launched cruise missiles like the Kalibr, which has a 1,500-kilometer range, Russian ships can still pound Ukrainian land targets, said Mr. Plunkett. But the ships have to fire from further away, giving Ukrainian defense extra time to warn civilians and track the missiles.

"Ukraine has prosecuted a classic asymmetric campaign against what was a significantly stronger opponent," he said. "Ukraine identified weaknesses in the Russian operations and then systematically and consistently applied pressure to them."

And the significance is not just limited to the Black Sea. In the Red Sea, cargo ships have been attacked and threatened by Huthi rebels in Yemen, prompting U.S. and British warships and fighter jets to respond, firing on multiple targets in Yemen.

The Huthis don't have a navy.

In Taiwan, which a growing and increasingly forceful China considers to be a renegade province that will eventually be reincorporated into the Chinese state, experts say military planners are also likely watching closely for tips and tactics about how to thwart a possible Chinese amphibious invasion one day.

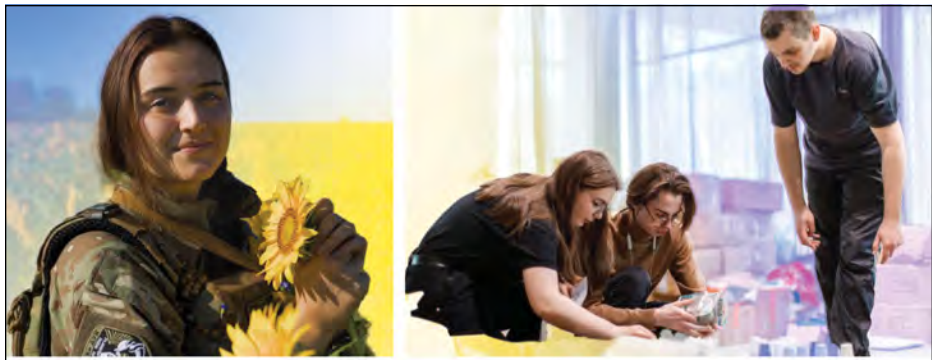
"Implications elsewhere are significant," Mr. Petersen said.

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position as gloomy or even defeatist, it accurately reflects the present realities of the war and epitomizes the most feasible avenue to future success.

Russia has prepared itself for a long war and is buoyed by increasing signs of weakness among Ukraine's Western partners. To defeat Putin and end the threat posed by Russia's resurrected imperialism, Ukraine and its international partners must pause their singular offensive strategies and focus on a more solid long-term strategy for this monumental mission.





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## U.K. announces...

(Continued from page 1)

key links in Putin's plan to make Russia a major LNG player.

The sanctions also target a Turkish company involved in the supply of electronics, three electronics companies based in China, Russia's state-run diamond giant Alrosa and its CEO, and companies active in Russia's oil and mining industries.

The sanctions come a day after the European Union approved its own package of expanded sanctions, including bans on nearly 200 entities and individuals accused of helping Moscow procure weapons or of involvement in kidnapping Ukrainian children.

U.S. President Joe Biden has said the United States will announce a package of tough new sanctions on February 23 against Russia over the death in prison of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

### Horrific cost

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said that Russia's nearly two-year-old invasion of Ukraine has caused immense suffering, with civilians paying a horrendous price as tens of thousands were killed and wounded, while millions were displaced and subjected to bad treatment.

In a statement issued on February 22, two days before the second anniversary of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Mr. Turk said the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) had verified 30,457 civilian casualties during the war – 10,582 killed and 19,875 injured, adding that the actual numbers were likely to be considerably higher.

"Russia's full-scale armed attack on Ukraine, which is about to enter its third year with no end in sight, continues to

cause serious and widespread human rights violations, destroying lives and livelihoods," Mr. Turk said.

The invasion "has exacted a horrific human cost, inflicting immense suffering on millions of civilians," he added.

The HRMMU documented summary executions, widespread torture and arbitrary detentions of civilians by Russian troops as well as forced disappearances and other human rights violations, the statement said.

Additionally, the United Nations migration agency said on February 22 that more than 14.6 million people, or 40 percent of Ukraine's population, will depend on some type of humanitarian assistance this year, while millions of Ukrainian refugees abroad also require assistance.

The Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that 2.2 million refugees were currently in Ukraine's neighboring countries, while a total of nearly 6.5 million are refugees globally.

Some 3.7 million people have been displaced inside Ukraine, families are still separated, and children left homeless, the IOM said in a statement that also called on the international community to step up its efforts to help the Ukrainian civilians affected by the war.

"We count on increased support from donors and local partners to meet the challenges that lie ahead in providing a better life for Ukrainians," IOM Director-General Amy Pope said.

(With reporting by Reuters)

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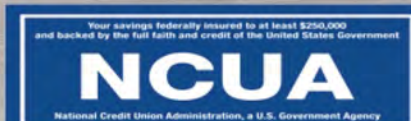
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# Largest exhibit of Maria Prymachenko's work goes on display at The Ukrainian Museum

## The Ukrainian Museum

NEW YORK – The Ukrainian Museum announced an exhibition of renowned Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko's work, entitled "Maria Prymachenko: Glory to Ukraine," which will be open until the April 7.

The largest exhibition of her work – and the first held outside of Europe – "Maria Prymachenko: Glory to Ukraine" is a tribute to her resounding legacy and a testament to the unbreakable spirit of Ukrainian identity.

On February 27, 2022, just three days into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces destroyed a museum in Ivankiv, a village near Kyiv, where Prymachenko's works were stored and exhibited. It was the first of many museums and historical monuments that Russia has destroyed since the war began.

The Ukrainian Museum in New York immediately decided to mount an exhibition of Prymachenko's works to allow the world to see what Pablo Picasso saw when he attended an exhibition of her paintings at the 1937 Paris World's Fair and said, "I bow down before the artistic miracle of this brilliant Ukrainian."

An icon of Ukrainian culture, identity, resilience and tradition, Prymachenko



Maria Prymachenko's "My Sweetheart Fell in Love with the Foreman"

(1909-1997) is one of Ukraine's most celebrated artists. She was born and lived most of her life in the village of Bolotnia, near Chernobyl. Across her 60-year career, Prymachenko's work drew on her deep connection with nature and rich cultural heritage.

Despite having no formal art training, she possessed an innate artistic talent that became evident from a young age, said Peter Doroshenko, director of The Ukrainian Museum and curator of the exhibition. She developed a distinctive style that was deeply rooted in Ukrainian folklore and mythology, he said.

"She drew inspiration from folk tales and traditions passed down through generations, weaving them into a visual tapestry that celebrates the beauty and mysticism of Ukrainian folklore," he said. "Her use of vibrant colors and intricate details brings her subjects to life, creating a captivating visual experience that engages all our senses."

Prymachenko is widely known for her brilliantly colored and inventive scenes of animals – lions, bears, birds, horses and strange behemoths – covered in riotously hued, almost psychedelic patterns. She believed that animals encompass the joy intrinsic to Ukrainian mythology and was inspired by her own small farm.

"Her vibrant, densely populated compositions depict an array of fantastic creatures, mythical beasts and ethereal landscapes, all infused with a sense of enchantment and spiritualism," Mr. Doroshenko said. "Each painting seems to transport the viewer to a world that exists somewhere between reality and fantasy, evoking emotions of wonder, awe, and curiosity."

"It is impossible not to be inspired and enchanted by the unique world she created through her art," Mr. Doroshenko said.

At first glance, her works appear primitive, traditional and unassuming, but a deeper look into her animals, beasts and gardens transforms these figures into representations of political leaders, criticism of the Soviet Union and reactions to social issues in Ukraine: they show the trauma of war, anti-war and anti-nuclear statements, the Chernobyl disaster, and even satires of Soviet leaders and collective farms. Paired with her village lifestyle, her humble



Courtesy of the Ukrainian Museum

Maria Prymachenko's "War is A terrible Beast" (1968).

appearance allowed her to bypass Soviet authorities – to be one of the few Ukrainian artists of her time to survive Stalin's purges.

The exhibition demonstrates the diversity of her prolific practice. It features over 100 paintings, unique ceramic works, wooden objects, embroidered shirts and ritual cloths. All of the artworks have been retrieved from Kyiv – many of which have never been shown before and are making their premiere at The Ukrainian Museum.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Rodovid Press in Kyiv is publishing a 220-page exhibition catalog, the first such publication in both English and Ukrainian.

## About Maria Prymachenko

Prymachenko (January 12, 1909-August 18, 1997) was born into a humble farming family and spent the majority of her life in the village of Bolotnia, in Kyiv Oblast, just 19 miles from Chernobyl. She contracted polio and was left bedridden for much of her childhood, which led her to learn the fine arts of painting, embroidery and pysanka writing – the Ukrainian tradition of decorating Easter eggs – during this time.

In 1936, her paintings were featured at the First Republican Exhibition of Folk Art, which was shown in Moscow, Leningrad

and Warsaw, and in 1937 her works were exhibited at the Paris World's Fair. Subsequent exhibitions took place across the former Soviet Union, including in Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, as well as in France and Canada. One of Ukraine's most beloved artists, her work has appeared on the country's stamps and coins.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared 2009 the Year of Prymachenko.

The Ukrainian Museum, located in New York's East Village, is the largest art institution outside of Ukraine that has been highlighting Ukrainian art and culture for the past 46 years. Seminal exhibitions have included "Alexander Archipenko: Vision and Continuity," along with "Staging the Ukrainian Avant-Garde of the 1910s and 1920s." The museum holds over 10,000 artworks in its collection by artists including Alexander Archipenko, David Burliuk, Sonia Delaunay and Alexandra Exter.

The Ukrainian Museum is located at 222 East 6th Street (between Second Avenue and The Bowery) in New York. It can be reached by calling (212) 228-0110 or emailing [info@ukrainianmuseum.org](mailto:info@ukrainianmuseum.org). The museum's website address is [www.ukrainianmuseum.org](http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org).

## Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

Deshchysti (acting foreign affairs minister); Oleksandr Shlapak (finance minister); Pavlo Sheremeta (economy minister); Stepan Kubiv (chairman, National Bank of Ukraine); Pavlo Petrenko (minister of justice); Serhiy Kvit (minister of education); Liudmyla Denysova (social policy minister); Yevhen Nishchuk (minister of culture); Andrii Mokhnyk (ecology minister); Dmytro Bulatov (minister of sports and youth); Ihor Shvaika (agriculture minister); Maksym Burbak (infrastructure minister); Tetiana Chornovol (chief of the Anti-Corruption Bureau); Yegor Sobolev (chairman of the Lustration Committee); and Viktoriia Siumar (deputy secretary, National Security and Defense Council).

Dr. Olha Bohomolets was nominated as vice prime minister for humanitarian affairs, but she declined the nomination, citing a lack of transparency within the Ministry of Health and a lack of a clearly defined mandate of authority.

Source: "Interim government to be led by Yatsenyuk," by Zenon Zawada, *The Ukrainian Weekly*, March 2, 2014.



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## Putin's...

(Continued from page 5)

fight Ukraine. Russia never had to make an enemy of the West. That's the fundamental mistake.

**RFE/RL:** What I infer from what you are telling me is that this strategic defeat of Russia, that was so much talked about around this time last year in Munich, and then kind of died off, that you still believe that a strategic defeat has been inflicted on Russia?

**Mr. Snyder:** Well, we can all lose. See, everyone thinks that either Russia loses or the West loses. But we can both lose; everyone can lose. Russia can lose to China, and the West can be weakened as a result of Russia's local victory. We can end up with a world where everybody's worse off. That's also possible.

So, I think Putin inflicted Russia's strategic defeat a while ago, by himself. The question is whether that strategic defeat is then shared across other countries: Eastern European, Western European and North American countries. That's how I see it. He made a big mistake for Russia. And then the question is, whether the costs of that will continue to spread out around the world.

**RFE/RL:** So, who is winning in this grand strategy game? Putin might be a loser, but who else is losing?

**Mr. Snyder:** I think it's a great question. The winners in all of this can just be a very few people, right? The winners can be the people who run tyrannical systems of different kinds – winners can be a few people in Tehran, a few people in Beijing, a few people in Moscow, and the losers can be almost everyone. So, if Putin can win his war in Ukraine, the winners won't be the Russian people, the winners will be a few people around Putin, including himself.

It's because I think the larger issue, which goes beyond geopolitics, is the question of what sort of systems we have. The kinds of systems where only a few people do well, or the kind of systems where lots of people are free and have a chance of doing well. And it is fundamentally about that.

And humans, we know from history that humans can do it either way: You can be a country which is free and cease being a country which is free. That's the oldest history we know, I mean, one of the oldest histories is the history of ancient Greece. Human beings are very adaptable. They can be free, and then a generation later, slavery can seem normal again. And I think that's the ultimate question.

So, in that sense, you know, humanity can lose, because the possibility of having a normal system, which is democratic, where there's the rule of law, where your children have some chance of having a more interesting life, that can all go away.

**RFE/RL:** There is an interview of yours in Der Spiegel, roughly one year ago, where you said the following: "We need to do all we can to make sure Ukraine has a very decisive battlefield victory this year. We need to supply them with as many weapons as we can to save lives on both sides and get Moscow to back down faster. The only way to protect lives on both sides is to end this war, and the only way to end it is to help Ukraine win." I think you'll agree that this hasn't quite happened, to put it mildly, so where do we stand now in Ukraine?

**Mr. Snyder:** We're in the same situation. I mean, of course, that didn't happen. But it was still the only way to end the war. And it's also still the only way to win the war. Wars are unpredictable, and they tend to go on for a long time. And it's very important to manage your own emotions and not think, well, because we lost a battle, we lost

the whole war.

My analysis is fundamentally the same. It's just that now, because we've taken longer to give the Ukrainians what they needed, the war is going to last longer. But the overall logic is still the same. I mean, I think in 2024, it's a matter of Europeans helping Ukrainians to hold the line, and so that in 2025 something like a victory will be possible.

**RFE/RL:** Europeans? With the omission of the United States?

**Mr. Snyder:** I hope the Americans come through, but if you're a European you have to be thinking: If the U.S. doesn't help, what do we do? What is the required minimum that we do to make sure the Ukrainians don't fail?

**RFE/RL:** Do you get the impression sometimes that the West is not willing to win?

**Mr. Snyder:** Yes, I get the impression that we have problems with victory. I think that's a very profound question. I think there's one line of analysis, which is more of a German line of analysis, which says: We shouldn't win because the Russians will be upset. And I think that's a mistake, because, of course, Germans are right, that you have to deal with Russia, but a Russia that's been defeated is going to be an easier Russia to deal with.

And then there's an American – not even a line of thinking, but a kind of paradigm – which says: We don't want to win, we want to be on the right side. But being on the right side is not enough in a war. It may be enough in a classroom or in a debate, but you need to win. And I think you can't win unless you talk about winning. You can lose either way. But I think the absence of the category of victory has made the planning much harder. It leads to various kinds of wishful thinking about how somehow this will all go away.

**RFE/RL:** That is exactly what I wanted to ask you about. With how things are going at the front, what does a Ukrainian victory – whether full or partial – look like?

**Mr. Snyder:** So, Ukrainian victory is the same thing as a Russian defeat, right? You lose a war when politically you can no longer do it. That's Clausewitz, that's the fundamental definition of victory: making your opponent unable to continue for whatever reason. Defeat means politically you can't continue, for whatever reason. So, the United States couldn't continue in Vietnam, the Soviet Union couldn't continue in Afghanistan.

**RFE/RL:** But Putin seems to be on board with that, making sure that he'll outlast others, he'll be the last one in the game.

**Mr. Snyder:** Yeah, exactly. And in that sense, he's correct. But that doesn't mean that he has to win. It just it means that he understands that part of the situation correctly. But a Russia which is already mobilized can't mobilize. The Germany which was completely mobilized is the Germany that lost the war, right? And this full mobilization is the last thing you do before you lose, and Russia is totally mobilized. We're not. And that means that Russia is doing what it should be doing from Putin's point of view. But it also means that Russia is vulnerable.

**RFE/RL:** Does that mean Russia has peaked?

**Mr. Snyder:** Well, I think it's peaked in terms of mobilization of manpower and some resources. There's a big question of how Russia is getting hold of so much Western technology. And that's something where the West has to be much more attentive, because they're still manufacturing weapons with Western microchips all the time. And so they could get better at that,

or they could get worse, and that depends on us.

**RFE/RL:** And finally I wanted to ask you about Georgia and Moldova – two countries that unlike, say, the Baltic states, don't have the luxury of the security umbrella. They don't even have a security hat, so to say. What does the war spell for those two?

**Mr. Snyder:** I think that's an easy question. Georgia and Moldova are in a special category. These are countries where Russian military experimentation has already taken place. And should Ukraine fall, God forbid, Moldova's strategic position is, of course, disastrous. And Georgia is, of course, further away from anyone's concerns than the rest of Eastern Europe.

**RFE/RL:** For maybe unfair but understandable reasons?

**Mr. Snyder:** Well, I'm glad you said that, not me. So there's sort of two different lines of analysis here. One is, if Ukraine falls, what are the next easiest pieces for Putin? Which would be Moldova, maybe Georgia. And then there's also, if Ukraine falls, the West is so demoralized that you then poke

into NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], because you think you can succeed, by attacking a Baltic state.

**RFE/RL:** So, you don't go for the easy pickings, because they're not going anywhere?

**Mr. Snyder:** You can get them five years from now. So those are two different ways of thinking. If Putin were in that position where the West was demoralized, those are two different lines of thinking: One might be that he would think, well, you know, we can clean up in the Caucasus, or we can go and I can humiliate [NATO], I can complete this operation. Which, by the way, I think would be a mistake on his part.

But those are two different ways of thinking, which are both possible. And those are, of course, like two of the 100 reasons why Ukraine has to win.

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## Water shortages...

(Continued from page 2)

droughts, which the Kremlin claims are now easing, and poor water use patterns, which are currently being rectified. Russia insists that it is already on course to solve Crimea's water problems forever (Kerch.fm, February 13; Vesti Krim, February 13 [1], [2]). Reports in the last several weeks, however, show little support for Moscow's arguments, a reality even Russian commentators are now beginning to acknowledge (Kerch.fm, February 13). These reports in Russian state-controlled media show that ever more villages are being forced to do without water for days at a time and that those shortages are now extending into major cities, including Feodosiya and Sevastopol (Krasnaya vesna, February 12; Krimskoye Informatsionnoye Agentstvo, February 13; SevastopolMedia, February 13, February 13; RIA Novosti Crimea, February 15).

These shutdowns are already having an economic impact and are rapidly creating a humanitarian disaster. This crisis predominantly affects the Crimean Tatars, who live primarily in rural areas, but also the civilian population, especially its ethnic Ukrainian segment. These groups are so highly affected due to Moscow, not surprisingly, taking measures to ensure that Russians who have moved onto the peninsula, either as part of the occupation forces or to support them, will have enough water (for a comprehensive discussion of this aspect of Russian policies, see Crimean Tatar Resource Center, July 2022). There have been small but continuing protests across Crimea about the water shortages. Still, the most important consequence has been the flight of Crimea's residents, first from the villages to the cities and then for migration to Ukraine or elsewhere. Occupation authorities have sought to limit both, but have only had moderate success. Some Crimean villages already stand empty, and the departure of Crimeans from the peninsula has been hidden in statistical reports by the arrival of so many Russian troops and support personnel (Krim.Realii, February 10).

It is unlikely that anything close to the estimated 500,000 victims of the water shortages will be able to leave, given Moscow's police powers on the occupied peninsula and uncertainty among Crimeans about where they could go. That does not mean, however, that the failure to meet the demands of the Crimean population for water will not have serious consequences

for all concerned. While some in Moscow may not be opposed to the flight of ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars from the peninsula as a means of Russification, few inside the Kremlin are going to be entirely comfortable either with the international embarrassment inflicted on Russia by the departure of a fifth of the population from "Our Crimea" or the threat to Moscow's control posed by such a destabilizing flight from the peninsula. The occupation authorities will likely be forced to divert resources to limit movement out of Crimea in such a case, but protests are sure to follow if the peninsula's population is unable to flee to the cities or out of Crimea.

At the same time, many in Kyiv may welcome this threat to Russian control, while others will be concerned about the humanitarian disaster caused by Russian policies. Many are recognizing the very real limits on Ukraine's ability to exploit the crisis. Officials in Kyiv are sure to be worried about the risk posed by large numbers of people fleeing Crimea. There is a risk that the volume of such a departure could place impossible burdens on the Ukrainian government. Likewise, given Putin's willingness to violate international norms, there is an all-too-real possibility that Moscow might even intentionally take steps to provoke such a flight. This could offer the Kremlin both a way to Russify Crimea and a means by which additional pressure could be put on Ukraine, especially in the near term, to negotiate an end to the war on Russian terms.

The pro-Ukraine segment of the international community is not going to escape from the consequences of this crisis either. The West must be sensitive that a humanitarian disaster on the occupied Ukrainian peninsula may spread far beyond that territory. At the same time, Western governments must be aware that they will likely be forced to pick up the costs of overcoming this catastrophe both in the near and longer terms. In the near term, the West is expected to be compelled to focus on and call attention to the dangers this development represents for Ukraine – and be prepared to help Kyiv overcome a humanitarian disaster. In the longer term, it likely means that the West must be ready to help Ukraine address Crimea's water problems once it recovers Crimea. Otherwise, the disaster the Russians have inflicted will cast a long-term shadow on Ukraine and the world.

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## NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

ing a visit to Ukraine's northern battle sector to visit troops. "They're taking advantage of the delays in [aid shipments] to Ukraine," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address, referring to his urgent pleas to Western partners for additional artillery shells and other offensive and defensive weapons. Mr. Zelenskyy is fresh off his visit to the Munich Security Conference, where he told allies that "Ukrainians have proven we can force Russia to retreat. ... Our actions are limited only by the sufficiency and length of the range of our strength. ... [The] Avdiivka situation proves this." Mr. Zelenskyy on February 19 visited the frontline northeastern city of Kupyansk, where

he met with brigade leaders at a command post. The frontline visit came hours after Russia said it took control of Ukraine's largest coke plant in Avdiivka, where Kyiv last week acknowledged defeat by pulling the last of its troops. The capture of Avdiivka, formerly a city of around 30,000 but now largely leveled and deserted, in the eastern Donetsk region marks Russia's most significant territorial gain in nine months in its nearly two-year full-scale invasion. Ukrainian forces cited Russian attacks overnight that appeared to be trying to grab further nearby territory and separate offensives in the northeast and south of the country. Russia's Defense Ministry said early on February 19 that its "'Center' grouping of troops, taking the offensive, took full control of the coke plant in Avdiivka." It also claimed to have gained ground around the

city, which Kyiv said last week it had withdrawn from to save the lives of Ukrainian troops. Images appeared to show Russia's tricolor flag flying over the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant. Meanwhile, Ukraine's western military command said early on February 19 that the Russian Army had tried again repeatedly overnight to overtake Ukrainian positions in areas around Zaporizhia. Local officials reported increased shelling of the city on February 17, leaving thousands of households without heat. And the Ukrainian General Staff said Russian forces had mounted 10 attacks on Ukrainian positions in Robotyne, in the Zaporizhia region, a day later. They said Ukrainian troops had repelled the attacks. RFE/RL cannot independently confirm battlefield accounts by either side in areas of the heaviest fighting. Power in Kharkiv was cut off to around 9,500 people after shelling by Russian forces, according to the Ukrainian Energy Ministry. Russia's Defense Ministry on February 19 accused Ukraine of poisoning two Moscow-installed leaders of two regions falsely claimed as part of Russia

and annexed in 2022 but said both men had survived. It said the governor of Russian-held territory in Luhansk, Leonid Pasechnik, had been poisoned in December and the leader of Russian-held territory in Kherson, Vladimir Saldo, was poisoned in August 2022. Kyiv is thought to have mounted increasingly daring operations targeting Russian-appointed officials in Ukrainian regions under Russian control since the early months of the war. On the diplomatic front, Japan said it has initiated talks on an investment treaty with Ukraine and said it would maintain support for the reconstruction of the war-torn country. The details of negotiations were not provided, but Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said in Tokyo that Japan would provide 1.25 billion euros (\$1.35 billion) to support Japanese investments in Ukraine. Japan is forbidden to provide direct military aid by its post-World War II constitution. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by Reuters)

(Continued on page 15)

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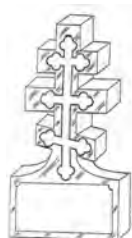
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## Panel focuses...

(Continued from page 8)

Ukrainian children.

According to the Children of War report, only 388 of 19,546 children deported to Russia have been returned to Ukraine. These numbers are likely very low, considering that after February 24, 2022, approximately 3.6 million Ukrainians were forcibly deported to Russia, including hundreds of thousands of children who remain unaccounted for.

In March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued two arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his appointee in charge of children's welfare. The challenges for Ukraine remain how to return the stolen children and how many Ukrainian women and children will return from abroad to avoid a demographic catastrophe.

Kristina Hook, an assistant professor of conflict management at Kennesaw State University's School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding and Development, spoke about stopping Russia's genocide in Ukraine using atrocity prevention tools from research, policy and law perspectives.

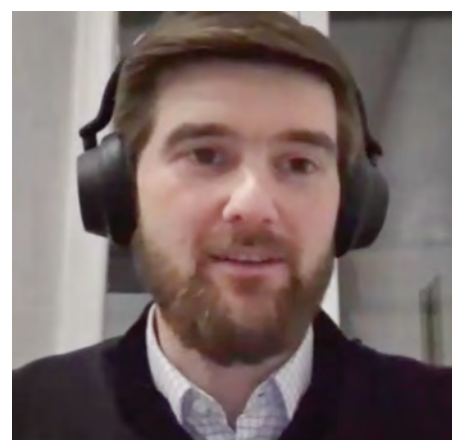
Dr. Hook has developed her expertise as an anthropologist and scholar-practitioner,

who specializes in genocide and mass atrocity prevention, emerging technologies and disinformation, post-conflict reconstruction, and war-related environmental degradation, working in more than 25 countries, including across Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, East Africa, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.

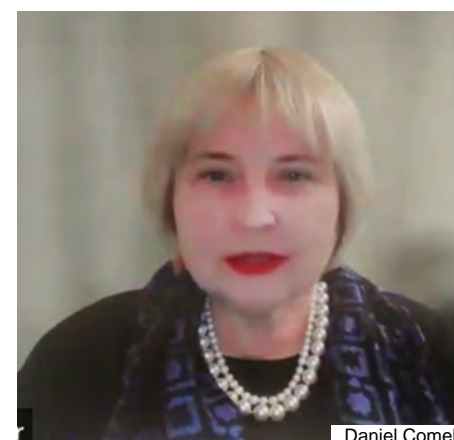
She served as a principal author of the July 2023 report for the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights in Washington, D.C., that documented Russia's escalating genocidal violence against Ukrainians, pinpointing instances of escalating rhetoric and ongoing public incitement of genocide, and the legal duty to prevent genocide by all means possible.

The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act requires the U.S. State Department to monitor such events around the world and devise a response strategy. The genocide will not stop on its own, she said. The United States and European partners must step up aid to Ukraine.

But one question was left unanswered: Does this commitment to undertake and prevent the crime of genocide mean anything if the United States simply looks away when the party accused of international crimes is a member of the U.N. Security Council?



Dmytro Koval



Elizabeth Zechenter



Kateryna Krakhmalova



Kristina Hook



# NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

## Blogger reportedly commits suicide

Friends of noted Russian blogger Aleksandr Morozov said on February 21 that he committed suicide after citing unnamed sources online saying that Russian troops might have lost up to 16,000 troops while fighting for the Ukrainian city of Avdiivka. A day earlier, Mr. Morozov, who has been fighting alongside Russia-backed separatists and Russian troops in Ukraine's east since 2014, wrote on Telegram that his military commanders forced him to delete the post about Russian losses. On February 17, Ukrainian forces withdrew from Avdiivka after four months of a brutal battle with Russian soldiers. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

## Some 60 Russian troops reportedly killed

A Ukrainian strike on a training ground in Moscow-occupied Donetsk has killed at least 60 Russian troops, the BBC's Russian Service quoted sources as saying. Russian soldiers from the 36th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade had been lined up and were waiting for the arrival of Maj. Gen. Oleg Moiseyev, the commander of the 29th Russian Army, when the strike occurred on February 20, the report said. Ukraine has not commented on the report. Pro-Russian social media outlets posted videos and photos purportedly showing dozens of uniformed dead bodies, accusing Mr. Moiseyev of making soldiers stand in line waiting for his arrival when they were hit. Meanwhile, three civilians were killed and 13 others were wounded by Russian shelling of three eastern Ukrainian regions, local authorities reported on February 21. One person was killed in Kramatorsk, in the Donetsk region, while eight others were wounded, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said. In the Kharkiv region, two farmers were instantly killed when their car was struck in the village of Petropavlivka in the Kupiansk district, while one woman was wounded, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said. In the Kherson region, four people were wounded in Russian shelling, mortar and drone strikes, local authorities reported. Air defense forces shot down 13 out of 19 drones launched by Russia at four Ukrainian regions early on February 21, Ukraine's Air Force reported, adding that one S-300 missile and four Kh-22 cruise missiles were also destroyed. The drones were downed in the Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Donetsk regions, the air force said. It said that some of the remaining six drones did not reach their targets. The four Kh-22 cruise missiles were shot down in the central Poltava region. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

## Ransomware group disrupted

U.S. and British officials on February 20 announced that they had infiltrated and disrupted a Russian-linked ransomware cybercrime group known as LockBit, arresting two Russian nationals in Poland and Ukraine, and indicting two others in the United States. "We have hacked the hackers," Graeme Biggar, director-general of the National Crime Agency (NCA), said at a news conference in London, calling the LockBit ransomware syndicate "the world's most harmful cybercrime group" and saying it extracted \$120 million from thousands of victims around the world in the four years since its founding. Mr. Biggar said the NCA worked with the FBI, Europol and agencies from nine other countries in Operation Cronos, which authorities said gained access to LockBit's systems by taking control of the gang's infrastructure and seizing their source code. Hours before the announcement, the front page of LockBit's site on the so-called dark web was replaced with the words "this site is now under control of law enforcement" alongside the flags

of Britain, the United States and several other nations. The United States on February 20 also unsealed an indictment against two Russian nationals, Artur Sungatov and Ivan Kondratyev, bringing to five the number of Russians it has indicted in connection with LockBit. The U.S. Treasury Department also imposed sanctions against Messrs. Sungatov and Kondratyev. In May 2023, the United States offered a \$10 million reward for information leading to the arrest of one of the other indicted Russians, Mikhail Pavlovich Matveev. Two others have been taken into custody – one in Canada and one in the United States. The U.S. Justice Department said the law enforcement agencies involved in Operation Cronos had seized control of numerous websites used by LockBit to connect to the organization's infrastructure and had taken control of servers used by LockBit administrators. Lockbit was a "ransomware-as-a-service" operation, which cybersecurity experts say is a model that leases software and methods to others on the dark web, where they pitch their services for use in the extortion schemes. In a typical ransomware cyberattack, the cybercriminals hack into an entity's system and steal or freeze sensitive data, refusing to release it until a ransom is paid. LockBit and its affiliates targeted governments, major companies, schools and hospitals, causing billions of dollars of damage and extracting tens of millions in ransoms from victims, officials said. Mr. Biggar said the network had been behind 25 percent of all cyberattacks in the past year. Those targeted have included Britain's Royal Mail, U.S. aircraft manufacturer Boeing and a Canadian children's hospital. Officials told reporters the gang targeted 2,000 victims worldwide, but also noted that the actual number is probably larger because victims generally resist admitting publicly that they have been targeted and have paid the ransom. Mr. Biggar said a "large concentration" of the cybercriminals are in Russia and are Russian-speaking, indicating "some tolerance of cybercriminality within Russia." But he said law enforcement agencies had not seen any direct support for LockBit from the Russian state. The NCA has previously warned that ransomware remains one of the biggest cyberthreats facing Britain and urges people and organizations not to pay ransoms if they are targeted. (RFE/RL, with reporting by AFP, AP and Reuters)

## Death of Russian defector confirmed

Ukrainian intelligence spokesman Andriy Yusov on February 19 confirmed to RFE/RL that Russian pilot Maksim Kuzminov, who hijacked a Russian military Mi-8 helicopter for Ukraine last year, was found dead in Spain. Mr. Yusov did not provide any details. Spanish media reports said Mr. Kuzminov's body was found last week with gunshot wounds. Mr. Kuzminov made headlines in August last year after the Ukrainian secret service said it had recruited him to fly the military chopper from Russia to Ukraine, a mission the man successfully carried out. Mr. Kuzminov's two copilots were "neutralized" during the operation. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

## Dual U.S.-Russian citizen arrested

Russia's FSB security service said a woman holding both U.S. and Russian citizenship was arrested in the central city of Yekaterinburg on suspicion of treason after she was accused of raising funds for Ukraine's military. The FSB said in a statement on February 20 that it had "suppressed the illegal activities of a 33-year-old resident of Los Angeles, who has dual citizenship of Russia and the United States and was involved in providing financial assistance to a foreign state in activities directed against the security of our country." It added that since February 2022 the suspect allegedly had been collecting

money spent mainly on "tactical medical supplies, equipment, weapons and ammunition." The FSB did not name the woman detained in Yekaterinburg, the city in the Urals where U.S. journalist Evan Gershkovich was arrested last year on espionage charges that can carry a sentence of up to life in prison. However, using information gleaned from a video the FSB published and social media, Russian news outlet Mediazona reported the woman's name is Ksenia Karelina. Washington has repeatedly criticized Russia for targeting and arresting U.S. citizens to exchange them for Russian nationals being held in U.S. prisons. Mr. Gershkovich and former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan are both being held in Russia on espionage charges they and the U.S. government reject as politically motivated.

While Mr. Gershkovich is still in pretrial detention, Mr. Whelan was sentenced to 16 years in prison in June 2020. A third U.S. citizen, RFE/RL journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, who also holds Russian citizenship, has been in pretrial detention on a charge of violating the so-called foreign agent law. The U.S. government and her employer say the charge is in reprisal for her work. Indictments for treason reached a record number in Russia last year. According to official data, the courts have received 63 treason cases, 33 of which have already resulted in convictions. Human rights activists say they expect the number will be even higher this year as Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine reaches the two-year mark on February 24. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)



## Sviatoslav Boris Makarenko

passed away peacefully on February 9th 2024  
at home surrounded by his children.

Born on March 10th 1953 in Philadelphia, PA to Boris Ivanovich Makarenko and Lidia Ichtiarowa, Sviatoslav spent the majority of his childhood learning the canons and traditions of Byzantine iconography from his father. As a teenager, Sviatoslav started working in churches and learning the fundamentals of monumental art. He studied under famed Ukrainian artist and iconographer Petro Cholodny while working alongside accomplished Ukrainian artists Sviatoslav Hordynsky and Myron Bilinsky. Sviatoslav became well versed in the design and composition of iconography, ornamentation, stained glass, and mosaics. In 1974, Sviatoslav graduated with a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and in 1976 he officially co-founded Makarenko Studios (now Ecclesiastical Art & Design) with his father. Together, they completed cathedral and church interiors throughout the United States, Canada, and Australia.



While working on the interior artwork of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Chicago in 1977, Sviatoslav met the love of his life, Oksana Ferens. They were married on October 3rd 1981 in New York, and settled in Yonkers to raise their family. Sviat would fondly recall these years as some of the happiest in his life, in a home full of love, laughter, good energy, and great friends.

Tragically, Sviatoslav lost Oksana suddenly in January 1994, and faced the monumental task of raising his children without his wife and partner. He met this unimaginable challenge with the same incredible strength and fortitude he showed throughout his life, and went on to raise his children with strong cultural ties to their Ukrainian community through music and art while emphasizing the importance of education and independence. For the remainder of his life, Sviatoslav mourned the loss of his beloved wife.

A devoted and loving father, Sviatoslav was heavily involved in his children's lives - never missing a parent teacher conference and always encouraging his children to give their best effort and try new things.

Sviatoslav passed along his knowledge of ecclesiastical art and design to his children, who worked alongside him in churches and cathedrals through their adolescence and teenage years. Over the past seventeen years, Sviatoslav has been working alongside his daughter, Ruslana, in churches and cathedrals throughout the United States and Canada. Together, they continued the studio he founded with his father, Boris, and designed iconography and artwork in countless cathedrals and churches throughout North America.

Through his vast portfolio of work, Sviatoslav enabled thousands of faithful of many denominations to find peace and prayer in their chapels, churches, and cathedrals. While Sviatoslav's legacy lives on in his iconography, ornamentation, stained glass, and mosaics within over 150 churches and places of worship, the legacy he was most proud of lives on through his children.

Sviatoslav is preceded in death by his beloved wife, Oksana, and parents Boris and Lidia; he is survived by his seven children: Rostyslav (Jennifer), Vsevolod, Boyan, Ruslana (Dorian), Zoryana, Yaremiya, Milan, granddaughter Veronica, brother Ihor (Mariola), nephews, and many godchildren.

Parastas was held on Friday, February 16, at the Whalen & Ball Funeral Home in Yonkers, NY. Funeral Liturgy was celebrated by His Eminence Metropolitan Antony on Saturday, February 17, at St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Memorial Church in South Bound Brook NJ. Sviatoslav was laid to rest next to his wife Oksana in St. Andrew Cemetery.

## Memory Eternal!

In lieu of flowers donations in Sviatoslav Makarenko's memory may be made to: *Revived Soldiers Ukraine*: [www.rsukraine.org](http://www.rsukraine.org)



## Kyiv loses...

(Continued from page 1)

shortages from the U.S.

U.S. President Joe Biden's office in particular singled out House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) for stalling further approval of security assistance to Ukraine after he started a recess that was expected to last until February 28 without voting on a bill that included aid to Kyiv that the Senate had passed earlier.

"Every day that Speaker Johnson causes our national security to deteriorate, America loses. And every day that he puts off a clean vote, congressional Republicans' standing with the American people plunges," White House spokesperson Andrew Bates said. "Running away for an early vacation only worsens both problems."

Mr. Kuleba told CNN on February 21 that Ukraine "wouldn't lose Avdiivka if he had received all the required ammunition that we needed to defend it."

In turn, Ukraine's second war-time president characterized Russia's recent success as at most a tactical success without any strategic gain.

"And what they [Russia] could do? Only in this one place. But what for?" Mr. Zelenskyy told Fox News in an exclusive interview from the Kharkiv region. He noted that Ukraine has had success in unblocking Black Sea trade routes, retaking much of the eastern Kharkiv region and regaining 50 percent of territory that was previously occupied.

If the war were to be characterized as one of erosion, then the battle is playing into the Kremlin's favor, as it has more manpower and material.

"Attrition clearly benefits the Kremlin, which cares nothing for losses," the Center for European Policy Analysis wrote this week. "This is not to mention that Russia has been successfully circumventing sanctions and has managed to dramatically increase production of arms. It can fund the war as it continues to receive massive cash inflows from selling its resources on the international market."

## In Munich...

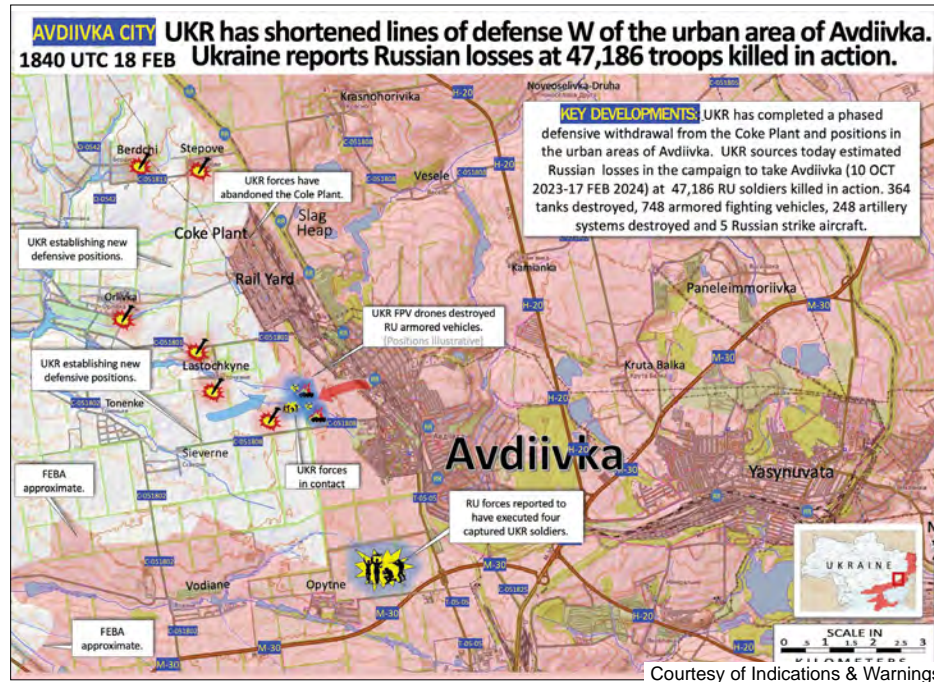
(Continued from page 4)

long, maybe just a few weeks, so why build a factory? But now there is a sense that this is an opportunity."

This also goes quite some way in explaining why Europe is struggling to provide Ukraine with ammunition now. The E.U. optimistically pledged in March last year to deliver 1 million 155 mm artillery shells to the country in a year. Nearly 12 months later, the bloc has provided 524,000 rounds and now promises to reach 1.1 million by the end of this year instead.

But there is more "E.U. spin" on the story. One senior E.U. official who wasn't authorized to speak on the record briefed journalists on background, saying that there is a difference between donating and selling and that the abovementioned figure is just donating. The official also admitted that nobody knows how much ammunition the bloc has sold to Kyiv, as it is an "opaque system" with a lot of confidential information.

That in itself is, however, not the end of the process, as various European countries have tinkered with standards in recent decades so that there isn't any uniform 155 mm shell that fits the artillery – perhaps most amusingly summed up by Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who said that "politicians tick the box and get credit when there is agreement to send something to Ukraine, but on the ground it becomes a massive technical problem to



A map of the middle portion of Donetsk Oblast in Ukraine shows where Russia took over the industrial town of Avdiivka over the past week. It was Moscow's biggest battlefield gain in nine months after earlier conquering Bakhmut in the same region.

Russia currently has 470,000 troops stationed in the occupied part of the country, Vadym Skibitsky, deputy head of Ukraine's defense intelligence, told Interfax-Ukraine news agency. Earlier, defense intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov said that Russia is capable of mobilizing up to 30,000 military personnel a month.

Advances by Moscow's forces are not stopping and they are currently focusing on Robotyne with "increased ... ground attacks ... in southern Ukraine [Zaporizhia Oblast]," British Defense Intelligence said. "Russian forces have intensified attacks across several points of the front line within the last week, [a move] likely intended to stretch Ukrainian forces."

### Sanctions

To further prevent Russia from circumventing sanctions, the European Union and Britain announced new packages of restrictive measures.

A 13th set of E.U. measures were introduced that ban nearly 200 entities and individuals accused of "procuring weapons or

send the right ammo to the right cannon."

And outside the merry diplomatic speed-dating at the Munich Security Conference, a Ukrainian official described the situation on the front line as absolutely dire, with the army shooting "with nothing," meaning less than 2,000 rounds per day compared to Russia's 10,000. The predicted result of this is losing more Ukrainian soldiers and eventually more territory. It was quite telling that Mr. Zelenskyy, when asked by the audience at the conference about the possibility of lowering the draft age from the current 27, elegantly dodged the question.

And this was, in many ways, how the Munich Security Conference this year shaped up: high in rhetoric but lacking in concrete news and outcomes.

While everyone spoke affectionately and emotionally about the loss of Mr. Navalny, pointing the finger solidly at the Kremlin, quite a few leaders quickly dismissed the need to punish Russia with new sanctions over the event. At least some believed that his tragic fate would spur U.S. lawmakers into passing the Ukraine supplement – with some optimistically suggesting a vote will soon reach the floor – but only in March, after the recess, naturally.

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of involvement in kidnapping Ukrainian children." The sanctions limit them from traveling or doing business in the 27-nation union, Reuters reported.

Fifty new sanctions imposed by Britain were announced on February 22 "to diminish [Kremlin dictator Vladimir] Putin's weapons arsenal and war chest," a statement by the U.K. government said.

"These new sanctions also target key sources of Russian revenue, clamping down on metals, diamonds and energy trade, and

## Kremlin seeks...

(Continued from page 2)

in 2016. At the time, this was talked about under the guise that Russia should have its own infrastructure if international certificate providers stopped providing services to Russian internet users (Lenta, February 15, 2016). The invasion of Ukraine served as a perfect excuse to implement the plans.

Within weeks of the invasion, three Russian cryptographers published a paper through the internet's technical governing body, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). They proposed an alternative encryption method for use within Russia known as GOST (IETF, March 2022). Key firms behind the development of GOST and other parts of Russia's parallel certificate and encryption system include sanctioned Sberbank subsidiary Digital Technologies (U.S. Department of the Treasury, April 6, 2022) and Crypto-Pro, which have a history of working with the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) (Trusted.ru, January 28, 2021).

The Russian government began to pressure users to download these certificates to interact with several sites and perform basic functions. These functions included banking and municipal services, as well as requiring domestic web browsers, such as Atom and Yandex, to include the certificates in their software. As a result, in June 2023, estimates from Russia's Central Bank calculated that up to 30 percent of the Russian population had downloaded said certificates (Vedomosti, June 16, 2023). Using these certificates is problematic as it leaves a user's internet traffic susceptible to interception by authorities.

Russia's efforts are running parallel to the large-scale efforts underway to localize as much of the internet infrastructure as possible, thereby creating a sovereign Russian national internet. This would maximize Moscow's control over the system. The Kremlin's National Security Council began to study the idea of creating a sovereign internet in 2017 and passed legislation establishing a groundwork for the project in November 2019. Subsequently,

cutting off funding for Putin's illegal war from every angle," it said.

Washington was also expected to add to the list of additional sanctions on Russia on February 23.

"At President Biden's direction, we will be announcing a major sanctions package on Friday of this week holding Russia accountable for what happened to Mr. [Alexei] Navalny," White House spokesman John Kirby told reporters, referring to the death of the leading Kremlin critic.

Already this week, the U.S. Justice Department announced that it had transferred nearly \$500,000 in frozen Russian assets to Kyiv via Estonia "for the purpose of providing aid to Ukraine."

Last year, the U.S. "provided \$5.4 million in forfeited funds ... to the State Department for the support of Ukrainian war veterans," a statement said.

### European funding

As Congressional funding stalls, Sweden and Denmark announced new military aid packages for Ukraine

Copenhagen said that an additional \$247 million, which includes ammunition and drone equipment, will help buy 15,000 155-millimeter shells out of the 800,000 that the Czech Republic has made available.

Swedish Prime Minister Paul Johnson said that a record \$683 of materiel is being allocated and includes 10 military assault surface crafts, 20 boats, underwater weapons, TOW anti-tank systems, hand grenades, grenade launchers and medical equipment.

Putin's government moved to localize as much necessary infrastructure as possible, alleging that this would be a way to protect the population, should Russia ever be cut off from the broader internet (Kommersant, January 20, 2022).

Russia is using every available lever to pursue its project of a sovereign internet by localizing network infrastructure. Retroactively constructing a complete China-style Great Firewall, however, would not be technically feasible for Russia. China implemented its vast censorship system in the 1990s as the internet was a nascent technology, at a time when chokepoints could still be established. The latest round of testing in Russia for the "sovereign internet" took place in July 2023. Government officials claimed that such tests were successful. Still, media sources reported that Russian users attempting to access websites for various government services, including the Russian Railway, experienced significant slowdowns, which government officials attributed to cyberattacks (RVTI, July 5, 2023).

These moves by the Kremlin are part of a broader campaign by authoritarian states to use technologies to restrict internet freedom and to borrow best practices from one another. Kazakhstan initially attempted to coerce its population to download national TLS certificates in the 2010s, presaging Russia's actions. Iran and Belarus experimented with complete internet blackouts amid anti-government protests in 2020 and 2022 (OpenNET.ru, December 6, 2020). Echoing Moscow's actions, Ankara's Communications Ministry began restricting 16 VPN services in December out of suspicion that they were being used to access censored media (Gazete Duvar, December 20). These draconian policies to crack down on internet freedom raise the specter of a splintered World Wide Web, with an increasing number of internet users no longer able to access information freely.

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## Ukrainian sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

### Kharlan wins gold at Saber World Cup

Elite Ukrainian fencer Olha Kharlan won the gold medal at the 2024 Women's Saber World Cup held in Lima, Peru, on February 9-11. Because Kharlan is currently ranked sixth in the world, she was given direct entry into the main draw. She defeated Hungarian Lisa Pustai (15-11) in the quarterfinal and American Elizabeth Tartakovsky (15-12) in the semifinal. The final bout was a rematch of last year's March World Cup final in Athens, but, unlike that match, this one ended with a most convincing victory for Kharlan by a score of 15-6 over Hungarian Sugar Katinka Batai.

It was Kharlan's 14th gold medal and 31st total medal in fencing competitions at the elite level.

#### Ukrainian government publishes Russian athlete list

On February 5, it was announced that the Ukrainian government released a list of Russian and Belarusian athletes it says have supported the war in Ukraine. The list is Ukraine's response to the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to allow so-called "neutral" athletes to participate in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympic Games. The initiative was disclosed as part of the recent "Play the Game 2024" conference held in Trondheim, Norway.

The extensive list includes current and retired athletes from some 52 sports with brief explanations of an athlete's presence on the list as well as their varying degrees of support for Russia's war on Ukraine. Most of the names on the list are affiliated with the Central Sports Club of the Army (CSKA). CSKA is a massive sports club in Moscow and was responsible for 45 of the 71 medals won by Russian athletes at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

#### Bilodid longs for Olympic gold

Ukrainian judoka Daria Bilodid is on an Olympic gold medal mission not solely for herself, but also to show the world that her war-torn Ukrainian people are "still standing" two years into an unprovoked full-scale war. The judo star has always been thrilled to represent her country, but she has expressed even more of a desire to win.

Bilodid has said it is important for Ukrainian youth and all Ukrainians to dem-

onstrate that they have hope and remain resolute and resilient in their fight against Russia. Her sights are focused on earning a gold medal this summer in Paris.

Bilodid was unable to compete for a third world title last year after Ukraine boycotted the 2023 championships in Doha, Qatar, to protest the presence of Russian judokas. Bilodid personally expressed her feelings at the time, posting on social media how she deemed it "unacceptable to allow soldiers from a terrorist country that kills Ukrainians every day to take part in international competitions."

This summer Russian athletes will be permitted to compete as "neutral" athletes provided that they do not actively support the war or have an affiliation with Russian armed forces or national security agencies. Bilodid has said that she is prepared to compete against Russians if drawn against them.

The 2018 and 2019 world champion and Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist in the 48-kilogram category now competes in the 57-kilogram category. The 5-foot-7 Ukrainian utilizes her height in the new weight class, but she claims that her greatest asset is her character and her main strength is what is inside of her, her spirit, her mental resilience.

Bilodid continues to live in Kyiv despite the challenges of daily training. She relocated for a while to Valencia, Spain, immediately after the Russian invasion in February 2022, but she later returned home.

Her blue kimono has a Ukrainian flag embroidered over her heart. She acknowledges that the Ukrainian people are "very tired of the war" as missiles continue to fall and the future in her country is unknown. She has a clear objective for 2024: to hear the Ukrainian national anthem play in Paris this summer.

#### Yastremska hides from missile attack

Ukrainian tennis star Dayana Yastremska went from her phenomenal run at the Australian Open to hiding from missiles in her Odesa home in a matter of weeks.

A possible surprise finalist at a Grand Slam tournament, she was on top of the world playing winning tennis in a peaceful country, enjoying her life. Upon her return

home, she was greeted by missile attacks in a city far from the contact line of the war.

Yastremska returned home after her exit from the recent Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Linz Open. On February 7, Russian rockets rained down over Odesa while she was walking her dog near a parking lot.

She posted the reality for Ukrainian tennis players on social media, showing herself, her family and pets sheltering from incoming missiles in an underground parking lot. Her video included captions in which Yastremska pointed out how terrifying the experience was for her due to the extent of the missile attack.

"Today is the scariest night for me. I've heard more than ever rockets nearby me. And we're still here at the parking [lot]. People, if we can call you people, can you stop doing this s\*\*t."

This was not the first such horrific experience for Yastremska who fled with her younger sister the first time Odesa was attacked in 2022. At the time, she was forced to leave her parents behind.

#### Volynets makes semifinal at Mumbai Open

Ukrainian Katie Volynets served and volleyed her way into the semifinal of the L&T Mumbai Open in Mumbai, India, on February 5-11. Ranked No. 113 in the WTA rankings, Volynets defeated Ankita Raina of India, 6-4, 6-2 in the round of 32, Rutuja Bhosale of India, 7-6(8), 2-6, 6-1 in the round of 16 and Sohyun Park of South Korea, 6-1, 6-2 in the quarterfinal before losing to Storm Hunter of Australia in the semifinal, 4-6, 6(4)-7.

The 22-year-old daughter of immigrant parents from Ukraine was born in Walnut Creek, Calif. Her career high ranking was No. 74 in March 2023.

#### 17-year-old Ukrainian basketball player murdered

17-year-old Volodymyr Yermakov was stabbed to death in an attack by a gang of eight individuals at Oberhausen Central Station in Germany on February 10. Yermakov, fellow Ukrainian youth basketball player Artem Kozachenko and two friends were attacked by individuals with



Wikipedia

**Katie Volynets, whose parents immigrated to the United States from Ukraine, advanced to the semifinal round of the Mumbai Open, which took place on February 5-11. Volynets lost the semifinal match against Storm Hunter of Australia 6-4, 6(4)-7.**

knives. The three companions were all injured. Local police detained two suspects in the murder and assault, according to Oleg Nikolenko, a spokesman for Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two detained individuals were reportedly 14- and 15-year-old teenagers.

According to local police, two of the Ukrainians had a verbal dispute with two teenagers on a city center bus that escalated as the two groups exited the vehicle. A physical confrontation ensued and reportedly knives were drawn. The Ukrainians were injured in the ensuing fight along with a 14-year-old Syrian boy and a 13-year-old Lebanese-German girl.

(Based on reporting by Rubryka via the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine, Swim Swam, Japan Today, Tennis Infinity, the Kyiv Post and Malay Mail.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at [iman@sfgsports.com](mailto:iman@sfgsports.com).

### Ukraine says...

(Continued from page 1)

dead bodies, accusing Mr. Moiseyev of making soldiers stand in line waiting for his arrival when they were hit.

Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on February 22 that, since launching the invasion two years ago, Russia has launched more than 8,000 missiles and 4,630 drones – of which 3,605 have been shot down – at targets inside Ukraine.

In Moscow, former President Dmitry Medvedev boasted that, after Ukrainian forces last week withdrew from the eastern city of Avdiyivka following a monthslong bloody battle, Russian troops would keep advancing deeper into Ukraine.

With the war nearing its two-year mark amid Ukrainian shortages of manpower, more advanced weapons and ammunition, Mr. Medvedev signaled Moscow could again try and seize the capital after being pushed back decisively from the outskirts

of Kyiv during the initial days of the invasion in February 2022.

"Where should we stop? I don't know," Mr. Medvedev, now deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, said in an interview with Russian media.

"Will it be Kyiv? Yes, it probably should be Kyiv. If not now, then after some time, maybe in some other phase of the development of this conflict," he said.

Mr. Medvedev was once considered a reformer in Russia, serving as president to allow Vladimir Putin to be prime minister for four years to abide by term limits before returning to the presidency for a third time in 2012.

But the 56-year-old former lawyer has become known more recently for his caustic articles, social media posts and remarks that echo the outlandish kind of historical revisionism that Putin has used to vilify the West and underpin the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

#### Russian losses in Ukraine

At least 45,123 Russian troops have been killed since the start of Moscow's full-

scale invasion of Ukraine almost two years ago, according to research by journalists from Mediazona and the BBC's Russian Service who have established the deceased soldiers' identities.

Two-thirds of all confirmed dead – volunteers, conscripts, ex-inmates and fighters from private military companies – were not connected to the military before the start of the invasion, researchers found.

The number includes 5,406 mobilized soldiers, 80 percent of whom were killed in the second year of the war.

Krasnodar, Sverdlovsk, Bashkortostan and Chelyabinsk are the regions with the highest number of dead.

Journalists have identified 27,906 Russian soldiers killed last year – 57 percent more than the confirmed losses in the first year of the invasion.

From October of last year until this month – roughly the period during which Russian forces advanced on the industrial city of Avdiyivka and in neighboring areas in the Donetsk region – researchers confirmed the deaths of 6,614 Russian soldiers. Avdiyivka fell to Moscow's forces last week.

The journalists based their research on data from open sources, such as obituaries in the media, messages on social networks by relatives of the victims, reports from local administrations, as well as data from cemeteries. The researchers say that the actual figures could be at least twice as high.

The Russian Defense Ministry does not disclose data on personnel losses and does not comment on figures reported by journalists.

In January, CIA Director William Burns said in an article published by the magazine Foreign Affairs that at least 315,000 Russian soldiers had been wounded or killed during the war in Ukraine.

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## Ukrainian pro sports update: soccer

by Ihor N. Stelmach

### Shakhtar draws 2-2 with Marseille in UEFA Europa League



Midfielder Yehor Yarmoliuk (tallest individual in the back row), who signed with English club Brentford in 2022 on a three-year contract, met with Ukrainian fans and supporters in February.

UEFA's Europa League playoffs kicked off in Hamburg, Germany, on February 15 with Marseille leading the match on two occasions only to be dramatically caught by Shakhtar Donetsk, which fought back to earn a 2-2 draw setting up a nail-biting second leg in France later this month. Goals by Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Iliman Ndiaye proved not to be enough as the Ukrainian side hit back in formidable fashion.

Shakhtar's play in the opening minutes of the game did not reflect that the team had not played a competitive match in two months. The Ukrainians dominated possession of the ball in the early stages and had more scoring chances as they effectively pounced on their opponents with direct

attacking play during their counterattacks.

The second half was packed with goals, including Aubameyang's side-footed finish in the 64th minute that was immediately offset by Mykola Matviyenko four minutes later. Not content with a draw, Marseille tallied again at the 90-minute mark when Ndiaye connected off a cross. Brazilian winger Eguinaldo loomed tall with a looping header set up by Oleksandr Zubkov that flew into the top corner allowing Shakhtar to equalize dramatically three minutes into extra time.

#### Shevchenko meets with FIFA president in Paris

FIFA President Gianni Infantino and newly elected Ukrainian Football Asso-

ciation (UFA) President Andriy Shevchenko discussed future matters of interest at the 48th UEFA Congress in Paris on February 8.

Infantino praised Shevchenko for inspiring Ukraine as a player and expressed confidence that the Ukrainian football legend will do the same in his new role as UFA president. The FIFA chief pledged his organization's help and support to grow football in Ukraine "on and off the pitch." Examples cited were the FIFA Forward program, FIFA Football for Schools and the FIFA Talent Development Scheme, which will help shape Ukrainian society and advance the next generation of Ukrainian footballers.

Shevchenko once again underlined the need to not just maintain football in Ukraine, but develop it during the war. One

of his key projects is to help grassroots football for future generations. His agenda also includes developing women's football and digitizing a database of past and present Ukrainian football players. Shevchenko understands the importance of international connections and working with the FIFA Foundation going forward.

#### Shevchenko signs partnership with Italy

On February 13 it was announced that Ukrainian Association of Football President Andriy Shevchenko and Italian Football Federation President Gabriele Gravina signed an agreement of cooperation and support for football programs in Ukraine amid the ongoing war with Russia. The two football executives met in Paris at the UEFA Congress where they agreed on the pact.

According to La Gazzetta dello Sport, the partnership's goal is to provide training to Ukrainian coaches and players while it is not feasible to do so in their homeland. Ukrainian players and coaches will have access to shared training activities at the Italian national team's base in Coverciano, Italy, plus other training facilities in the country.

Gravina expressed pride in Ukraine's choosing Italy for this collaboration and promised to provide a more organic and structured path for a technical partnership to protect the future of Ukrainian football.

#### Sudakov inks new deal with Shakhtar

On February 1, Shakhtar Donetsk announced that midfielder Heorhiy

(Continued on page 19)

## Boxer Anna Lysenko navigates obstacles en route to Paris 2024

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukrainian boxer Anna Lysenko has already experienced the Olympic challenge, almost winning a medal at the 2021 Tokyo Games. She knows the stakes and how much preparation and training are required to attain elite athlete status in her sport. She has been hard at work in a modest gym in downtown Kyiv despite the unnerving sounds of booming explosions outside. Her training regimen has been disrupted by the ongoing war in Ukraine, which began when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. In her luminous, airy gym with high windows, she too often hears bombs explode as the Russian army continues to target Ukraine's capital.

Lysenko realizes the sounds of war are stifling, not allowing her to feel peaceful and to train as she normally would. Affected by anxiety and stress associated with the war, the 31-year-old Lysenko does not deviate from her training and remains focused on her ultimate goal. She has already invested nearly 10 years of her life in boxing. In the Tokyo Olympic Games, she made it to the quarterfinal round, only to miss out on an Olympic medal after losing to the eventual gold medalist. Realizing that the Paris Games may be her last chance at an Olympic medal, she stays strong, training six days a week, trying to get stronger, faster in order to win a medal for herself and her country.

She hopes to have the opportunity to compete in Paris, an uncertainty due to Ukraine's policy of having their athletes boycott international sporting events where Russians and Belarusians can compete as "neutral" athletes.

Lysenko supports Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's claim that any neutral flag is stained with blood. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has defined neutrality as not publicly supporting the war, not being contracted by the military since February 2022, and competing without a flag, anthem or national colors.

Lysenko described it as "very unpleasant" that Russian citizens will have the opportunity to compete at the Olympics. Neutral flag aside, Russian athletes are still citizens of their country and represent it. As the Paris Games near, the IOC changed course on its original tough stance urging sports bodies to exclude Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from international sporting events and strip the countries of their hosting privileges. In March, IOC President Thomas Bach said that excluding athletes based on their passports would be discriminatory and would violate their human rights.

As a result, Lysenko believes Ukrainian athletes have to compete in an "unequal battle" with citizens of a country that began a war in her homeland. In Russia, athletes train normally and in peaceful conditions without bombs or missiles falling out of the

sky, and without losing the lives of family and friends.

As an athlete, she understands that the Olympics are the ultimate goal for many competitors, but as a person who has witnessed mass destruction and the anguish of loved ones, the overall picture is quite difficult to accept. In the fall of 2022, Lysenko lived through a harrowing experience the day that she and her team were scheduled to leave for the European Championships in Montenegro. Kyiv was attacked by missiles and the Olympic base near the capital shook from explosions. Lysenko found it nearly impossible to leave her family in that dire predicament. Whenever she is abroad competing, her thoughts remain focused on the situation in her homeland.

She never stopped or curtailed her training, even during last winter when Russian rockets targeted Kyiv's energy infrastructure. If the power was out, athletes changed their workout times to prepare during daylight.

Lysenko has chosen to compete and fight. She likens the upcoming Olympics and her sport of boxing to a frontline where Ukrainian athletes need to win. She would feel extremely disappointed if she is not able to go to the Olympics. She yearns to represent Ukraine one more time and bring home a medal for her war-torn nation.

In the interim, she continues to train even when Kyiv suffers through nightly



Ukrainian boxer Anna Lysenko (17-15, 0 KO), 32, fights in the women's welter-weight division and is a medal hopeful at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

attacks by the Russians. She has gotten used to the circumstances, readily acknowledging that Ukrainian soldiers on the frontlines have it much worse. When she looks at the big picture, she realizes that the situation for her and other Olympic hopefuls is not as bad as it might be.

(Based on reporting by The Indian Express.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at [iman@sfgsports.com](mailto:iman@sfgsports.com).



# OUT & ABOUT

Through March 3 Chicago	Exhibit, "Immense Journeys: Art, Nature, Science and Beyond," featuring works by Melissa Jay Craig, Lisa A. Frank and Anne Hughes, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, <a href="http://www.uima-chicago.org">www.uima-chicago.org</a>	March 2 Binghamton, NY	St. Patrick Parade, with Ukrainian American marchers representing "Stand with Ukraine," Binghamton N.Y. branch of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, <a href="mailto:lmzobniw@aol.com">lmzobniw@aol.com</a>
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, <a href="http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org">www.ukrainianinstitute.org</a>	March 5 Philadelphia	Ballet, "Giselle," Grand Kyiv Ballet, Philadelphia Klein Center, <a href="http://www.grandkyivballet.com.ua">www.grandkyivballet.com.ua</a>
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, <a href="http://www.uocofusa.org">www.uocofusa.org</a>	March 5 Philadelphia	Concert, "Ukraine in the Eyes of Others," Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, American Philosophical Society, 215-569-8080 or <a href="http://pcmsconcerts.org/Ukraine">pcmsconcerts.org/Ukraine</a>
March 1 Philadelphia	Concert with Mariana Sadovska, "The Night is Just Beginning," Annenberg Center, University of Pennsylvania, 215-898-3900 or <a href="https://pennlivearts.org">https://pennlivearts.org</a>	March 7 New York	Poetry reading, "Songs of rage and Hope: A Poetry Reading and Conversation with Alex Averbuch," Columbia University, <a href="https://harriman.columbia.edu">https://harriman.columbia.edu</a>

## Displaced...

(Continued from page 3)

are you doing here, they don't see the problem. They don't understand that the symbol of communism is like the swastika. Because millions of people were tortured under this emblem, and they don't even know it. And they don't seem to listen," she said.

Ms. Mahomedova was asked what inspires her to continue leading the Ukrainian Association in Tromsø.

"I don't see anyone else who can do this. I would be happy to honestly hand over this role to someone else because I'm exhausted, but I don't see anyone else who can do the job and unite people around this community," she said.

"I am very inspired by the Ukrainians who come here and join the community. Just yesterday, I met some new people and was in a great mood after the meeting. I felt that all our work made sense. I like that our union brings together young people – they are the ones who build the community," she said.

Ms. Mahomedova invited a correspondent for The Ukrainian Weekly to visit a Ukrainian hub in the city center of Tromsø. The community calls it the meeting place for Ukrainians or the Ukrainian House.

"When the full-scale invasion began, the government offered grants to various organizations for projects designed to integrate and socialize people. My deputy, Ania Dranovska, and I gathered at a founding meeting of our organization and decided to rent a room and create a hub in the city. We applied for a grant, but while waiting for the result, we had already agreed with the owner of this house, who allowed us to stay here for about three months without paying rent," Ms. Mahomedova said.

"During this time, we managed to furnish everything. Someone donated furniture to us, and we found some second-hand furniture. We hold many meetings here: language clubs, hobby meetings, board game nights and yoga classes. We even had psychological support meetings for a while," she said.

"We also celebrate different holidays here. For example, we had a very cool celebration of the Constitution Day of Norway, their biggest holiday. We ordered a big cake with a Norwegian flag on it. It was very nice and cozy," she said.

"We gather here every Friday to play board games. Our Norwegian friends come to visit us from time to time. Many Ukrainians made friends in the union, and now they celebrate birthdays together, go fishing and spend time outside the organization. They are the community's most active members – communicating with politicians and the press and organizing rallies. I want them to join the organization's

board and lead it. I want the organization to become more youthful. It makes sense only for the sake of young people. I want them to remember who they are and not have a blurred self-identity. Because it's difficult when you don't fully know who you are and where your 'tribe' is. I want us to live the Ukrainian cultural revolution together," Ms. Mahomedova said.

She understands these difficulties firsthand. Her father is from Dagestan and her mother is Ukrainian. She was born and raised in the Donbas in Ukraine under a huge Russian cultural influence.

"When I was seven years old, I asked my mother if we were Russians, being in a Russian-speaking environment. And it was great that my mom answered that we were Ukrainians. In many families, the answer was less clear. And starting with the Orange Revolution in 2004, my identity was even more obvious. It was easier in 2014 because I did not hesitate about which side I was on. And in 2022, I completely switched to the Ukrainian language, already living in Norway," Ms. Mahomedova said.

The Ukrainian activist said she believes it makes sense to unite around a particular location. Many ethnic communities in the city do not have their own location and constantly rent something for their events. But it is stressful for them to rent something for a couple of hours every time.

"Again, they already have such a more stable life. We just have an unrealistic number of people who arrived here, and they are people in crisis," she said.

"You have to understand that people are going through a crisis, and, as an immigrant, I can say that I went through this crisis myself. I came here not from the war, but still. I experienced this crisis – it was tough for me when I had a lot of anxiety. It is a physical feeling when you are cut off from your tribe, and your instinct for self-defense is activated when you worry that you will not survive here because everything is foreign. Refugees seem to experience this even more, especially those who have lost their homes or whose hometowns are occupied," Ms. Mahomedova said.

This empathy and the desire to unite as a "tribe" provide significant support to many Ukrainians who find themselves in the cold northern city of Tromsø.

The Ukrainian Association and the Ukrainian House assist newcomers in finding a new home above the Arctic Circle, where the winter sun remains below the horizon for six weeks during the year.

Ukrainians who have endured the horrors of Russian aggression and lost their homes face challenges in building new lives here.

But here they can also learn an important lesson: it is during the darkest days that you can witness the spectacular lights of the Aurora Borealis.

March 8 through April 14 Jenkintown, PA	Exhibit, "Affirmation of Life: Art from Today's Ukraine," benefiting Ukraine Global Scholars, Abington Art Center, <a href="https://ukrainian-cultural-initiative.com/">https://ukrainian-cultural-initiative.com/</a> or <a href="https://abingtonartcenter.org">https://abingtonartcenter.org</a>
March 9 Leighton, PA	Pysanka workshop, Ukrainian Homestead of CEC ODWU, <a href="http://www.ukrhomestead.com">www.ukrhomestead.com</a> or <a href="mailto:oseliaodwu@gmail.com">oseliaodwu@gmail.com</a>
March 10 Melrose Park, PA	Pysanka workshop, led by Georgine Borchik, Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, 856-829-3597 or <a href="mailto:mk.hill@hillspace.org">mk.hill@hillspace.org</a>
March 10 Chicago	Concert, "The Village Strings," Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, St. Nicholas Cathedral, <a href="http://www.uima-chicago.org">www.uima-chicago.org</a>

*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](mailto:mdubas@ukrweekly.com).*

## Soccer update...

(Continued from page 18)

Sudakov signed a new contract with the club, keeping the highly sought-after rising star in the fold through December 31, 2028. The release clause to buy him out on transfer stands at a reported 100 million euros (\$107,284,000). The Shakhtar Academy graduate made his debut with the first team in October 2020. The 21-year-old has dressed in 85 matches for the Donetsk squad, scoring 13 goals and adding 13 assists.

During the recent January transfer window, several top European clubs, including Napoli, Juventus, Arsenal and Chelsea, among others, pursued Sudakov. Napoli's 40-million-euro bid was quickly declined by Shakhtar because it was too low.

The release clause in Sudakov's new contract stands at 150 million euros (\$160,965,000), meaning the club is looking for some \$53.65 million to part with him this summer. The new asking price likely puts him in a bidding war with English Premier League teams and out of the Serie A sides' price range.

### Ukrainian families enjoy meet and greet with Yarmoliuk

More than 50 Ukrainian children and their families met Brentford's Ukrainian football player Yehor Yarmoliuk at a special event in Gtech Community Stadium in London in the middle of February. The central midfielder, a product of the Dnipro-1 academy who made his senior debut with the club in 2020, hails from Verkhovnodniprovsk, Ukraine. The families attending the event have been living in the United Kingdom after they fled their homeland following Russia's invasion in February 2022.

The children and their families heard Yarmoliuk discuss his football career with Brentford staffer and fellow Ukrainian

Maria Manirko. He explained why he chose to play football, how he settled into his new home in the U.K. and shared some personal advice with young aspiring footballers in the audience.

Those present had the opportunity to take photographs with the 19-year-old (he turns 20 on March 1), who also provided the youngsters with goodie bags of team merchandise and tickets to an upcoming home game.

Yarmoliuk was acquired via transfer by Brentford in July 2022 and signed a three-year contract with an option for a fourth year for a reported fee of 1.6 million euros (\$1,717,025). After beginning his Brentford career with the club's B team, he was promoted to the first team in June 2023 and signed a new five-year contract with the option for an extra year.

### Ukraine draws Czechia, Albania and Georgia in UEFA Nations League

The UEFA Nations League's fourth edition began with the league draw phase in Paris on February 8. League phase games will be played in September through November. Knockout round playoffs are scheduled for March 2025 with the finals in June 2025. Ukraine is in League B, Group B1 with Czechia, Albania and Georgia. Each national team will play six matches in their group, one home and one away against the other three nations in their group. Ukraine finished 2023 as the No. 22 team in FIFA's rankings.

The Nations League replaces international friendly matches previously played on the FIFA International Match Calendar with European national teams enjoying more frequent competitive matches against other European national teams.

(Based on reporting by 1Football, UAF, Football Italia, Terrikon.com, Brentford Football Club and FIFA.)

*Ihor Stelmach may be reached at [iman@sfgsports.com](mailto:iman@sfgsports.com).*



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