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Ukraine regrouping forces, considering new counteroffensive 'this year,' says commander



Office of the President of Ukraine

Ukrainian ground commander Oleksandr Pavlyuk, seen in an undated file photo, said in televised remarks on March 6 that the military is now focusing on stabilizing front-line positions and regrouping troops to "conduct counteroffensive operations this year."

RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian Services

The commander of Ukraine's ground forces said that Kyiv is aiming to conduct a counteroffensive in 2024, even as the outmanned and outgunned military has faced criticism for a perceived lack of progress during its drive against invading Russian troops over the past six months.

Oleksandr Pavlyuk, named Ukraine's ground commander on February 11, said in televised remarks on March 6 that the military is now focusing on stabilizing front-

line positions and regrouping troops to "conduct counteroffensive operations this year."

After a successful counteroffensive against Russian forces occupying regions in the east and south of the country, Ukraine's progress has slowed over recent months, with leaders in Kyiv pleading with Western allies for deliveries of badly needed ammunition and air defense systems.

Also on March 6, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he and visiting

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Shmyhal, Ukraine's longest-serving prime minister, outlines government priorities amid war and economic reconstruction

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – March 4 marked four years since Denys Shmyhal became prime minister of Ukraine. The anniversary cemented his status as the longest-serving prime minister in the war-ravaged country's history.

At his annual press conference, Mr. Shmyhal spoke about building a new Ukrainian economy, continuing reforms and ensuring that the people of the country remain resilient throughout the current war. Despite being among the most turbulent times in modern Ukrainian history, Mr. Shmyhal has been seldom seen, and it is, perhaps, one reason that he has been in office for so long. The most common explanation that political insiders and experts of Ukrainian politics give for Mr. Shmyhal's comfort with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his team is the prime minister's complete loyalty and lack of political ambition.



Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal speaks to journalists at his annual press conference on March 4, marking four years since he became prime minister of Ukraine. The anniversary cemented his status as the longest-serving prime minister in the war-ravaged country's history.

Those who have encountered Mr. Shmyhal at work note that he spends almost all his time in the Cabinet of Ministers, and weekends are no exception, according to Ukrainian media outlet Glavcom. The prime minister begins his work day at 7 a.m. In the morning, he gets briefings from all of his subordinates and then takes part in daily meetings: one in the morning with the president and later one with the Cabinet of Ministers.

Government meetings are held twice a week. But, given the current times, ministers meet more often if there is an urgent need. For example, the government met several times a day during the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

Mr. Shmyhal did not leave Kyiv at the start of the Russian invasion when part of the Cabinet of Ministers evacuated the capital.

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Zelenskyy calls on world to help Ukraine defeat 'Russian evil'

As death toll from strike on Odesa climbs to 12



Serhii Nuzhnenko/RadioSvoboda.org

Ukrainian soldiers use an antiaircraft gun to fire onto Russian positions.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service and Current Time

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on March 3 for the world to help Kyiv defeat "Russian evil" as the death toll from a Russian drone strike on Odesa rose to 12, including several children.

"Every Russian loss at the front is our country's response to Russian terror. The world must respond to every manifestation of Russian evil and repel Russia's actions," Mr. Zelenskyy said after rescuers ended their search for victims in the rubble of the attack on Odesa.

He said later in his nightly video address that political will is required to make sure Ukraine has enough supplies, in an apparent reference to a crucial multibillion-dollar aid package that remains stalled in the U.S. Congress amid partisan bickering.

The war "must become hopeless for Russia. ... They must sense that there is force that destroys those who seek to destroy life," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

"If this doesn't happen and America [and] Europe lose to Iranian Shaheds or Russian jets, it will go down in history as one of the most shameful chapters. Evil should never be encouraged. Neither by weak decisions, delays in supplies, nor indecision," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

The Russian drone hit an apartment block in Odesa early on March 2, partially destroying several floors and leaving more than a dozen people under the rubble.

The attack killed at least four children, including two babies less than 1 year old, according to statements by Mr. Zelenskyy and the regional governor.

"Mark, who was not even 3 years old, Yelyzaveta, 8 months old, and Timofey, 4 months old," Mr. Zelenskyy said, naming the youngest victims on Telegram.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Russian unity and Western discord converge in Putin's imagination

by Pavel K. Baev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual address to the Federal Assembly on February 29 was grander in length and style than his usual domineering performances. He did not attempt to persuade the audience of loyal bureaucrats that victory in Ukraine was near. Rather, he asserted once again that the "special military operation" (SVO) was launched to pre-empt a Western onslaught. He insisted that Russia held the initiative in the battles in Donbas and could sustain the war effort indefinitely (Carnegie Politika, February 29). This confidence is underpinned by two key propositions: that Russian society is united in support of the war and that Western unity is crumbling. There is an element of truth in both assertions, but neither of them is truly solid, calling into question the foundations of Russia's war (Kommersant, February 29).

Putin's address was heavily tilted toward social issues with plenty of promises to expand state funding for pensioners, families with children, doctors and teachers (Novaya Gazeta Europe, February 29). This generosity is a clear attempt to ensure public consent to, if not enthusiasm about, Putin's new presidential term, due to start a few weeks after the "elections" in mid-March (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, February 28). The prescribed expansion of social expenditures does not, however, correspond to the deepening deficit of the state budget, and Putin carefully avoided using the word "inflation" in his expectations-boosting narrative (Izvestiya, March 1). Every tightening of the sanctions regime cuts into budget revenues and disrupts already twisted supply chains. Plans for resuming production

of the SSJ100 Superjet and other passenger planes have been postponed yet again, for example (Novye Izvestiya, March 2).

Putin's promises to increase money flows to the general populace betray his doubts about mass support for the permanent SVO (Re: Russia, March 1). The Kremlin cannot rely on the public's grim acceptance of the costs of the unwinnable war, which makes it increasingly difficult to pretend that life is continuing "as normal." Thus, the Kremlin seeks to stimulate obedience by providing material benefits (Forbes.ru, February 24). One new twist to the jingoist tale is Putin's claim that war heroes are a new elite who will make up Russia's future government, in contrast with the aging political crooks who enriched themselves in past decades and are now indiscriminately sanctioned by the West (The Insider, February 25).

Expanded efforts to buy loyalty go hand in hand with harsher repressions. The murder of influential opposition leader Alexei Navalny in a remote Arctic penal colony was supposed to discourage all forms of protest (Republic.ru, March 1). Instead, the cruel crime has galvanized discontent, and his funeral in Moscow last Friday turned into a mass anti-war rally (Novaya Gazeta Europe, March 1). Mr. Navalny's message continues to connect the underground anti-Putin resistance in Russia with the new Russian diaspora in Europe, where Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia, has stepped up to be a passionate leader (Moscow Times, March 1).

Yulia Navalnaya began her struggle with Putin's regime by speaking at the Munich Security Conference and continued by addressing the European Parliament, seek-

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Nine things Western 'experts' got wrong about Russia and its invasion of Ukraine

by Taras Kuzio
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Two years ago, on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what he termed a "special military operation" (SVO) against Ukraine. This was the first full-scale invasion of a European country since World War II, though the invasion truly began eight years earlier with the invasion of the Donbas and the illegal annexation of Crimea. Many Western "experts," especially those with professed Russian expertise, misinterpreted several critical points, and Russian propaganda was quick to support these misconceptions.

Failed State: There was a long-standing depiction of Ukraine as weak, divided and corrupt. This depiction is similar to Kremlin disinformation that portrayed Ukraine as a failed and artificial state (BBC, May 8, 2018; The Nation, February 15, 2022; Meduza, February 23, 2023). This view made it seem like protecting Ukraine was a lost cause for Western countries, deterring them from providing the aid Kyiv needed.

Pro-Russian: Russian speakers in Ukraine were portrayed as disloyal and pro-Russian, adding to the stereotype of a weak and divided Ukraine. This depiction is similar to that of Kremlin disinformation and Russian nationalist claims of all Russian speakers as "compatriots" who seek to become a unified part of a pan-Russian people (Gazeta.ru, April 5, 2021; RIA

Novosti, May 26, 2021; TASS, July 12, 2021; Meduza, June 9, 2022). One of Putin's justifications for the SVO was to halt the "genocide" of Russian speakers that he claimed had been carried out by Ukrainian "Nazis" since 2014 (Andrei Karaulov, Genocide of Russians in Ukraine: What the West is Silent About, May 15, 2018; RIA Novosti, February 18, 2022; Meduza, March 2, 2022). Since the 2014 "Russian Spring" and the 2022 invasion, most Russian speakers in Ukraine have shown themselves to be Ukrainian patriots. A poll conducted in July 2023 reported that 50 percent of eastern Ukrainians and 35 percent of Russian-speaking Ukrainians blamed the entire Russian population for the war, while 60 percent of respondents perceived the question of whether the Russian people or the Kremlin was to blame as irrelevant (RE: Russia, July 21, 2023).

Ukraine's Quick Defeat: The Kremlin and Western "experts" were unanimous in their view of a rapid Russian military victory and Ukrainian defeat, with Kyiv only lasting a few days before capitulating (Radio Free Europe, March 11, 2022; Lenta.ru, December 8, 2022). This influenced the West to only send light weapons, such as Javelins and NLAWs, to Ukraine for use in partisan warfare. Many in the West thought sending heavy weaponry was pointless, as Ukraine would be quickly defeated (U.S. Depart-

(Continued on page 4)

NEWSBRIEFS

Zelensky, Greek PM witnessed missile strike

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he and visiting Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis witnessed a deadly Russian missile attack on March 6 while visiting the Black Sea port city of Odesa. Mr. Zelenskyy said there was an unspecified number of people killed and injured in the attack. Mr. Mitsotakis confirmed that Russian missiles attacked the city while he and Mr. Zelenskyy were present, saying "we had explosions very close to us." Mr. Mitsotakis added that he and the Ukrainian leader, as well as their teams, did not have time to go to a shelter, calling the incident "an astonishing experience." (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Russian vessel 'sunk,' Ukraine military claims

The Main Directorate of Ukraine's Military Intelligence (HUR) said high-tech Ukrainian sea drones struck and "sunk" the Russian patrol vessel Sergei Kotov off the coast of occupied Crimea in what appears to be the latest sinking of a Russian ship well behind enemy lines. HUR's special unit Group 13 and Ukraine's naval forces took part in the operation with support from the Ministry of Digital Transformation. HUR said in a statement on Telegram on March 5. "As a result of a strike by Magura V5 maritime drones, the Russian ship Project 22160 Sergei Kotov sustained damage to the stern and to the starboard and port sides. The action occurred in the territorial waters of Ukraine, not far from the Kerch Strait," the statement said. The value of the "destroyed" Russian vessel was about \$65 million, it added. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made no direct reference to the sinking of the Sergei Kotov in his nightly video address. "Ukraine has proved what we are capable of, what our strength is capable of," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "That is shown by the number of downed Russian aircraft and the capabilities of our boys against the Russian fleet. There are no safe havens for Russian terrorists in the Black Sea and nor will there be." HUR official Andriy Yusov told RFE/RL that, according to intelligence reports, there are dead and wounded among the ship's crew, and some have been evacuated. "There are dead and

wounded. However, there is a possibility that part of the crew could have evacuated," Mr. Yusov said. The destroyer-class vessel reportedly can carry cruise missiles and around 60 crew. A video posted later on social media platforms by the HUR claims to show "how the Sergei Kotov was sunk." The grainy black-and-white video appears to have been shot from cameras on board naval drones from different angles and distances and show several explosions hitting a ship purported to be the Sergei Kotov. HUR did not reveal the precise location of the strike, but social media posts reported that the attack on the vessel occurred in the port of Feodosia overnight. A video posted on X, formerly Twitter, purportedly shows the moment of the impact and a large explosion. Russia has not commented on the Ukrainian claim, which could not be independently verified. But the Rybar war blog, which is close to Russia's Defense Ministry, said the ship was destroyed. "The Russian Black Sea Fleet is a symbol of occupation. It cannot be in Ukrainian Crimea," Andriy Yermak, Mr. Zelenskyy's chief of staff, wrote on Telegram on March 5. Later on March 5, Crimea residents told RFE/RL's Crimea Realities project that explosions could be heard in the area of Mzhvodny, in the northwestern part of the Russian-occupied peninsula. "We heard about five explosions within an interval of 10-15 minutes," one resident said. Details are still unknown. The sinking of the Sergei Kotov – which was commissioned in 2021 – would be another blow to Russia's navy, which has lost several key ships since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Explosions were heard early on March 5 in the Crimean city of Kerch, and the bridge connecting the occupied peninsula with Russia was closed, according to RFE/RL's Crimea Realities project. Highway traffic reportedly reopened on the bridge at around 7 a.m. local time, the Russian-installed administration managing the bridge said on March 5. Last month, Ukraine's military said it had destroyed the Tsezar Kunikov, one of the largest Russian landing ships, in the Black Sea off the coast of occupied Crimea. It said

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'War is not lost,' says former American marine serving in elite Ukrainian defense intelligence unit

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – When Russia started the biggest ground war on the European continent since World War II in February 2022, former U.S. Marine Garrison Foster was one of the first volunteers to join the ranks of Ukraine's military to withstand the Kremlin's genocidal invasion.

He started to see combat in April of that year as part of a special operations brigade that he left toward the end of 2022 "after it was wiped out" during the offensive to liberate much of the northeastern region of Kharkiv, Ukraine.

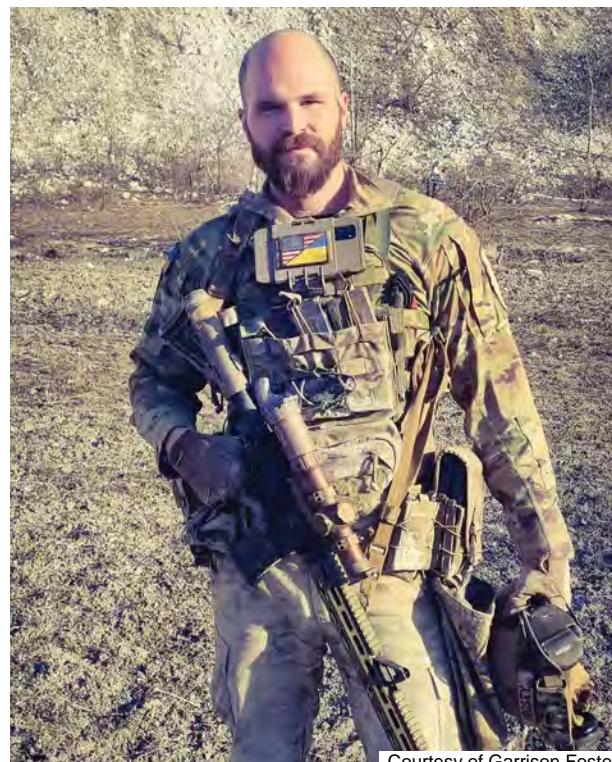
Mr. Foster, 35, is now part of a special assault team attached to Ukraine's defense intelligence (HUR) whose leader, Kyrylo Budanov, has become the bane of Russia's military for spearheading raids on the occupied Crimean Peninsula, as well as for overseeing joint operations to destroy sea craft in the Black Sea, cross-border sabotage and drone attack operations, and assassinations behind the front lines of collaborators who help occupying authorities.

Speaking from an undisclosed location in Donetsk Oblast, the former marine said he joined Ukraine's ranks based on his knowledge as a war historian who sees parallels "of the geopolitical situation that is reminiscent of the 1930s in the lead up to WWII [World War II]."

"My concern is that if it doesn't stop here [in Ukraine], it will cascade and escalate, and I would prefer for the war to stay in this area," he said.

The ascent of fascist Austrian-born, German dictator Adolf Hitler in the 1930s led to invasions of neighboring countries and eventually engulfed much of the world in a global war that saw scores of millions of people, both civilian and military personnel, killed.

After Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945, the world discovered the genocidal atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime of Jews, as well as inhumane policies



Courtesy of Garrison Foster

Former U.S. Marine Garrison Foster is seen at a Donetsk regional shooting range armed with an M4A1 fully automatic carbine last week.

toward other ethnicities deemed inferior, people living with disabilities and non-heterosexuals.

As a result of Moscow's current war on Ukraine, four Russian officials, including Kremlin dictator Vladimir Putin, are suspected of war crimes at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The Russo-Ukrainian war has been characterized as less of "an artillery war" and more of "a war of signals," Mr. Foster said, referring to the growing and inexpensive use of reconnaissance and so-called kamikaze drones on the battlefield.

Sky drones "send signals back and forth to a controller with radio feeds, and wifi signals are used on the front" to identify coordinates for artillery, he said. "We've been hunting Russian snipers using thermal optics connected to cell phones using Bluetooth."

First-person view drones, which allow a pilot on the ground to see what the unmanned aerial vehicle sees, "are getting incredibly faster," Mr. Foster said.

Drones, he added, are the biggest danger to HUR's combat missions.

Many times, Russian surveillance "drones catch us coming in on a Russian position," ruining the element of surprise, and instead, during one mission, "we had seven Russian positions open up on us," Mr. Foster said.

When Mr. Foster goes to take over Russian trenches, "I take 15 full magazines ... and we have as many as 10 to 20 grenades per man" for close combat, he said.

Given the lengthy network of some Russian trenches, he added, it could take as much as four to five hours to conquer one – "that's extremely grueling ... and, once you're there, you have to repair that position immediately ... because Russia will start shelling us and, in a counter-assault, try to retake the trench."

The acute shortage of heavy weaponry is also noticeable, given that the U.S. has supplied the vast majority of materiel, "and that is a bad thing to rely on one country," he said.

The U.S. House of Representatives has stalled on supply-

(Continued on page 16)

Moscow warns U.S. Embassy, designates 3 NGOs as 'undesirable'

Adds British journalist Tom Rogan to its wanted list

RFE/RL

Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry summoned U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Lynne Tracy and delivered a stern warning for Washington to stay out of Russia's internal affairs ahead of a presidential election widely expected to hand incumbent Vladimir Putin another term in office given the absence of opposition candidates on the ballot.

The ministry informed Ms. Tracy on March 7 that three U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) – American Councils for International Education, Cultural Perspectives and the Institute of International Education – had been labeled "undesirable organizations" and demanded the embassy "stop any collaboration" with them.

The ministry accused the NGOs of running "anti-Russian programs and projects aimed at recruiting 'agents of influence' under the guise of educational and cultural exchanges" and any further cooperation with the embassy "would be considered a violation of Russian law."

Russian officials often show disdain for Western-backed NGOs and civil society groups, accusing them of trying to manipulate Russian public opinion in order to stir up popular discontent and advance the foreign policy interests of their home countries. Western governments routinely reject the claims.



Russia's Internal Affairs Ministry on March 6 added Washington-based British journalist Tom Rogan to its wanted list on unspecified criminal charges.

"It is especially emphasized that attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation, including subversive actions and the spread of disinformation in the context of elections and a special military operation, will be harshly and decisively suppressed, up to and including the expulsion as 'persona non grata' of U.S. Embassy employees involved in such actions," the ministry said in a statement.

All three NGOs labelled say they conduct activities to strengthen international ties through academic, professional and cultural exchanges and programs and that thousands of students have used the programs to further their education.

The activities of the three organizations will be prohibited in Russia, and anyone who cooperates with them may face criminal penalties, including up to six years in prison.

There was no immediate reaction from the U.S. embassy in Moscow or the three NGOs designated as "undesirable."

The "undesirable organization" law, adopted in 2015, was a Kremlin-backed regulation on NGOs that receive funding from foreign sources. The label has been applied to dozens of foreign groups since Moscow began using the classification and effectively bans an organization outright.

RFE/RL was declared an "undesirable organization" last month.

The ministry's move comes just over a week before Russians head to the polls in a presidential election the Kremlin hopes to use as a show of national unity in support of Putin and his invasion of Ukraine, which Russia refers to as a "special military operation."

Russian elections are tightly controlled by the Kremlin and are neither free nor fair but are viewed by the government as necessary to convey a sense of legitimacy.

The Kremlin's tight grip on politics, media, law enforcement and other levers means Putin, who has ruled Russia as president or prime minister since 1999, is certain to win, barring a very big, unexpected development.

Additionally, Russia's Internal Affairs Ministry on March 6 added Washington-based British journalist Tom Rogan to its wanted list on unspecified criminal charges.

In 2018, Mr. Rogan published an article headlined Ukraine Should Blow Up Putin's Crimea Bridge in the Washington Examiner. Mr. Rogan's article sparked outrage



Freddie Everett/Wikipedia

U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and U.S. Ambassador to Russia Lynne M. Tracy (left) are seen at the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., in January 2023.

among Russian officials, who demanded an explanation.

Last month, Russian authorities added Mr. Rogan and Washington Examiner editor Hugo Gurdon to its "terrorist" registry.

In May 2018, Russia's Investigative Committee launched a probe against Mr. Rogan on a charge of making public calls for terrorism. In response, Mr. Rogan published another article titled Why Putin Wants to Send Me to the Black Dolphin [Prison].

(With additional reporting by RFE/RL's Current Time.)

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Leaked recording of German military call is part of Putin's 'information war,' says minister

RFE/RL

Berlin accused Russia on March 3 of trying to sow disunity following the leak of a confidential conference call between high-ranking German military staff discussing the possible use of German-made Taurus missiles by Ukraine.

A recording of the call between the commander in chief of the German Air Force, Gen. Ingo Gerhardt, and Brig. Gen. Frank Graefe, along with two Bundeswehr officers was posted online on March 1 on Russian social media, initially by Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of the Russian state-controlled RT media group, formerly known as Russia Today. Ms. Simonyan did not explain where she got the recording of the 38-minute call.

Ukraine has been asking Germany to provide it with Taurus missiles, which can reach targets up to 500 kilometers away, giving Ukrainian forces a boost as Kyiv struggles to fend off Russia's full-scale invasion.

The German Defense Ministry confirmed on March 3 that a "conversation related to the Air Force" had been intercepted.

"Whether changes were made to the recorded oral or written version that is circulating on social media we cannot say with certainty at this time," a ministry spokesman said, according to German broadcaster ARD.

Representatives of the army told Germany's other public broadcaster, ZDF, that they considered the recording to be authentic.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said the timing of the release of the recording was not a coincidence.

"It is about using this recording to destabilize and unsettle us," Mr. Pistorius said, speaking at a news briefing in Berlin on March 3.

"It is part of an information war that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is waging. There is absolutely no doubt about that," he said at a news briefing in Berlin. "It is a hybrid attack aimed at disinformation. It is about division. It is about undermining our resolve."

He said Germany should not "fall for Putin's line" and the reaction should be "in a particularly level-headed manner, but no less resolutely."

Mr. Pistorius added that he would await the result of a military probe into the case to decide what the consequences should be.

The recording includes a detailed discussion of how the German military can technically support the supply of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine in the event of a decision by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to allow them to be sent.

Mr. Scholz has refused to send the missiles, fearing that it would lead to an escalation of the conflict, draw Germany more deeply into the fight and potentially touch off the use of nuclear weapons by Russia.

The wiretapped exchange includes a discussion of whether the Taurus would theoretically be technically capable of destroying the bridge connecting Russia to the Crimean Peninsula that Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

The discussion also addresses whether Ukraine could carry out the strike without the involvement of German armed forces.

Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov said on March 2 that the recording indicated that Ukraine and its backers "do not want to change their course at all and want to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia on the battlefield."

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, now deputy head of the Security Council, went further, saying Germany "is preparing for war with Russia."

The discussion between the German military officers also covered the use of long-range SCALP and Storm Shadow missiles provided to Kyiv by France and Britain, respectively, each with a range of about 250 kilometers.

The audio recording also contains a diplomatically sensitive reference to the British having "a few people on the ground" in Ukraine in connection with the deployment of the Storm Shadow. Britain has denied that it had any direct involvement in operating the missiles.

Mr. Scholz on March 2 promised swift clarification of the incident, calling it a "very serious matter." But the fallout from



Daniel Biskup/Wikipedia

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said the timing of the release of a confidential conference call between high-ranking German military staff discussing the possible use of German-made Taurus missiles by Ukraine was not a coincidence.

the scandal continued on March 3 as members of the German parliament demanded consequences, including that German military leaders be trained in protected communications.

The discussion was vulnerable to wiretapping because the officers were not using an encrypted line, according to sources quoted by dpa. The sources said the discussion was hosted on Webex, a conferencing platform made by the U.S. tech giant Cisco.

(With reporting by AFP, dpa and Bild am Sonntag)

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A Taurus KEPD 350 cruise missile is seen under the wing of a Eurofighter Typhoon jetplane at the ILA air show near Berlin in 2004

Nine things...

(Continued from page 2)

ment of Defense, April 7, 2022; CSIS, April 12, 2022; Foreign Policy, November 27). In October, a year and a half into the war, 90 percent of Ukrainians believed that they would win the battle against Russia, demonstrating the resilience of Ukraine contrary to what many believed at the war's beginning (Ukrayinska Pravda, October 24).

Reformed Russian Army: Moscow and Western "experts" were united in their view that a reformed Russian army had become the second best in the world (RG.ru, August 31, 2017; RBC Ukraine, February 22, 2023; Foreign Affairs, September 8; Komsomolskaya Pravda, January 17). Western analysts ignored the disastrous impact of the mafia state, a term that had been used to describe the country as far back as 2010, on the Russian military and security forces (Vedomosti, December 2, 2010; BBC, December 2, 2010). By the end of the invasion's first year, the Russian army was mocked as the second-best army in Ukraine (New Voice of Ukraine, June 2, 2023).

The Kremlin Is Not Ideological: Numerous Western scholars and "experts," although certainly not all, have been reluctant to depict Putin's Russia as totalitarian, nationalistic and fascist (Atlantic Council, April 23, 2015; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 9, 2022; Courthouse News Service, August 3, 2022; Politico, December 9, 2022). Russia is a mafia state and, since constitutional changes in 2020 and

increased domestic repression, a totalitarian political system that supports imperial nationalism and revanchism (Meduza, March 10, 2020; Republic.ru, September 5, 2022). Putin's Russia seeks the genocidal destruction of Ukraine and Ukrainians and their replacement by a Little Russia and Little Russians. Crimea and New Russia (southeast Ukraine) are claimed as "historical Russian lands," and central Ukraine would become a Little Russian puppet state akin to Alyeksandr Lukashenka's Belarus, while Putin has stated that many in Western Ukraine want the territory to be offered to Poland, Hungary and Romania (RG.ru, July 22, 2023; TASS, December 19). Russia will rise from the ashes of a destroyed Ukraine as a great power (once again resembling the Soviet Union, where the U.S.-led unipolar world is replaced by the multipolarism found in the Cold War). Russia's rebirth in the ashes of Ukraine's destruction is a quintessential definition of fascism.

Why Russia Invaded Ukraine: This question continues to puzzle some Western "experts" and scholars because of their inability to comprehend the true nature of Putin's regime. The roots of Russia's invasion of Ukraine lie in the Kremlin leader seeking to carve out a place in Russian history as the "gatherer of Russian lands" (alongside Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Joseph Stalin). This notion is a return to the imperial-nationalist denial of Ukraine's existence and the belief in a pan-Russian people composed of "great," "little," and "white" Russians (Russians, Ukrainians,

ians, and Belarusians, respectively) (TASS, July 12, 2021; RBC, June 9, 2022; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 3, 2022). Many Kremlin leaders believed that "Little Russians" were deluded into thinking they were Ukrainians by the Austrians and Poles before 1914, by Vladimir Lenin when he gave them a Soviet republic, and by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) since 1991 (Kremlin.ru, July 12, 2021; Pravda.ru, November 22, 2022).

No Military Support: Most Western "experts" argued against sending military support to Ukraine after 2014 (Foreign Affairs, February 24, 2015). U.S. President Barack Obama vetoed sending weapons to Ukraine despite the United States being one of the signatories of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which provided security assurances to Ukraine in return for nuclear disarmament (House Armed Services Committee, October 4, 2015). One argument against the United States sending military aid was that Western weapons would not prevent Ukraine's defeat (The Hill, December 7, 2021).

Escalation: A second argument from 2014-2021 was that sending Western weapons would merely lead to an escalation of the conflict. Therefore, it was not in the interests of the United States and the West to send lethal aid to Ukraine (Wall Street Journal, September 18, 2014; The Atlantic, April 2016). Since 2022, fear of escalation has continued to influence slow-moving U.S., German and French military aid to Ukraine and the stipulation that prevented their use inside Russia until very

recently. Fear of escalation continues to prevent the United States and Germany from sending more long-range munitions (Politico, October 12; NBC News, February 19). The fear of Russian escalation was and has been exaggerated. Meanwhile, delays in military aid have caused the war to carry on longer as Russia was given time to build three lines of fortifications, lay tens of thousands of mines and organize a mobilization of 300,000 soldiers (Interfax, November 1, 2022).

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Enlargement: Some Western realists, "experts," and scholars blamed NATO in 2014 and since for provoking Russian military aggression (Reuters, July 11, 2023). Ukraine has yet to be granted full NATO membership. Russia did not necessarily oppose Ukraine joining NATO but instead worried about losing what the Kremlin considers "Little Russia" to Europe.

These misconceptions in the West about Russian imperialism and the war against Ukraine have caused a shallow understanding of what Ukraine needs to defeat the occupiers and why a complete Ukrainian victory is critical to ending Russia's threats to its neighbors. Relying solely on a Western perspective of how Russia and Ukraine operate will only disadvantage the West in fighting against Russian imperialism.

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Crosses for chaos: How Russian ultranationalists used 'missile markers' to sow panic in Ukraine

by Yelizaveta Surnacheva and
Systema
RFE/RL

In the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as Moscow's forces surged toward Kyiv, online photos of crosses on Ukrainian infrastructure sparked widespread fears of potential Russian missile attacks. Nearly two years later, the question remains: Were these crosses for real, and, if so, who painted them and why?

Sometimes it was a red Celtic cross on a road or on the roof of an apartment building, other times, it was a miniature black cross on a gas line, or a mark on a power substation.

An investigation by Systema, RFE/RL's Russian Service investigative unit, found that a social-media disinformation campaign by Russian ultranationalists to "paralyze" Ukrainian emergency services and law enforcement during the war was behind at least some of the images.

In the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion, roughly half of the 50,000 messages received by a Ukrainian government chatbot about Russian military movements concerned these crosses, according to the National Police of Ukraine's Cyber-Police Department, which runs the bot.

Journalists found no concrete evidence that the crosses were the work of Russian military intelligence, known as the GRU. But both the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Interior Ministry asked Ukrainians to conceal any such marks they saw.

A diplomatic source in Kyiv told Systema that the Ukrainian government and military also had asked diplomats to look for marks on the roofs of diplomatic missions.

The earliest social media post about the marks appeared on February 24, 2022, the first day of the invasion, in the official Facebook group for Novhorodka, a town in Kirovohrad Province about 340 kilometers southeast of Kyiv.

Two photos showed green and red crosses, each with a circle in the center, painted on a highway and a strip of road that Systema geolocated to a feeder road off a highway near Novhorodka.

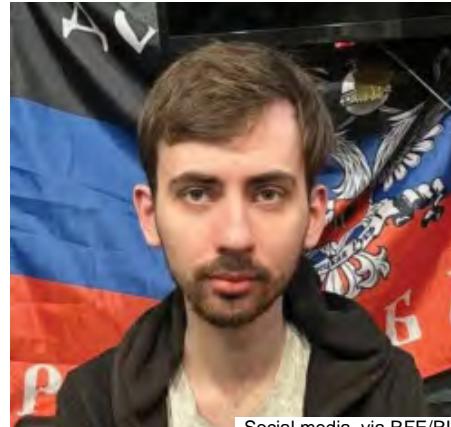
The caption described the signs as "for landing enemy paratrooper(s)" and advised that they should be covered with earth, rubber or paint.

The secretary of the Novhorodka administration, Oleh Vyetrov, told Systema that he himself had photographed the red cross after social media users had sent him photos of crosses. He could no longer recall who these users were.

The people who painted the crosses were never found, though rumors circulated in the village about individuals in Toyotas stopping along local roads, Mr. Vyetrov said.



Igor Mangushev



Vladislav Ugolny



Vladislav Khmelevoi

With an official population of under 6,000 people, the farmland town of Novhorodka might not seem like a priority target for attacks, though Russian missiles have hit the broader region repeatedly during the invasion.

But as Ukrainians nationwide sheltered from a barrage of Russian missile attacks amid a three-pronged invasion from the north, south and east, photographs of other crosses began to spread online.

The cross panic lasted three full days. On February 27, 2022, then-Ukrainian presidential office adviser Oleksiy Arestovych underlined, on behalf of the military, that the crosses served no military purpose – apart from sowing chaos.

"The military equipment of today isn't guided by signs on roads. It's guided with the help of other modern technical means," Mr. Arestovych said in a briefing. "This practice [of painting crosses] could be set up to spark spy mania among us."

For Russian ultranationalist Igor Mangushev, Mr. Arestovych's words signaled success: "Every distracted cop is minus one gun. Every SBU officer catching 'saboteurs' is minus one gun," Mr. Mangushev wrote in a post on his Telegram channel *Zapiski Avanturyurista* (Notes of An Adventurist) on February 27, 2022.

Mr. Mangushev styled himself as a disinformation impresario, "part PR person, part political strategist, part soldier," as well as "a con man and mercenary," his Telegram biography reads.

An ardent ultranationalist notorious for displaying what was purportedly the skull of a Ukrainian soldier at an August 2022 event in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk, he fought against Ukrainian government forces in the Luhansk region beginning in 2014. He reportedly had ties with figures and forces ranging from the late Russian mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin to the GRU.

In February 2022, he was living in Beirut to avoid the risk of criminal prosecution in Russia for a far-right movement he had co-led, E.N.O.T. (United People's Community

Partnerships). While in Lebanon, he organized rallies in support of Russia's war against Ukraine, including one attended by the Russian ambassador to Lebanon, Aleksandr Rudakov.

But he saw "scandalous information campaigns" as his mission – "not just how I earn a living, but my hobby," he told the liberal Russian daily *Novaya Gazeta* in 2019.

One day after the start of the full-scale invasion, on February 25, Mr. Mangushev called on "fighters in the information war" to sow "panic" among Ukrainians and to organize the "paralysis" of the Ukrainian security agencies and emergency services by attacking the Ukrainian cyber-police's bot and by calling the SBU, the Interior Ministry and fire stations with false reports about saboteurs and artillery spotters.

On February 26, Mr. Mangushev also urged his Telegram readers to call Ukrainian territorial defense forces from Ukrainian internet phone numbers and inform them about "ballistic crosses."

Mr. Mangushev's widow, Tatyana Azarevich, said these crosses were her husband's idea.

"The crosses, flooding ambulance phone lines with fake calls, bot attacks, using the Z symbol – that's all his doing. He tried to create maximum chaos," she told Systema in January.

Mr. Mangushev attributed the "chaos" approach to the Russian military chief of staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, and was eager to implement it, former associate Vladislav Ugolny told Systema, also in January. Mr. Ugolny, a blogger, said rumors that had circulated in the region in 2014 about red jackets and T-shirts symbolizing support for the Ukrainian military had inspired the red crosses.

"We projected the Luhansk experience onto Kyiv," he said.

In his February 27, 2022, Telegram post, Mr. Mangushev scoffed at conjecture that "professionals from the GRU" or a Russian military psychological operation had overseen the campaign.

Rather, on March 25, 2022, he claimed that "the creators of a few Telegram channels and their subscribers" were responsible.

He attributed the idea to "a few drunken media people." The first such marks, he said in a June 6, 2022, article on the Russian website *Ukraina.ru*, had been drawn by "our friends," described as "juvenile drug addicts," on the roof of a house in Moscow's Altufyevо district.

"Our volunteers broke into Ukrainian chat rooms, [and then] distributed information about saboteurs drawing marks," he claimed.

How many people took part in any such campaign – and what happened to them – is unknown. When the full-scale invasion began, Mr. Mangushev's Telegram channel had fewer than 6,000 subscribers, according to TGStat, a service that analyzes Telegram traffic.

Following Mr. Mangushev's violent death in 2023, multiple claims surfaced about the crosses' origin and the ultranationalist's ties. A former media manager for Mr. Prigozhin, Sergei Zagatin, has claimed co-creation of the crosses, while Dossier Center, an investigative news outlet funded by exiled former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a vocal critic of Putin, reported that a GRU colonel's "working papers" had mentioned plans to pay Mr. Mangushev 4,000 euros (\$4,032) a month to run a GRU front organization. The Dossier Center report did not show official documents proving this specific claim but included related materials including leaked e-mails from the purported GRU officer.

Ms. Azarevich claimed her husband organized the campaign by phone only in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Mr. Ugolny, who said he didn't work on the crosses, attributed their spread to "our supporters in Kyiv."

"It wasn't anything very complicated," he said. "They just put down a series of marks."

In February and March 2022, Ukrainian media reported on dozens of detentions for drawing crosses and marks, but Ukrainian law-enforcement sources told Systema that police had let such detainees go after issuing a warning. The Ukrainian court registry's cases mostly involve fines or warnings, including for the parents of children making prank calls.

Kateryna Bazykina, 25, a native of the eastern Ukrainian mining town of Novohrodovka, is an exception. Ms. Bazykina was sentenced in August 2023 to 12 years of prison for state treason and "prior conspiracy," including for allegedly painting five crosses on February 25, 2022, in Novohrodovka at the behest of a Russian soldier.

The Dnipro court of appeals later ruled that Ms. Bazykina's recruitment had not been proven – despite a police video in which she claimed that a Donetsk separatist fighter had paid her 2,000 hryvnyas (\$52) for each of the marks.

Ms. Bazykina's case is now under review, though she remains in prison.

Prosecutors assert that Ms. Bazykina delivered the photos via an Instagram intermediary. The man she identified in the video for this role, a former neighbor, Vladislav Khmelevoi, however, dismissed the assertion that the Russian military recruited Ms. Bazykina to draw crosses as "total nonsense."

"It's a digital world now. To carry out a strike, it's enough just to have an address, without crosses, or to have a photo with the coordinates," Mr. Khmelevoi, who fought for Russian-backed forces in the Donbas beginning in 2014, told Systema in a Telegram chat from Moscow in January. "I could identify any military facility without the help of recruiting [anyone]."

Claiming that the "special services" shut



Igor Mangushev displayed what was purportedly the skull of a Ukrainian soldier at an August 2022 event in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk.

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THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Putin's sham reelection

As Russia braces itself for Vladimir Putin's certain reelection, the ominous clouds of authoritarianism grow darker, casting a dark shadow not only over the Russian people but also over neighboring nations in the region who want to embrace democracy and the rule of law. The impending coronation of Putin for yet another term as president represents not just a continuation of tyranny but a grave threat to the fragile stability of the region and the sovereignty of Ukraine.

The façade of democracy that Putin parades before the world is but a thin veneer that conceals the grim reality facing millions of Russians – a reality characterized by repression, censorship and the ruthless suppression of dissent. It is a reality that most ethnic Russians seem to welcome and embrace. The recent crackdown on political opposition and independent media outlets underscores the Kremlin's determination to crush any semblance of democratic governance and entrench its grip on power.

However, while Putin bears ultimate responsibility for the heinous crimes committed under his regime, it is essential to recognize that the Russian people are not mere bystanders in this political theater. The pervasive climate of fear and intimidation that permeates Russian society has made it exceedingly difficult for ordinary citizens to resist the Kremlin's iron-fisted rule and demand accountability from their leaders.

Moreover, the Kremlin's relentless propaganda machine has succeeded in indoctrinating large segments of the population with a toxic brew of nationalism and xenophobia, further eroding the prospects for genuine democratic reform. By demonizing political opposition and scapegoating ethnic and religious minorities, Putin has managed to rally public support behind his authoritarian agenda, effectively silencing dissent and stifling any hopes of political change.

The impact of Putin's certain reelection extends far beyond the borders of Russia, casting a long shadow over the sovereignty and stability of neighboring Ukraine. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine, Putin's regime has pursued a relentless campaign of aggression and expansionism, seeking to redraw the map of Europe through force and intimidation.

The specter of Putin's authoritarian rule looms large over Ukraine, threatening to extinguish the flame of liberty and independence that its people have fought so valiantly to preserve. The ongoing war in Ukraine has exacted a heavy toll on the civilian population, leaving countless innocent civilians dead and displacing millions from their homes.

Moreover, Putin's certain reelection sends a chilling message to the international community, signaling his intent to continue his brazen disregard for international law and norms of civilized behavior. Yet many in the international community refuse to openly castigate the Russian tyrant or they are simply unwilling to take an outspoken stand against him. By flouting the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, Putin undermines the very foundations of the international order, emboldening other autocrats and despots to follow in his footsteps. We, for one, don't want to live in a world of autocrats and despots.

As the world watches in horror at the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine, it is incumbent upon the international community to stand in solidarity with its people and demand an end to Putin's reign of terror. Tougher sanctions must be imposed, diplomatic pressure must be applied and every available means must be utilized to hold Putin and his cronies accountable for their crimes against humanity before Ukraine runs out of the weapons it needs to beat back the Russian horde.

But the burden of change ultimately rests with the Russian people themselves. They must rise up and demand their rights, refusing to be cowed into submission by the Kremlin's campaign of intimidation and repression. Only through collective action and solidarity can they hope to break free from the shackles of tyranny and build a future that is worthy of their collective aspirations. Whether they have that in their DNA is yet to be seen, but we are not optimistic.

March
11
1990

Turning the pages back...

Thirty-four years ago, on March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union. On March 22, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania issued an appeal to the nations of the world to apply pressure against the Soviet Union for its threatening use of force against Lithuania since it declared independence.

"Unfortunately, during the past few days it has become more and more evident that another state is preparing to use force against the Republic of Lithuania and its citizens," the appeal stated.

"In the presence of this threat, we turn with hope to the nations of the world, governments of nation states and all people of good will to request that protests be made against the possible use of any form of coercion and violence against a peaceful member state of the world community, Lithuania, and its citizens."

The Ukrainian Weekly's editorial for March 25 noted the response of President Vytautas Landsbergis to the Soviet threat of force against Lithuania. "The ghost of Stalinism is walking in the Kremlin, and the shadow of it lies far to the West," Mr. Landsbergis said.

The editorial highlighted the lack of response from President George H. W. Bush, who took a cautious approach, claiming he did not "want to sit halfway across the world and try to stir up difficulty." Mr. Bush upped his response after Soviet violations of Lithuanian airspace when he called for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to respect Lithuania's right to self-determination and to adhere to its pledge of not using force.

A resolution proposed in the House of Representatives on March 15 called for Mr. Bush

(Continued on page 7)

Putin's political machinations delegitimize Russian presidential elections

by Vadim Shtepa
Eurasia Daily Monitor

From March 15 to 17, Russia will hold presidential elections, the results of which are entirely predictable. Russian President Vladimir Putin will again receive an overwhelming majority of votes. Kremlin propaganda has created the image of a permanent "national leader," a "tsar." Not all Russians, however, succumb to this image. Alternative, independent candidates are, nevertheless, disallowed from participating in the elections. This was observed in previous campaigns, but in 2024, it became blatantly obvious, even to the point of culminating in political assassinations.

In November, Ekaterina Duntsova, an independent journalist from the Tver region, announced her candidacy in the presidential elections. Among her goals, she named ending the war against Ukraine and democratic reforms in Russia. As an unaffiliated self-nominated candidate, Ms. Duntsova had to collect 300,000 voter signatures by law – hardly possible for an unknown politician. The Central Election Commission, however, did not even allow her to collect these signatures. Russian officials were likely afraid that she had a high chance of success as a woman with an anti-war campaign (DW.com, December 27).

Boris Nadezhdin made the next attempt to run for president on an anti-war platform. He has been involved in politics since 1990, though not in a leading role. The Civil Initiative party nominated Mr. Nadezhdin, and he only had to collect 100,000 signatures to register as a candidate. In January, thousands of people lined up in various Russian cities to sign the petition for his nomination (BBC.com, January 22). People were attracted not so much to the figure of Mr. Nadezhdin himself but to his stated idea of terminating the so-called "special military operation." This became a relatively clear refutation of the Kremlin propaganda thesis that "all Russians" support this war. Although Mr. Nadezhdin collected the required signatures, the Central Election Commission refused to register him, finding many "errors" in these signatures. This is the standard method in Russia for eliminating undesirable candidates. Mr. Nadezhdin's appeal to the Supreme Court did not help either – the court sided with the Central Election Commission (Svoboda.org, February 21). On March 4, the Russian Supreme Court declared that Mr. Nadezhdin was not allowed to register for the presidential election, dismissing his complaint that the Central Election Commission's decision not to register him for the election was illegal (Interfax, March 4). In this, it is apparent that the various elements of Putin's "vertical of power" do not contradict each other.

Mr. Nadezhdin has never called himself an "oppositionist." Throughout his political career, he always remained a "systemic liberal" – that is, people close to the Kremlin who try to promote a moderate liberal agenda. Moscow did not consider, however, the rapid evolution of the Russian political system from formal liberalism to an imperial totalitarian dictatorship under the Putin regime.

Theoretically, the Kremlin could have allowed the "liberal" Mr. Nadezhdin to participate in the elections, enabling him to receive a small portion of the votes. This was how businessman Mikhail Prokhorov was allowed to run in 2012 when he received 8 percent of the votes. Today, this would mean Mr. Nadezhdin's admission to

direct television debates. Moscow, however, considers openly voicing an anti-war position during the war too dangerous, capable of undermining the "will to win."

As a result, the pre-election television debates in Russia have been a complete farce. The participants admitted from the three official Duma parties – the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Liberal Democratic Party, and New People – did not criticize Putin at all (Svoboda.org, February 27). The leader of the pseudo-liberal party "New People," Vladislav Davankov, is advocating "for peace and negotiations, but on our conditions" (RBC.ru, February 15). "Our conditions," in this case, points to the continuation of the war and occupation of Ukrainian territory.

Putin has never participated in pre-election television debates throughout his entire presidential career. In the United States, such behavior would mean automatic disqualification of the candidate. In Russia, on the contrary, it confirms his status as a "tsar" who does not stoop to arguing with "serfs." Equality is nonexistent in Russian politics.

In 2020, Putin openly violated the Russian constitution by usurping power. After two terms as president, he was supposed to leave in 2008. He has been ruling, however, for 24 years and plans to continue. The "constitutional amendments" he introduced in 2020 allow him to sit in the Kremlin until 2036. His rule has been accompanied by the destruction of Russian civil society, increasing repressions year by year, and the strengthening of his imperial dictatorship. In 2022, Putin's push for power led to the outbreak of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Today, residents of the occupied regions of Ukraine are being forced to vote for Putin, and the International Criminal Court in The Hague has issued an arrest warrant for his illegal deportation of Ukrainian children (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 19, 2023).

The free world should not recognize the fictitious presidential elections of 2024 and their "winner," Putin, as the legitimate president of Russia. This will be a decision similar to when many countries in 2020 refused to recognize dictator Alyaksandr Lukashenka as the legitimate president of Belarus (Meduza.io, September 23, 2020). In early February, the issue of non-recognition of the presidential elections in Russia was discussed in the European Parliament. It did not, however, come to a clear conclusion (DW.com, February 15).

The murder of Alexei Navalny on February 16 may radicalize the sentiments of Western politicians toward delegitimizing Putin's rule. In 2020, FSB agents tried to kill him with Novichok poison, but Mr. Navalny survived. After treatment in Germany, he returned to Russia, was sentenced to 19 years in prison, and has now been killed (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 20 [1], [2], February 21). Mr. Navalny was the clear leader of the Russian opposition for the last nine years following the 2015 murder of Boris Nemtsov. They both had strong charisma and could rally massive protest demonstrations (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 11, 2017, February 1, 2018). To establish his "tsarist" power, Putin was afraid of these democratic competitors. If the still uninvestigated murder of Mr. Nemtsov could be attributed to some "Chechen bandits," then the murder of Mr. Navalny proved that this is a systematic Putin policy. Now, if the Western world

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INTERVIEW

West needs stronger sanctions on Russia to help Ukraine win the war, expert says

by Reid Standish
RFE/RL

Since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than two years ago, the United States, Britain, the European Union, Australia, Canada and Japan have imposed thousands of sanctions on Russia.

The main target of the measures has been Russian finances, especially the networks that fund Moscow's war effort. Amid the grinding conflict that's claimed tens of thousands of lives, the companies, entities and individuals connected to Russia's defense and security sector have been added to ever-growing lists compiled by Brussels, Washington and their partners meant to curb Moscow's capacity on the battlefield.

But as the war enters its third year, a growing body of evidence shows that Moscow can circumvent many of these sanctions and get key items for its military from third countries despite Western attempts to stop those efforts.

To better understand the cracks in Western sanctions and how Russia has been able to exploit them, RFE/RL spoke with Tom Keatinge, the director of the Center for Financial Crime and Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London. A former investment banker, Mr. Keatinge is also an adviser on illicit finance to the British Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

RFE/RL: We're now in year three of the war. Shortly after the invasion happened, there was lots of talk about how Russia would become the most sanctioned country ever. Looking at things now, how does this hold up?



Courtesy photo via RFE/RL

Tom Keatinge, the director of the Center for Financial Crime and Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London, is also a former investment banker and former adviser on illicit finance to the British Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

to strengthen his commitment to an independent and democratic Lithuania, normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and Lithuania, build support for Lithuania among U.S. allies to negotiate credits in Western markets, as well as making technical assistance available to the people of Lithuania.

The U.S., along with other Western

Mr. Keatinge: Those statements are all true. There have never been so many sanctions on one country or so many individuals and companies and industries being sanctioned – and never has a country so integrated into the West economically been sanctioned like this before, either.

I think it's also important to keep in mind that the goal of this response has mainly been to restrict the funding and resourcing of the Russian military. And when we look at how that's going, the answer is not great.

It's wrong to say that they're not having any impact, they clearly are having an impact because the Russians are having to find circumvention mechanisms. So some would argue that sanctions are working. Others would say [that we're actually] pulling apart drones that are smashing into Kyiv every night and finding Western components that are relatively recent and certainly have been shipped since the start of the war. Both arguments are true, but the bottom line should be whether we are doing enough and I think, bluntly, that the answer is "no, we're not."

And that's true whether [we're talking about] the provision of ammunition and advanced weaponry or whether we look at the application and implementation of sanctions.

The United States now has the power to designate foreign financial institutions that it finds is facilitating sanction circumvention, but it hasn't been used yet because it will be bloody when it is used and will basically put that particular bank out of business. So until the West broadly is willing to make some examples out of some big violators then I think people at these places will continue to think that sanctions are something that someone else needs to worry about and not what they as an organization need to worry about.

RFE/RL: Earlier this week [Alexei Navalny's wife], Yulia Navalnaya, spoke to the E.U. [European Union] parliament and, among other things, she was saying that more needs to be done to block these channels and networks of banks and lawyers in the West that allow Russia to move money around and navigate around sanctions. You're based in London, which has been famous as one of the main hubs for this over the decades, and despite many events over the years – including the 2022 invasion – it seems there hasn't been a total shift. So, if the war isn't a wake-up call, then what would be?

Mr. Keatinge: That's a legitimate and valid challenge that she makes. I think the thing you have to remember is that the target of sanctions – whether it's an individual, a company or a country – does not sit there and simply say, "Okay, I give up. I will do what you want me to do because of the sanctions you've leveled against me."

There is a whole industry of people, both

states, had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR. The editorial commented that the U.S. should abide by the policy, and doing so would be a demonstration of leadership in granting diplomatic recognition to the Republic of Lithuania, as well as recognizing the will of the people of Lithuania in re-establishing their independence.

Sources: "Lithuania appeals to world's nations," and "Long live Lithuania," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, March 25, 1990.



Office of the President of Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stands by a downed Iranian-made, Shahed-136 kamikaze drone launched by Russia in Ukraine in an undated photo.

inside the country and outside the country, whose job it is to develop new procurement networks. [Russia's Federal Security Service, the FSB], in particular is heavily involved in developing these procurement networks. They're taking all of this very seriously. It's existential for them and so that means that we need to treat it in a similar fashion if we don't want to be outplayed and outmaneuvered.

The West wanted to be heavy in its response, but it didn't want to destroy its own economies in the process. So we have the whole conundrum that's played out with energy dependence on Russia in Europe. It's more than two years now, so we should have organized ourselves to be in a position to completely embargo Russia, if we choose to, but right now there are simply too many gaps.

[Al-Qaeda founder] Osama bin Laden once famously said that his financiers knew the cracks in the Western financial system as well as the cracks on the backs of their hands, which shows how if you leave cracks then they will get abused. So I would endorse what Yulia said, and I think that, again, if we want Ukraine to win, then we have to be willing to lean in much more than we are currently [and] we may have to be willing to potentially damage our own economies.

Ultimately, if it costs us something today, it's going to cost us an awful lot more over the next five, 10 or 15 years if we're not forceful now. So I think it's a false economy, frankly, to be lighter today than we could be. Even for the politicians where it might be a tough explanation to their populations.

RFE/RL: You said earlier that there are still tools on the table that could potentially be very effective, but they're just not being used. So that leaves me with two questions: Why aren't they being used? And what could they accomplish if they were?

Mr. Keatinge: The tools that aren't being used are the tools that would create, to put it mildly, diplomatic difficulties.

The E.U., for instance, has its anti-circumvention toolbox and it could start naming and shaming countries and companies as circumvention risks, but it's treading very, very carefully and tiptoeing around [having to use it.]

As I said before, the United States could use some of the big hammers in its toolbox on foreign financial institutions, too, but the reality is that I just don't think we are brave enough to use those tools because there would be blowback [at home]. But the calculation for whether that blowback is worth it, I suppose, looks different depending on where you are.

If you're sitting through nightly aerial bombardments in Kyiv, Odesa or somewhere like that, I think you'd think that the blowback faced by Europe would be worth it. But if you're facing an election this year in London, Brussels or anywhere else – including on the mega list of countries holding elections this year – maybe you think it's not worth it and you'll leave it for after the election or for the person who ends up taking over after you.

So I think there's a big dose of realpolitik in all of this, which for those of us who want to see an end to this war immediately and Russia expelled from Ukraine, is disappointing.

(This interview was edited and condensed for clarity.)

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Putin's political...

(Continued from page 6)

recognizes Putin as "president" after the elections, it will legalize a political murderer. "A president who killed his main opponent cannot be legitimate," Alexei Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, told European Union officials (Meduza.io, February 20).

Another well-known oppositionist, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, also calls for not recognizing the legitimacy of the March elections. "Declaring the Putin regime illegitimate will also deal a blow to those who continue to do business with the Kremlin despite sanctions and will also contribute

to the federalization and democratization of Russia in the future," he said (Politico.eu, February 16).

If the West continues to call Putin "Mr. President," then Moscow will believe that it has the right to move forward with its criminal plans. Non-recognition will help Ukrainian resistance and may change Russian society. A dictator and murderer, whom the outside world does not recognize as a legitimate president, will soon lose his internal legitimacy in Russia.

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Russian unity...

(Continued from page 2)

ing to convert the outrage against her husband's murder into practical steps toward punishing the Kremlin (Svoboda.org, February 28). Her campaign aims not only to unite the opposition but also to gain stronger international support, which directly targets Putin's hopes for eroding Western solidarity (Meduza.io, February 20). Putin has pinned his hopes on the deadlock in U.S. Congress that has interrupted the delivery of urgently needed military aid to Ukraine. His working assumption has been that this failure of U.S. leadership would accelerate the erosion of European commitment to prevent Russia's victory (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, February 25).

Seeking to promote this disunity, Putin found it opportune to reiterate that Russia has no plans to invade any North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) country so there is no need to increase investments aimed at deterring this aggression (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, February 29). He also saw a new point of contention in French President Emmanuel Macron's warning that a deployment of European troops to Ukraine might become necessary to prevent Russian victory (RIAC, February 29). At the same time, the possibility of even limited reinforcement of Ukrainian air defenses and logistical hubs by troops from a newly-formed Western coalition is a major worry for the Russian high command (Kommersant, March 1).

To discourage the implementation of Mr. Macron's ideas and to foster disagreement among Western countries, Putin asserted that a direct NATO intervention in Ukraine could trigger a nuclear conflict with dire consequences for the world (Svoboda.org, February 29). He recited, yet again, the list of Russian modern nuclear-capable weap-

on systems but did not mention any new tests or deployments (Izvestiya, February 29). He denied any plans for moving nuclear weapons into outer space but confirmed that consultations with the United States on strategic stability matters were out of the question (Vedomosti, February 29). Leaked documents on Russian plans and exercises involving non-strategic nuclear weapons, which experts in Moscow have remained silent about, have added new context to Putin's nuclear discourse (Moscow Times, February 29). China figures prominently in these documents, so Putin probably toned down his nuclear message, wary of irritating Beijing before the visit of Li Hui, Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs, to Moscow (Kommersant, March 3).

Putin is obviously following European and U.S. policy-making, but his portrait of a decadent, declining West is extremely detached from the reality of Western determination to defeat Russian aggression. Similarly, the wishful vision in the Kremlin of a Russian society eager to indefinitely continue the war effort is seriously distorted, and every bit of evidence of deepening discontent produces a spasm of angst and an urge to erase the disagreeable truth (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 26, February 29).

These basic misconceptions will guide the Kremlin's strategy for perpetuating the war. In reality, this course condemns Russia to degradation. Hope was not buried, however, at a small cemetery on Moscow's outskirts, and opposition alternatives exist. A new surge in Western aid will empower Ukraine to regain initiative, and it will then become clear that time is not on Putin's side, and that his defeat will be a liberation, not a catastrophe.

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Cleveland community unites to pray for peace in Ukraine

by Dick Russ

CLEVELAND – More than 1,200 people gathered in downtown Cleveland to pray for peace on the evening of February 24, the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, led by Bishop Edward C. Malesic, partnered with Bishop Bohdan J. Danylo of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat of Parma, Ohio, to welcome faithful from many churches and denominations from across the greater Cleveland area.

"Just stop the killing," pleaded Bishop Danylo, whose local parishes have welcomed many refugee families over the last 2 years. "I ask everyone to pray, whatever prayers they say, be it Christian, Jewish, Muslim. Just pray for peace. People of goodwill are standing for the same principle on which our nation of America was founded. Freedom."

Bishop Malesic, whose diocese covers eight counties across northeast Ohio and has more than 600,000 faithful, made an impassioned plea for peace in his homily to the overflow crowd gathered in the



Courtesy of Dick Russ

Bishop Bohdan J. Danylo (fourth from the right) of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat of Parma, Ohio, was joined by members of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland and community leaders during a religious service on February 24.



More than 1,200 people gathered in downtown Cleveland in the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist to pray for peace on the evening of February 24, the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist.

Accompanied by his Auxiliary Bishop Michael Woost, the leader of the Cleveland diocese said from the pulpit, "We gather tonight to offer our prayers for the repose of the souls of those killed in this war, and for healing and recovery for those who have been maimed."

Looking at a children's choir, which sang hymns in Ukrainian and English, and noting how many Ukrainian children have been killed, injured or kidnapped by Russia, Bishop Malesic said, "All children should be able to sing without fear.

Children should not be caught in the middle of a war."

The Cleveland Maidan Association, which coordinated the ecumenical prayer service, has counted more than 410,000 Ukrainians killed or wounded since the Russian invasion. More than 30,000 of the dead are civilians, including 2,000 children. Physical damage to Ukraine is now estimated to be more than half a trillion U.S. dollars.

Dr. Taras Mahlay, president of the Cleveland Maidan Association, put his

(Continued on page 12)

Shmyhal...

(Continued from page 1)

"The government's first task is to provide resources for the security and defense forces to ensure our resilience during the war. The second task is to build a new economy in war conditions, which will simultaneously become the basis for the Ukrainian economic miracle. The third task is to continue reforms on the path to the E.U. [European Union] and to continue Ukraine's recovery," Mr. Shmyhal said of the government's priorities during a press conference on March 4.

The prime minister emphasized that, despite the full-scale invasion of Russia, the government managed to maintain macro-level financial stability in the country.

He also emphasized that Ukraine spends its resources on defense and security needs.

"We can say that every hryvnia paid by Ukrainian businesses and citizens goes to security and defense. We need help from our partners in other areas," he said.

According to Mr. Shmyhal, a total of \$75 billion in foreign aid was attracted over the previous two years. This year, Ukraine plans to raise at least \$37 billion. The largest donors of direct budgetary support are the European Union, the United States, the International Monetary Fund, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, and other Group of Seven (G-7) and Nordic countries.

In addition, Mr. Shmyhal emphasized the importance of starting to use the proceeds of frozen Russian assets this year to help Ukraine rebuild.

"The assistance of our partners is a vital tool, but we need predictability and stability regardless of time, political fluctuations and electoral cycles in the world. Accordingly, the confiscation of Russian assets should become a reliable source of support

for our state and funding for our recovery," said Mr. Shmyhal, adding that about 300 billion euros of Russian sovereign assets have been frozen in the West. That money is held mainly in various financial instruments, such as bonds.

"Today, most partners support the idea of using Russian assets to rebuild Ukraine. We already understand that we are ready to use the proceeds from the frozen Russian assets in favor of Ukraine. But this is only the first step. We are interested in confiscation. Because this is the punishment of the aggressor for the crimes for which he must pay," Mr. Shmyhal said.

He emphasized that the government is making significant efforts to support business and the economy. He said that the government will continue to increase the percentage of GDP growth, which in 2023 amounted to 5.7 percent, more than forecast. In addition, according to Mr. Shmyhal, more than 90 percent of Ukrainian enterprises have resumed their work.

He also outlined what is needed to strengthen the Ukrainian economy, with a priority of attracting foreign investment. Additionally, Ukraine aims to create an extensive credit line for the country's recovery, insure investment projects, protect major industrial centers with air and missile defense systems, and develop industrial parks.

Among the projects for foreign investment, the extraction of critical raw materials, production of batteries for electric cars, chemical industry, wood processing and mechanical engineering are particularly promising. Attracting investors to energy projects is equally important, he said. Namely, priority projects include the completion of new units at the Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant to increase electricity generation and two energy interconnectors to Europe to strengthen integration with the European Union.

An essential area that the government is also focusing on is seaports.

"The sea corridor is working. I am grateful to our Armed Forces for actually liberating the western part of the Black Sea from the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and its terror and aggression. Our Black Sea corridor is working, and exports from Ukraine are moving. About 30 million tons, and this figure will be reached soon, have been exported from Ukraine. Our goal is to have stable indicators of the level of 2021 in sea transportation," Mr. Shmyhal said.

And Ukraine has also used the Danube River to move goods to the rest of Europe and beyond.

"Compared to 2021, cargo turnover of the Danube Port Cluster has increased by almost 600 percent. More than 20 new transshipment points have been opened. Danube ports handle 3.3 million tons of cargo per month. Our goal is to expand the export capacity of the Danube cluster," Mr. Shmyhal noted.

The prime minister named exports to the E.U. by land and the resolution of the border blockade as the ways to strengthen the economy.

Mr. Shmyhal said he believes that the border blockade by Polish farmers is unreasonable, as almost 90 percent of Ukraine's agricultural exports go by sea. He reminded the press that Ukraine offered Poland a plan of five straightforward steps to resolve the blockade, but they were not accepted.

He also noted that Ukraine is working with partners to incentivize Ukrainians to return home from abroad.

Another step in the development of the state's economy, the prime minister said, is to increase tax revenues. The goal is to increase tax revenues without raising taxes by fighting the "gray market" and reforming customs and taxation.

Mr. Shmyhal added that this year the government would intensify the scaling up

of the compensation program for purchased agricultural machinery to cover all equipment, adapt existing state support programs, introduce grants to Ukrainian producers, and stimulate consumer demand.

"We are implementing institutional changes, quite significant reforms. In the anti-corruption sphere, the heads of three anti-corruption institutions have been appointed through open competitions," said Mr. Shmyhal, referring to civil service reform and the intensification of work in the anti-corruption sphere.

He also emphasized the importance of introducing digitalization, which helps fight corruption at all levels, and assured that work in this direction would continue. Separately, Mr. Shmyhal reported on developments in reforming government institutions.

"We want to reduce the number of ministries by one-third. We want to reduce the number of civil servants. We have already started doing this. And this year, 20,000 civil service positions have been cut. We are working to create a powerful government center," he said.

Government ministries should employ a small number of highly qualified specialists who will formulate public policy, Mr. Shmyhal said.

"The government center should also quickly and efficiently prepare documents required by a particular ministry regarding resolutions and orders. That is, all auxiliary administrative functions should be concentrated in a single place, in the government center. Ministries will be powerful centers for policy development and analytics," Mr. Shmyhal said.

In addition, he noted that work is underway to introduce a modern human resources management system in government agencies similar to the Diia system currently used by the public.

Rukh Art Hub presents contemporary Ukrainian art shows at New York's Mriya Gallery

by Nicholas Gordon

NEW YORK – Two new art shows at the Mriya Gallery in downtown Manhattan featured the works of established and emerging contemporary Ukrainian artists, drawing large crowds for the opening night receptions.

The exhibits are part of a collaboration between Rukh Art Hub, a Ukrainian contemporary art space, and Mriya Gallery, "the first Ukrainian art gallery in NYC [New York City]," in which new exhibits will open each month throughout the year.

The "Shero" exhibit, which ran from February 16-22, featured 30 artworks by 27 different artists. "Shero" was a celebration of female power and beauty, exploring "the profound depths of women's inner worlds, their struggles for rights and freedoms, their societal roles and sensory experiences," as stated in the brochure for the exhibit.

The "Time Capsule – A Golden Record" exhibit featured over 30 artworks by more than a dozen artists, and ran from February 24 to March 3. "Time Capsule" explored existential topics of human experience and the "complex interrelationships between people of different faiths, cultures and social strata," as stated in the brochure.

Both exhibits were forward-looking and edgy, integrating experiences, questions and lessons of mankind's past and present, while considering the future. The bold, vibrantly-colored artworks of "Shero" – many of which feature the erotic and enigmatic power of the nude female form – exude a visceral pang of surprise, triumph, freedom and joy, often in the face of adversity.

The abstract, philosophical artworks in "Time Capsule" are of a decidedly more



Katia Lesiuk (holding microphone, eighth from the right), co-organizer of "Time Capsule – A Golden Record" and director of sales for Rukh Art Hub, speaks to gallery guests during the opening night reception.

contemplative and cerebral cast, assessing humanity's capacity for good and evil in a world of darkness and light.

Mariia Manuilenko, an art curator from Kharkiv, Ukraine, who co-founded Rukh Art Hub, organized both exhibits at the Mriya Gallery.

"I'm happy to do as much as I can in my job to support these Ukrainian artists and give them a space for their voice and their art," Ms. Manuilenko said in an interview with The Ukrainian Weekly at the Shero exhibit.

To save on costs and provide maximum support to the artists, Ms. Manuilenko handles many aspects of the show's production by herself, including the arduous logistics. Traveling around Ukraine by train and bus, she collected 63 different artworks from various artists and then transported them

out of the country on her own. In the process, she taught herself how to roll and package valuable canvases for shipment, as well as how to stretch and mount them for display in the exhibits.

"I've met so many good people who have helped me a lot along the way," Ms. Manuilenko said, noting that she works with a team of 10 members, most of whom are female refugees from Ukraine. Ms. Manuilenko currently splits her time between Ukraine, Poland and New York.

Since the start of the full-scale Russian war on Ukraine in February of 2022, Ms. Manuilenko has organized 11 Ukrainian art exhibitions across the U.S. in cities such as Atlanta, Denver and Los Angeles.

"When we found out about Mriya Gallery, we saw it as a great opportunity for collaboration," Ms. Manuilenko said. "It's a wonderful space and people enjoy coming here."

"The Time Capsule – A Golden Record" drew inspiration from the gold-plated record onboard NASA's Voyager spacecraft, which contained sounds and images conveying the diversity of life and culture on earth in hopes that it might be found by extraterrestrials.

Even as "Time Capsule" sets out to convey the golden record of the "most meaningful and valuable aspects of our lives" on earth, it does not shy away from exploring the brutal backdrop of the Russian war in Ukraine, where daily atrocities are being committed against innocent Ukrainian citizens.

Denis Sarazhin, a world-renowned Ukrainian artist represented by the Arcadia Contemporary Gallery in New York, has a painting titled "Did the Past Ever Happen" in the Time Capsule exhibit that reflects



Nicholas Gordon

Mariia Manuilenko, an art curator from Kharkiv, Ukraine, who co-founded Rukh Art Hub, stands next to her favorite artwork in the "Shero" exhibit. The painting is titled "The World Was Catching Me" by Diana Ruban, a 25-year-old self-taught artist

some of his anguish related to the war.

Mr. Sarazhin spoke with The Ukrainian Weekly at the opening reception about the complex emotions and challenges associated with making art during the time of war.

"After February 24, little by little I lost my passion for making art," Mr. Sarazhin said, explaining that he and his wife, who is also an artist, left their apartment in Kharkiv, Ukraine, just before the start of the Russian war to participate in an exhibit in Chattanooga, Tenn. Due to safety concerns, they have been unable to return to their home in Kharkiv ever since.

"In one sense, art is a nice distraction in our lives, but it's not the most important thing when you need soldiers and doctors," Mr. Sarazhin said. "But in another sense, our art is a part of our civilization; art is something that makes us human."

Mr. Sarazhin is originally from Nikopol, Ukraine, and studied art at the Kharkiv Academy of Design and Art. Having now returned to his craft of painting, Mr. Sarazhin said he's drawing artistic strength from seeing the work of many of his former classmates from Kharkiv Academy featured in the exhibit as well.

"Here, I feel a connection to my fellow artists and classmates," Mr. Sarazhin said. "Even though I don't see them here, I feel their presence in their artworks."

Responses to the war and reflections on the human condition are imbued in the art-

(Continued on page 16)



The "War Diaries" paintings featured in the "Time Capsule" exhibit were made by Ukrainian child artists who have been given a creative workspace by the Aza Nizi Maza Studio in Kharkiv, Ukraine. In the wake of the war, the studio first transformed into a bomb shelter and then became a creative haven for children who had been sheltering in metro stations amid the raging war.

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Shevchenko Scientific Society in U.S., HURI and Cooper Union mark war's second anniversary

by Mark Temnycky

NEW YORK – The Shevchenko Scientific Society in the United States, the Cooper Union and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University (HURI) hosted a presentation on February 23 in the Cooper Union's Great Hall to mark the second anniversary of the launch of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine.

During the presentation, panelists discussed Russian atrocities and war crimes throughout the war and highlighted how Ukrainians have stood up to Russian aggression. The presentation ended with what local communities can do to stop the Kremlin's ongoing war. Nearly 600 people attended the hybrid event.

The panel featured Oleksandra Matviichuk, 2022 Nobel Peace Prize winner and head of the Center for Civil Liberties; Volodymyr Yermolenko, president of PEN Ukraine; Kristina Hook, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center; and Christopher Atwood, senior advisor on media, communications and journalism at the Soubipilist Foundation. The event was moderated by Dr. Alexandra Hrycak, professor of sociology at Reed College in Portland, Ore.

Ms. Matviichuk opened the presentation by highlighting Russian atrocities throughout the war. Since the first Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Ms. Matviichuk has been documenting Russian war crimes. She, in addition to several other agencies such as Human Rights Watch and the United Nations, has visited parts of Ukraine, recording episodes of Russian atrocities.

According to Ms. Matviichuk, there have been over 64,000 cases recorded. The epi-

sodes range from Russian soldiers firing on civilians and murdering innocent people to separating families and torturing or raping Ukrainian civilians. There are many similarities in the cases reported, suggesting that they are not isolated incidents but recurring patterns of crimes committed by Russian soldiers, she said.

Ms. Matviichuk said that Russian President Vladimir Putin is testing the limits of the international community. The Russian leader is attempting to show the world that he can change international borders and the status quo without consequence. If Putin and his allies are not held accountable for their acts, then this will suggest to other authoritarian rulers that they can do as they please, she said. This would result in a "world dangerous for everyone," she concluded.

Mr. Yermolenko agreed. During his presentation, he said that Ukrainians have nowhere to hide as they try to combat Russian atrocities. This has forced Ukrainians to become stronger, and it has forced them to unite. As a result, their communities are more robust, he said.

Ukrainians have evolved throughout the war, Mr. Yermolenko added. They have worked hard to defend their homeland, and those not fighting on the front have joined the war effort through other means, such as providing equipment and assistance to soldiers and volunteers. Others have constantly sought to report on the war so that international audiences can be informed, he said.

Ms. Hook and Mr. Atwood then shifted the discussion to focus on categorizing Russia's atrocities during the war. In their research, they found three Western claims to be misleading.



Olena Kotyk

Pictured during an event to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine are (from left to right) Christopher Atwood, senior advisor on media, communications and journalism at the Soubipilist Foundation; Kristina Hook, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center; Volodymyr Yermolenko, president of PEN Ukraine; and Dr. Alexandra Hrycak, professor of sociology at Reed College in Portland, Ore.

First, there is a belief that the Russo-Ukraine war is a territorial dispute. Second, some believe a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine will end the war. Third, some believe that civilian casualties and other atrocities are a standard part of war, and that this is something that cannot be avoided, the two said.

These statements, however, are incorrect, they said. First, Putin and his supporters have stated on several occasions that they do not believe Ukraine is a real country, or that its people exist as part of a separate and distinct nation. Putin has said that he will not stop until Ukraine ceases to exist. This, therefore, is not a territorial dispute, the two argued.

Second, a ceasefire would condemn millions of Ukrainians to Russian brutality. Findings from investigations of atrocities committed in Ukrainian towns such as Bucha, Irpin and Izyum are only a glimpse into Russia's brutality, they said.

Finally, as Ms. Matviichuk said, there have been patterns of Russian attacks on civilian populations in Ukraine. Ms. Hook further elaborated on this point, stating that there are several other conflicts around the world. But in those wars, the combatants have avoided civilian casualties.

Ms. Hook and Mr. Atwood also wrote a report on Russian atrocities throughout the war. In their research, they found that Russian soldiers had targeted numerous cultural centers, residential buildings and non-military areas. In other words, as Ms. Hook put it, this was "willful destruction" by the Russians.

The panelists noted that misconceptions about the war will lead to false conclusions, and international observers will miss the atrocities that are occurring during the war. They noted that the consequences are dire for the world and for Ukraine.

"If Ukrainians do not fight for freedom, they will face [Russian] occupation," Mr. Atwood said, adding that that is why Ukraine needs to succeed.

Ms. Hrycak then opened the final portion of the program to an open discussion with the panelists.

During the conversation, the speakers emphasized that citizens both in Ukraine and abroad need to inform world leaders about the atrocities Russia is committing in Ukraine.

Elevating the voices of Ukrainians will help educate and inform world leaders. It can help legislators and policymakers pass new legislation that will aid Ukraine while also punishing Russia for its actions.

Finally, citizens in the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom, as well as elsewhere, should be encouraged to write to and speak with their elected representatives so that they can send aid to Ukraine, the panelists said. This work will continue to put Ukraine at the forefront of the news, and pressure politicians to continue aid, which will allow these countries to continue helping Ukraine, they said.

Mark Temnycky is an accredited freelance journalist covering Eurasian affairs and a nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center. He can be found on X @ MTemnycky.



Volodymyr Yermolenko (second from the right), president of PEN Ukraine, speaks on February 23 in the Cooper Union's Great Hall during a panel discussion to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine. He was joined by (from left to right) Christopher Atwood, senior advisor on media, communications and journalism at the Soubipilist Foundation; Kristina Hook, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center; and Dr. Alexandra Hrycak, professor of sociology at Reed College in Portland, Ore.

Cleveland...

(Continued from page 9)

career as a physician in Cleveland on hold when Russians invaded his family's homeland. For two years he has been coordinating medical relief efforts and supplies for Ukraine and has seen firsthand the carnage inflicted on Ukrainian civilians and the military.

"The injuries now are probably worse than they were before," he said. "Lives are being lost. I am doing significantly more now saving lives than when I was working full-time."

One of the severely wounded Ukrainian soldiers who is being treated in Cleveland attended the prayer service and spoke with reporters afterward.

"It is very hard to live just one day dur-

ing the war, and to describe two years of war is extremely difficult," said Ukrainian Army Lt. Myroslav Pylypchuk, who stepped on a Russian landmine and had to have his leg amputated. "I wish I could go back and be with my colleagues, but due to the severe nature of my injury, I cannot."

Also among those praying for peace were Dennis and Marina Serdichenko, who came to the service barely an hour after arriving in Cleveland from their home in Odessa, where Marina Serdichenko was a military chaplain.

"It is getting harder and harder, worse and worse," Ms. Serdichenko told reporters after the 40-minute vigil. "We are actually in great danger. Every day we are under bombing and rocket attacks. It's hard, but we work and do everything we can to stop this evil and have a victory. We really

believe that Ukraine will have freedom, that Ukraine will win."

After the service, which had the participation of more than two dozen Roman and Ukrainian Catholic clergy, along with Ukrainian Orthodox and Protestant clergy, those gathered were reminded that, in addition to prayers, there are actions they can take to help relieve the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

"Advocate, organize, raise your voices, visit our legislators," urged Marta Liscynsky-Kelleher, president of the United Ukrainian Organizations of Ohio. "May God hasten the day that we all gather to celebrate victory."

The need to pray and organize support was echoed by Lt. Pylypchuk.

"Ukraine depends to a great extent on the help that is coming from outside," he

said, "from the United States, from Europe. Unfortunately, Ukraine is not in a position to manufacture all the things necessary. The people are exhausted physically and financially."

Bishop Danylo also made a plea for assistance and he encouraged the faithful to keep praying and working to help bring an end to the war.

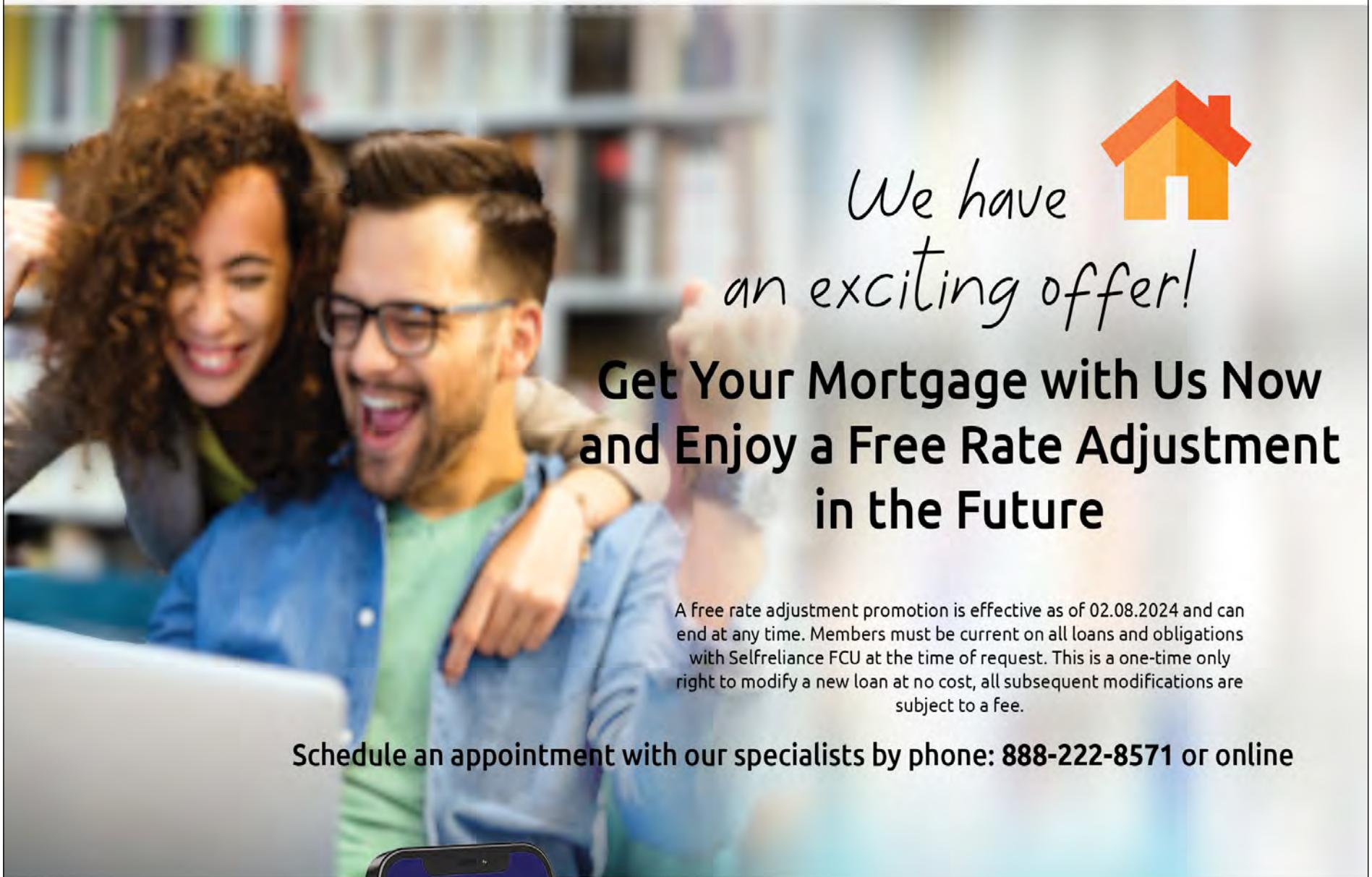
"Please help us to have advocacy to the U.S. government," he said.

"Right now, the Europeans are a little faster than us. We are slowing down the latest \$60 billion aid package for Ukraine. We were the first to help. Ukrainians are not asking for American Marines or soldiers, or the Air Force to fight for us. We just need help to fight this giant. We only want the Russians to leave and to let us live in peace," Bishop Danylo said.



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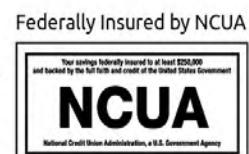
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(Continued from page 2)

the February 14 strike was a combined operation of the armed forces and military intelligence also using Magura V5 naval drones. Earlier in February, Ukrainian forces said they had sunk the Russian missile-armed corvette Ivanovets in the Black Sea in an operation carried out by the same elite Group 13 unit with Magura V5 drones. Russia has not commented on the two Ukrainian claims. The Magura V5 drone, an acronym for Maritime Autonomous Guard Unmanned Robotic Apparatus V Type, was unveiled last year. The drone, which has the appearance of a sleek speedboat, has a top speed of 80 kilometers per hour, according to reports, and can carry a payload of 320 kilograms. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian Services and Current Time, with reporting by AP and Reuters)

Moscow-installed election official killed

A car bomb killed a woman who was a member of the Moscow-installed local election commission in the Russian-occupied city of Berdyansk in Ukraine's eastern Zaporizhia region on March 6. Russia's Investigative Committee said it launched a probe into the "terrorist attack." According to the committee, a handmade explosive device planted under the driver's seat of the vehicle detonated, severely injuring the woman, whose identity was not disclosed. The woman died hours later in a hospital. Since Russia has installed officials in areas it has taken control of since launching its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, several have been killed or injured in attacks. (RFE/RL)

Ukraine never asked for foreign troops

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has never asked for Western troops to fight Russia's full-scale invasion, the White House said on March 5 after French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated that he would not rule out the idea. "President Zelenskyy isn't asking for that; he's just asking for the tools and capabilities. He's never asked for foreign troops to fight for his country," National Security

Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters. Mr. Macron earlier on March 5 said he "fully stood behind" remarks last week in which he did not rule out the deployment of Western troops to Ukraine, which sent a shockwave around Europe. He also said Ukraine's allies should avoid looking cowardly in supporting the country. "We are surely approaching a moment for Europe in which it will be necessary not to be cowards," Mr. Macron said on a visit to the Czech Republic. "And I believe that our two countries are aware of what is happening in Europe, that war has returned to our land." He added that the threat has become unstoppable and is spreading "every day" to European countries. "Is this or is it not our war? Can we look away in the belief that we can let things run their course?" Mr. Macron asked. "I don't believe so, and therefore I called for a strategic surge and I fully stand behind that," Mr. Macron said.

Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) chief Sergei Naryshkin was quoted by state-run news agency RIA Novosti as saying that Mr. Macron's comments show the irresponsibility of Europe's leaders and are moving the world to the brink of nuclear war. Most European allies said they would not send troops to Ukraine after Mr. Macron said on February 26 that he would not rule out the deployment of Western troops to Ukraine. French officials sought to clarify Mr. Macron's remarks and tamp down criticism while insisting on the need to send a clear signal to Russia that it cannot win in Ukraine. Any forces sent to Ukraine could be sent to back operations such as demining rather than fighting Russian forces, they said. Germany's defense minister said Mr. Macron's quotes were not helpful. "We don't need really ... discussions about boots on the ground or having more courage or less courage," Boris Pistorius said at a press conference in Stockholm after meeting with his Swedish counterpart. During his visit to Prague, Mr. Macron met with Czech President Petr Pavel, a former North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) general, who agreed that Ukraine's allies should seek "new ways" to help but said the West would not cross "the imaginary red line" by getting involved in combat operations. "We agree that the only option for us is to continue supporting Ukraine," Mr. Pavel said. "We've agreed that Europe has to play a bigger role in helping Ukraine." Mr. Pavel suggested that NATO countries could for instance train Ukrainian soldiers in Ukraine, which he said would not be a violation of international rules. The presidents also commented on Prague's plan to buy ammunition for Ukraine outside Europe. Around 15 nations have voiced support for the plan to buy 500,000 rounds of 155 mm ammunition and 300,000 122 mm shells worth about \$1.5 billion. The Netherlands has already pledged to donate 100 million euros

(\$108.5 million). Mr. Macron said France backed the plan but did not say how much it might contribute. France has long pushed for the European Union to use European financing only for the European defense industry and opposed the idea of buying outside the bloc. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by AFP and AP)

Arrest warrants for two senior Russian officers

The International Criminal Court (ICC) said on March 5 that it issued arrest warrants for Sergey Kobylash and Viktor Sokolov for alleged crimes committed in Ukraine from "at least" between October 10, 2022, and March 9, 2023. The two are "allegedly responsible for the war crime of directing attacks at civilian objects, the war crime of causing excessive incidental harm to civilians or damage to civilian objects and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts," the ICC said. Mr. Kobylash, a lieutenant general, is the commander of Russia's Long-Range Aviation of the Aerospace Force. Mr. Sokolov, an admiral, is the former commander of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. (RFE/RL)

Crimean Tatar activists detained

Russian-imposed police in Ukraine's Moscow-annexed Crimea detained at least five Crimean Tatar activists on terrorism charges after searching their homes and the homes of several other Crimean Tatars on the Black Sea peninsula on March 5, the Crimean Solidarity human rights groups said. The wife of one of the activists said the officers looked for banned literature. Since illegally annexing Crimea in 2014, Russia has imposed pressure on Crimean Tatars, the peninsula's indigenous ethnic group, many of whom openly protested the annexation. (RFE/RL's Crimea Realities)

Russia says it downed 6 Ukrainian drones

Russia's Defense Ministry says it destroyed six Ukrainian drones on March 7 over three Russian regions. One drone was intercepted over the Kursk region, three were destroyed over the Bryansk region, and two more were destroyed in Tula region. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. A day earlier, a Ukrainian drone struck the Mikhailovsky Mining and Processing Plant in Zheleznygorodsk, in the Kursk region, sparking a fire after hitting a fuel tank. Ukraine has not commented on the news, which could not be independently confirmed. Meanwhile, Lithuania's intelligence agencies said in a report on March 7 that high oil prices, sanctions evasion and state investment give Russia enough resources to fight on in Ukraine at the current intensity for at least two more years. The agencies, in their

(Continued on page 15)

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Plast Camp "Vovcha Tropa" is seeking a head cook for children's camp in East Chatham, NY from July 3 to August 11, 2024. The head cook plans, prepares and serves three meals and a snack daily for approximately 400 campers and staff seven days a week. Responsibilities include ensuring that kitchen and dining room meet NYS Health Dept. standards for health and safety, ensuring that kitchen staff is well managed and communicates with camp director. Candidate must have the ability and knowledge to properly provide nutritious meals in a timely manner to large groups. Candidate must have cooking, meal preparation, staff management, food handling experience and skills. Room and board provided. Knowledge of Ukrainian language is not necessary. Interested parties should contact Petro Bokalo at 215-385-1205 or psbokalo@gmail.com.

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Zelenskyy calls...

(Continued from page 1)

"Ukrainian children are Russia's military targets."

The bodies of a 10-year-old boy and his 8-year-old sister were found under the rubble on March 3, regional Gov. Oleh Kiper said.

Ukraine's emergency services said they had found the bodies of families huddled together as they sifted through the rubble.

"A mother tried to cover her 8-month-old baby with her body. They were found in a tight embrace," the agency said on Telegram.

March 3 has been declared a day of mourning in Odesa and the region for those killed during the drone attack on the city.

According to rescuers, 18 apartments of a nine-story building in Odesa were destroyed in the air strike that the Ukrainian Air Force said occurred overnight on March 2 and also hit the Mykolayiv region.

Mr. Zelenskyy on March 2 pleaded with Kyiv's Western allies to supply more air-defense systems as Russia continues to pound Ukraine with drones, missiles and artillery fire while the civilian death toll continues to mount. The United Nations has verified at least 10,000 civilian deaths since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

There was no comment on the attack in Moscow, which denies targeting civilians despite ample evidence of Russian strikes on residential areas.

The Ukrainian Internal Affairs Ministry reported a separate attack in the southern Kherson region that it said killed one person and wounded three others. Officials also reported an air strike on a residential quarter of Kurakhove, a town in the eastern Donetsk region, which injured 16.

Meanwhile, Russian military bloggers reported an attempted massive Ukrainian drone attack on the illegally annexed peninsula of Crimea.

Moscow said it shot down 38 Ukrainian drones, while the Rybar Telegram channel, which is close to Russia's armed forces, said

one hit a pipeline at an oil depot.

An adviser to Crimea's Kremlin-installed leader said traffic was halted early on March 3 along a highway near Feodosia, the site of the earlier explosion. More than eight hours later, Crimea's local transport minister reported that traffic had partially resumed.

A bridge that connects Crimea to Russian territory was also closed to traffic for about two hours early on March 3.

Following those strikes, Russia then continued to hit civilian areas of Ukraine indiscriminately, causing more casualties and material damage, the Ukrainian military and regional officials said on March 7.

Shelling killed at least two people and wounded another 16 in four Ukrainian regions, while the Black Sea port city of Odesa was targeted again by a Russian missile, regional officials said on March 7.

Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said a 70-year-old man was killed by a Russian Iskander-M missile in the village of Borova, where eight civilians, including five children, were also wounded.

Donetsk regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said one person was killed by Russian shelling in Netailove and three more people were wounded. Oleksandr Prokudin, the governor of the Kherson region, reported that four people were wounded by Russian shelling across the region.

Russian artillery fire wounded a man in the village of Bilenka in the southern region of Zaporizhia on March 6, according to the head of the regional military administration, Ivan Fedorov.

The Ukrainian military said that Russia launched a strike at Odesa, probably using a ballistic missile, hitting port infrastructure.

The strike came a day after several people were killed in a Russian missile attack that hit some 500 to 800 meters away from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Greek Prime Minister Konstantin Mitsotakis, who were visiting Odesa.

Regional Gov. Oleh Kiper said on Telegram on March 7 that "people were killed and wounded" in the attack, without specifying how many.

In Russia's northwestern region of



Serhiy Nuzhnenko/RadioSvoboda.org

RFE/RL photographer Serhiy Nuzhnenko traveled to the front line near Bakhmut, where he met up with a small unit of Ukrainian soldiers tasked with destroying Russian positions. With their ability to move quickly, thus making them harder to locate, small units such as this one can be especially lethal for entrenched Russian positions

Vologda, the governor confirmed media reports on March 7 saying a drone hit a major metallurgical plant, Severstal, in the city of Cherepovets.

Georgy Filimonov said no casualties were reported in the attack and that the facility continued to operate "routinely."

Hours before, Severstal officials said "a technical incident" took place in the plant without mentioning a drone attack.

Since Russia launched its ongoing invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many military objects and industrial facilities have been targeted by drones. Kyiv rarely comments on the attacks.

Russia's Defense Ministry, meanwhile, said it had destroyed six Ukrainian drones on March 7 over three Russian regions.

One drone was intercepted over the Kursk region, three were destroyed over the Bryansk region, and two more were destroyed in the Tula region. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

A day earlier, a Ukrainian drone struck the Mikhailovsky Mining and Processing

Plant in Zheleznogorsk, in the Kursk region, sparking a fire after hitting a fuel tank. Ukraine has not commented on the news, which could not be independently confirmed.

In Oslo, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Haar Store said in a statement on March 7 that his government will allocate \$153 million to an initiative launched by the Czech Republic to purchase ammunition for Ukrainian troops, who have been suffering from a shortage of weapons and ammunition needed to stave off the assault of the vastly better armed and equipped Russian forces on the eastern front.

(With reporting by AFP and AP)

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

annual assessment of threats facing the Baltic country, said Russia reformed and strengthened its battle-torn army in Ukraine in 2023 and is on track to expand its military capabilities along its border with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), including next to Finland, which joined the alliance last year. "Moscow is able to evaluate the lessons learned and improve its combat effectiveness," the agencies added. (RFE/RL's Current Time, with reporting by Reuters)

Ex-U.S. Army officer pleads not guilty

A retired U.S. Army officer has pleaded not guilty to charges that he shared classified intelligence with a woman claiming to be from Ukraine, using e-mail and an online dating platform to send information that included Russian military targets in Ukraine. David Slater entered the plea in federal court in Nebraska on March 5 in the latest in a series of embarrassing disclosures and leaks of classified U.S. intelligence, some of it concerning Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine and U.S. support for Kyiv. The federal public defender who represented Mr. Slater at the hearing didn't comment on the case, but the judge ordered Mr. Slater to hire his own attorney after reviewing financial docu-

ments indicating he owns several rental homes in Nebraska and a property in Germany. The judge also confirmed during the hearing that Mr. Slater no longer has access to classified information, but it was not clear if that meant he lost his job. U.S. prosecutors said on March 4 that Mr. Slater, a retired lieutenant colonel, was working as a civilian employee at U.S. Strategic Command when he allegedly began an online relationship with a woman on a "foreign dating platform." U.S. Strategic Command oversees U.S. nuclear arsenals, among other things. It's unclear whether Mr. Slater, 63, ever physically met the woman, who prosecutors said identified herself as Ukrainian. In a series of e-mails and chats on the unnamed dating site between February and April 2022, the woman sent messages asking Mr. Slater specific questions about U.S. intelligence on Russia's invasion. "Dear, what is shown on the screens in the special room?? It is very interesting," the woman texted Mr. Slater around March 11, 2022, according to the unsealed indictment. "By the way, you were the first to tell me that NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] members are traveling by train and only now (already evening) this was announced on our news. You are my secret informant, love! How were your meetings? Successfully?" the woman texted Mr. Slater days later. "Beloved Dave, do NATO and [U.S. President Joe] Biden have a secret plan to help us?" the woman wrote

on March 18. "You are my secret agent. With love," the woman allegedly wrote a week later. The indictment does not quote any e-mails or messages authored by Mr. Slater, who was expected to be released on March 6 on the condition that he surrenders his passport, submits to GPS monitoring, and remains in Nebraska. If convicted at trial, Mr. Slater faces up to 10 years in federal prison on each of the three counts laid out in the indictment. A series of leaks of classified U.S. data on Ukraine and other issues have embarrassed the U.S. intelligence community and stirred doubts among U.S. allies sharing closely held information. On March 4, a man who served in the U.S. Air National Guard unit pleaded guilty to leaking highly classified military documents about the Ukraine war and other U.S. national security secrets. Jack Teixeira, 22, admitted to obtaining the information while he worked as an information technology specialist, and then sharing it with other users on Discord, a social media platform popular with online gamers. The leaks, which included information about troop movements in Ukraine and the provision of U.S. equipment to Ukrainian troops, were seen as highly embarrassing for the Pentagon; more than a dozen military personnel were reprimanded in the subsequent investigation. (RFE/RL's Mike Eckel, with reporting by AP)

TO ALL MEMBERS OF UNA BRANCH 153

Please be advised Branch 153 has merged with Branch 362 as of March 1, 2024. All inquiries and requests for changes should be sent to **Mrs. Maria Luba Walchuk**.

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Ukraine regrouping...

(Continued from page 1)

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis witnessed a deadly Russian missile attack while visiting the Black Sea port city of Odesa.

Ukrainian authorities said at least five people were killed in the attack.

Mr. Mitsotakis confirmed that Russian missiles attacked the city while he and Mr. Zelenskyy were present, saying that "we had explosions very close to us."

Mr. Mitsotakis added that he and the Ukrainian leader, as well as their teams, did not have time to take shelter, calling the incident "an astonishing experience."

The Russian military said its forces had struck a storage facility that was housing unmanned Ukrainian boats, although the claim could not immediately be verified.

"The goal has been achieved. The target has been hit," the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi amid tensions over Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, which is under Russian occupation with IAEA observers stationed at the site.

Russian state media said the meeting took place at Putin's residence in Sochi, Russia, and that Aleksei Likhachev, the head of the Russian state nuclear agency, Rosatom, also participated. Mr. Grossi on

February 23 called for "maximum military restraint" after a string of powerful explosions occurred near the nuclear plant that week.

"The situation continues to be very fragile," Mr. Grossi told reporters on March 4 as he announced his trip to meet Putin.

Overnight, Ukrainian and Russian forces traded drone attacks that left thousands of people in western Ukraine without electricity and a gas storage depot at a Russian metal plant on fire.

Ukraine's air defenses shot down most of the drones launched by Russia in its latest wave of strikes at its territory on March 6, but the attack still left thousands of people without electricity hundreds of kilometers from the front line in the east, the military and regional officials said.

Air defenses downed 38 out of the 42 drones launched by Russia at eight regions early on March 6, the General Staff of Ukraine's military reported.

"As a result of combat actions, 38 Shadeds were shot down in the Dnipro-petrovsk, Odesa, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, and Sumy regions," the military said in a statement, adding that information about potential casualties and damages would be updated during the day.

Russian troops in the occupied part of the eastern Donetsk region also launched five S-300 surface-to-air missiles at Ukrainian targets, the military said, without elaborating.



Serhii Nuzhnenko/RadioSvoboda.org

A Ukrainian soldier from the 93rd Mechanized Brigade fires an AK-74 assault rifle at Russian positions near Bakhmut on March 6. Despite artillery and equipment shortages, Kyiv's troops are fighting to slow advancing Russian troops along the almost 1,200-kilometer front.

However, debris from six Russian drones downed in the western Khmelnytskyi region, some 800 kilometers away from the eastern battlefields, fell on a power substation, triggering a fire that interrupted the power supply to more than 14,000 people in the region, Ukraine's Energy Ministry reported.

Although the fire had been largely extinguished later in the day, more than 2,500 people were still without power, the ministry said.

Farther east, Russian forces continued the indiscriminate shelling of civilian settlements near the front line in Donetsk, regional authorities said, killing at least one person on March 6.

In the village of Netaylovye, a 63-year-old man was wounded by Russian shelling and died on his way to the hospital, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

In Russia, a gasoline storage depot in the Kursk region near the Ukrainian border caught fire after being hit by two Ukrainian drones, regional Gov. Roman Starovoit said on Telegram, adding that there were no casualties.

The reservoir was located on the territo-

ry of the Mikhailov mining and processing integrated plant in the city of Zhelez-nogorsk, which is one of Russia's largest industrial facilities producing and enriching iron ore.

Kyiv has not officially commented on the strike, but an anonymous source from Ukraine's Main Directorate of Military Intelligence (HUR) was quoted by Reuters as saying it was responsible for the attack.

The strike would be the HUR's second success in as many days after the Russian patrol vessel Sergei Kotov was reportedly sunk early on March 5 off the coast of Moscow-occupied Crimea by what the HUR said were high-tech Ukrainian sea drones.

Feodosia is located near the Kerch Strait, which links the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

(With reporting by Reuters)

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Rukh Art Hub...

(Continued from page 10)

works in the Time Capsule exhibit.

A work titled "Protectress" by Polina Kuznetsova, one of Mr. Sarazhin's classmates from Kharkiv, features a woman shielding babies from potential danger under her black cloak.

A corner of the gallery was lit up by the colorful works in a series titled "War Diaries," a collection of large portrait paintings made by Ukrainian child artists who have been given a creative workspace by the Aza Nizi Maza Studio in Kharkiv. In the wake of the war, the studio first transformed into a bomb shelter and then became a creative haven for children who had been sheltering in metro stations amidst the raging war.

Katia Lesiuk, co-organizer of "Time Capsule - A Golden Record" and director of sales for Rukh Art Hub, values that the legacy of Ukraine is inherent in the work of the Ukrainian artists she's supporting.

"The main virtue of Ukraine is freedom, and you can see that reflected in these artworks," Ms. Lesiuk said. "For many genera-

tions, we have been fighting for freedom and to keep our identity. Our art is part of our heritage, and art is how we bring the identity of Ukraine to the next generation."

Ms. Lesiuk, who is originally from Kyiv where she worked for many years in the fashion industry, joined the Rukh Art Hub team after meeting co-founder, Olga Severina, at their Los Angeles exhibit last December.

Addressing the crowd on opening night, Ms. Lesiuk expressed gratitude for the support of the attendees and for Razom for Ukraine, which has been running charity initiatives and providing financial aid to Ukrainians suffering hardships from the war.

Continuing their collaboration, Ms. Manuilenko and Ms. Lesiuk and their team at Rukh Art Hub will open at least one new art show featuring Ukrainian artists at Mriya Gallery each month over the course of the year.

"We're committed to representing Ukrainian artists and giving them space to share their talent with the world," Ms. Lesiuk said.

Information on upcoming Ukrainian art exhibits can be found at rukharthub.com and mriya.nyc.



Denis Sarazhin, a world-renowned Ukrainian artist represented by the Arcadia Contemporary gallery in New York, stands with his painting titled "Did the Past Ever Happen," which is featured in the exhibit "The Time Capsule - A Golden Record" at the Mriya Gallery in New York.

'War is not lost...'

(Continued from page 3)

ing additional arms to Kyiv as a cohort of lawmakers loyal to Republican Party frontrunner and former president Donald Trump has said they oppose a package for Kyiv of more than \$60 billion in additional aid for the war-ravaged country.

"We don't have direct artillery capabilities, we work alongside Ukrainian brigades and help spearhead assaults - it's pretty bad, it's down to using mortars, suicide drones and tanks as indirect fire capacity," Mr. Foster said.

This year "will be the worst for Ukraine ... I think the [U.S.] presidential campaign [with the November election] is affecting" the supplies of weapons, so "I'm extremely pessimistic as a historian."

However, Mr. Foster said, "the war is not lost. ... Russia may have gained some momentum ... and the European Union is stepping up defense capabilities and other countries outside Europe are working on shells as well."

"I'm extremely hopeful," Mr. Foster said, that toward the end of the year or beginning of 2025 Ukraine will be able to win the war.

Mr. Foster talked to The Ukrainian Weekly after his night training was canceled.

His unit undergoes constant training that is based on "lessons learned" from previous missions, first-hand information, sec-

ond-hand from other units "and third-hand from open-source intelligence sources," he said.

Both adversaries "react quickly ... change and adapt," he said. "So we have to come up with new plans, and you could also never have enough of [the] basics."

The bigger picture, Mr. Foster said, is that the nature of the war is different from 2022, "and 2023 is different from the previous year and 2024 is different now."

Still, Russia has the "strategic or tactical advantage in artillery ... but Ukraine is heavily dug in and Russia uses older artillery that is less accurate. ... They might take more ground this year but I don't foresee an outright breakthrough as Russian supporters are pitching it," he said.

HUR's leadership is deserving of praise, Mr. Foster said.

"We have really good officers," and HUR chief Budanov "has allowed us to set up our own operation; to do our own thing," he said.

"I don't know anybody who can convince me to leave HUR," said Mr. Foster, who uses the X (formerly Twitter) handle of @FrostyUkraine and doesn't shy away from disclosing his identity. His unit works closely with Protect a Volunteer for security assistance.

The priority in terms of the Ukrainian army's needs now is "vehicles - pickup trucks - drones and night vision devices. These three things are expensive and unfortunately, have a habit of breaking down or being destroyed," Mr. Foster.

Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine tops standings at Virtus championships

The 2024 Virtus World and European Indoor Athletics Championships, a competition for athletes with intellectual impairments, were held in Reims, France, on February 20-25. Ukraine's 15 athletes captured 24 total medals, including 13 gold, seven silver and four bronze medals to finish first overall among the nine nations competing at the event.

Ukraine, which secured the top spot in the final medal tally after showcasing its dominance in the competition, was led by Liudmyla Danyolina's three gold medals (800 meters, 1,500 meters and 3,000 meters) and teammate Yuliia Shuliar's two golds (60 meters and 200 meters).

Other Ukrainian gold medalists in Reims included Pavlo Voluikovich (1,500 meters), Vasyl Bilenko (hurdles, 60 meters), Ruslana Muravskaya (high jump), Kyrylo Bezverkhov (high jump), Viktoriia Shpachynska (shot put), Maksym Koval (shot put), Mykhailo Bilenko (pentathlon) and the Ukrainian women in the athletics team event (31 points).

Ukraine places second in archery championships

The 20th edition of the European Indoor Archery Championships was held in Varazdin, Croatia, from February 19-24. The event featured competitions in the recurve, compound and barebow divisions

in both the age categories of senior men and women and under 21 men and women.

Ukrainian archers placed second in gold medals (five) and total medals (nine), behind first-place Italy. Ukrainians won seven medals in recurve and two in compound. Under-21 Ukrainian juniors won five of nine total medals. Ukraine won two silver and two bronze medals.

Gold medalists in recurve were the senior men's team (Ivan Kozhokar, Viktor Ruban and Mykhailo Usach), senior women's team (Solomiya Hnyp, Anastasia Pavlova and Iryna Tretiakova), U-21 women's individual (Dzvenyaslava Chernykh) and U-21 women's team (Olha Chebotarenko, Chernykh and Daria Koval). Vitali Vdovenko won in compound U-21 men's individual for Ukraine's fifth gold medal.

Maksymenko wins four gold at fencing championships

Sixteen-year-old Anna Maksymenko won four gold medals in Naples, Italy, at the European Fencing Confederation's European Cadet and Junior Championships held on February 22-29. In winning her third gold, the Lviv native defeated teammate Emily Conrad, 15-11, to capture the individual épée event in the juniors competition. She went on to become a two-time double champion when her junior épée team won gold. She had previously been



Geoffrey Wahlen/www.virtus.sport

Liudmyla Danyolina (foreground) won two gold medals (800 meters and 3,000 meters) at the 2024 Virtus World and European Indoor Championships in Reims, France, on February 20-25.

crowned a double champion in the cadet category, having won both the individual and team épée competitions.

The championships featured competitions in individual épée, foil and saber, as well as team events for both cadets (under-17) and juniors (under-20).

Ukrainian fencers won five total medals in the cadet competitions, including three gold and a pair of bronze medals. In addition to Maksymenko's gold in épée, the

Ukrainian men's épée team (Maksym Mykytenko, Maksym Gula, Mark Stasovskiy and Myron Durnevych) and the women's épée team (Maksymenko, Conrad, Mariia Sereda and Alina Dmytryuk) won gold medals.

Ukraine's junior women's épée team won gold when they barely defeated France in the finals by a score of 45-44. The team

(Continued on page 19)

Table tennis champion starts new life in Canada

by Ihor N. Stelmach

On February 20, 2022, Zoya Novikova gave birth to her fourth baby girl in Dnipro, Ukraine. Four days later, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Novikova, a table tennis Euro Cup gold medalist and a winner of several European championships, took off on a survival expedition along with husband Sergii Korkin, an established table tennis coach for Ukraine's national team, and three of their daughters (The oldest daughter lives abroad.)

Needless to say, Novikova and her family's life changed forever.

After some lengthy traveling by bus and train, the family temporarily settled in Moldova for several months. At the time the Canadian government was working with Ukrainian refugees, and the family was for-

tunate to obtain visas for travel to Canada. They bought five one-way airline tickets to Vancouver.

They left everything they owned behind – their house, car, family and friends – with a minimal amount of money to start a new life in a new country in which people speak a different language. Their trek was made a bit more challenging in that they had to travel with a baby.

Novikova admitted that giving birth to a baby was easier than fleeing a war and living the last 18 months of her life. She is thankful that her family is safe, knowing many of her friends and family could not escape from Ukraine.

She often recalls a famous saying when struggling through tough times: "The road will be mastered by the walking one."

The family is adjusting to building their

new life from scratch and they are happy living in Richmond, British Columbia. Novikova likes the city, climate, friendly Canadian people and environment. The city is known for its Asian influences and has a large Chinese-Canadian population. Chinese players are some of the best in the world in table tennis and Novikova spent six months in China learning the game.

The cost of living in a British Columbia metropolitan area is expensive. The family's monthly bills total close to \$5,500 for rent, food, daycare and other expenses. Her 65-year-old, ex-coach husband could only find employment as a maintenance worker to help support his family.

Novikova herself went on an exasperating job-seeking mission that took 10 months, filling out applications, waiting for responses and doing some demo classes in table tennis. Finally, in August 2023 she was hired as one of three table tennis coaches at the Richmond Olympics Oval and as a coach for the B.C. Table Tennis Association.

Unfortunately, she's only teaching one or two students per day. To survive and make ends meet, she needs five students per day. She needs to make more money for her family's welfare but also wants to work more because she's very good at her job. Novikova is comfortable with the idea of permanently settling in Richmond, British Columbia. She could see her daughters growing up in the area because of friendly people with kind hearts.

The ex-European table tennis champion has established a big goal for herself in her new hometown – to utilize her and her husband's competence and experience to develop the next generation of table tennis players, and to help more people appreciate the allure of the game.

Novikova sees lots of seniors practicing

the sport all day in Richmond but professes that the future of the sport is with the next generation and she wants to invest in the children and pass along her expertise as much as possible. Her dream is for her and her husband to open a table tennis school in the city.

She reasons that if someone goes to play every day, every year, then in 10 years that person can become the city's champion or even the champion of Canada. A good teacher combined with a desire to learn and be the best makes this possible. Her experience and love for the sport could make this probable.

Novikova is also hoping to play with other notable table tennis players with different backgrounds, techniques and playing styles as a way of exchanging experiences. For her, table tennis is a sport, a career and an art. She compares playing table tennis to drawing a painting in the air. It is a form of entertainment and helps prevent brain diseases, such as dementia, and mental health illnesses, such as depression. The sport helps build character and resilience while allowing people to cope with struggles and difficult life situations.

In ancient Greece, the tradition was that hostilities ceased before, during and after the Olympic games. Novikova adheres to the rule that when the Olympics started the war ended.

"These two things are incompatible," she said in a September 15 interview with the Richmond News. "Sport brings people together and builds bridges, while war is the opposite. War kills people and separates them."

(Based on reporting by the Richmond News.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at iman@sfgsports.com.



Vitaly Solovey Photography

European table tennis champion Zoya Novikova, seen in an undated photo, fled the war in Ukraine and resides in Richmond, British Columbia, where she is a table tennis instructor

The beloved Ukrainian restaurant is now a *feature documentary*.

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OUT & ABOUT

Through March 14 New York	Film screening, "Veselka: Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World," Village East Cinema, www.angelikafilmcenter.com	March 18 Cambridge, MA	Discussion with Liudmyla Huliaieva, Eugenija Kovaliova and Svitlana Zaluzna, "Dreaming of Home: Displaced Ukrainian Women Between Transience and Permanency," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
Through March 14 Bernardsville, NJ	Film screening, "Veselka: Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World," Bernardsville Cinema 3, www.bernardsvillecinema.com	March 19 New York	Poetry reading, "Iryna Tsilyk: Literary Readings and a Conversation about Life and Art in Today's Ukraine," Columbia University, https://harrimann.columbia.edu
Through March 14 North Hollywood, CA	Film screening, "Veselka: Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World," Laemmle Noho 7, www.laemmle.com	March 20 Cambridge, MA	Petryshyn Memorial Lecture with Mayhill Fowler, "Theater, Women, Resilience: Telling Ukraine's 20th Century," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
March 17 New Haven, CT	Pysanka workshop, sponsored by Branch 108 of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, 1-3:30 p.m., St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 563 George Street, 203-269-5909 or president@ethnicheritagecenter.org	March 23 Jenkintown, PA	Easter Bazaar and Food Fest, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.ueccphila.org
Through March 24 Chicago	Art exhibit, "Tree of Life" with works by Marta Sofia Fraser and Kateryna Tkachenko, Ukrainian National Museum, www.ukrainiannationalmuseum.org	March 24 Cheektowaga, NY	Aid for Ukraine event, Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church, www.ukrainiansofBuffalo.com
Through April 14 Jenkintown, PA	Exhibit, "Affirmation of Life: Art from Today's Ukraine," benefiting Ukraine Global Scholars, Abington Art Center, https://ukrainian-cultural-initiative.com/ or https://abingtonartcenter.org	March 24 Lehighton, PA	Easter Bazaar, Ukrainian Homestead of CEC ODWU, www.ukrhomestead.com or oseliaodwu@gmail.com
Through April 27 Chicago	Pysanka workshops, Ukrainian National Museum, www.ukrainiannationalmuseum.org or 312-421-8020	March 24 Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX	Bake sale, St. Sophia Ukrainian Catholic Church, daria1215@verizon.net
Through April 28 New York	Exhibit featuring works by Evgeny Kotlyar, "The Light of the Revival: Stained Glass Design for the Restituted Synagogues of Ukraine," Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	March 26 New York	Book talk with Olesya Yaremchuk, "Our Others. Stories of Ukrainian Diversity," Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu
Through May 5 Chicago	Art exhibit, "In Control" by Katrina Majkut, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, www.uima-chicago.org	April 13 North Providence, RI	Concert, "Melodies of Ukraine," Women's Bandura Ensemble of America, The Wheeler School, www.banduristka.org
March 15 Chicago	Fashion Show, featuring designs by Lyuba Chernikova, fund-raiser for the 52nd Battalion of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Lone Tree Manor Banquet Hall, showimpulse.com	April 14 Boston, MA	Concert, "Melodies of Ukraine," Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America, The Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts, www.banduristka.org

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.

Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 17)

of Maksymenko, Conrad and Dmytruk survived another close call in the semifinal when they squeezed by Hungary 45-44.

Ukraine won a total of three medals in the junior competition with the men's épée team just missing out on a fourth medal after they were beaten by Israel, 45-43, in the bronze medal match.

Overall, in Naples, Ukraine won a total of eight medals: five gold, one silver and two bronze medals.

Ukraine wins five medals in judo

Ukraine was one of 37 countries competing in Warsaw on February 24-25 at the Warsaw European Open 2024. Four-hundred-fifty-eight competitors (295 men and 163 women) participated in the competition. Ukraine finished in fourth place overall with five total medals (two gold, three bronze) and tied for second in gold medals.

Ukrainian gold medalists were Mykita Holoborodko in men's 66 kilograms and Khrystyna Homan in women's over-78 kilograms. Ukraine's three bronze medal winners included Danylo Hutsol (100 kilograms), Anastasiia Antipina (63 kilograms) and Anna Kazakova (78 kilograms).

CAS rejects ROC's appeal to suspension

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected the Russian Olympic Committee's (ROC) appeal of the suspension imposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on October 12 over the war in Ukraine. The Switzerland-based international tribunal announced its decision on February 23.

The IOC suspended the Russian committee for adopting sports organizations from

four occupied regions in Ukraine currently under Russian control. The CAS decision found that the IOC "did not undermine the principles of legality, equality, predictability and proportionality." The IOC's claim that the Russian initiative was a "violation of the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian Olympic Committee and therefore of the Olympic Charter" was upheld.

Russia's final avenue in the matter is to appeal to the Swiss Federal Court within 30 days.

Yastremska releases new single "Hearts"

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) announced that Ukrainian tennis star Dayana Yastremska has released a new single titled "Hearts" dedicated to her native Ukraine, which the artist describes as a song for Ukraine and its children with themes including strength, love and maturity. "Hearts" is a collaboration between Czech singer Rodan and Latvian rapper Loopout.

Identifying as D.Y., Yastremska released a few singles to streaming platforms in 2020 and 2021. During her recent historic run to the Australian Open semifinal, the 23-year-old teased an upcoming revival of her pop career. She was observed making a heart shape with her hands as part of her celebration of match victories in Melbourne.

The song is set against the backdrop of Ukraine's ongoing war against Russia and stylistically differs from her usual up-tempo dance-pop. Speaking over moody synths, Yastremska describes the sound of exploding bombs across a city before encouraging listeners to "burn all fears."

Writing on social media, Yastremska wanted her single to remind the world about Ukraine's current plight and her homeland's need for support. She also calls upon the Ukrainian people to "be brave and

stick together."

Yastremska co-wrote the song with Loopout.

FAU recruiting drivers to aid Ukrainian military

The Automobile Federation of Ukraine (FAU) is enlisting race car drivers to assist the Ukrainian military in emergency driving. As the war with Russia continues and national motorsports events cannot be safely held, the FAU has elected to utilize its personnel for the country's armed forces. Drivers will be leading safe driving courses for members of the Ukrainian military, teaching them how to drive effectively in emergencies, such as in combat and during medical evacuation situations.

The FAU organized a Commission for Safe Driving and Emergency Training whose primary goal is to "establish systemic interaction" with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, notably to organize driving lessons guided by interested racing drivers and others in motorsports for Ukrainian

troops.

Particular attention will be paid to drivers with impressive racing resumes such as champions in domestic series, especially in rally driving, as driving on the frontline is typically done off road.

Ukraine-Romania Billie Jean King Cup matches set for Florida

Qualifying matches between Ukraine and Romania in the Billie Jean King Cup have been moved to Amelia Island, Fla. The matches to be played on April 12-13 were to be hosted by Ukraine, but the ongoing war with Russia has forced a change in location. The Ukraine-Romania matchup is one of eight best-of-five contests to determine who advances to the BJK Cup Finals in Seville, Spain, in November.

Ukraine's team in the competition is managed by Elina Svitolina's Svitolina Foundation.

(Based on reporting by Inside the Games, WTA The Checkered Flag.co.uk and ESPN.)

Crosses...

(Continued from page 5)

down his Instagram account before 2023, he denied he had conversed with Ms. Bazykina on Instagram. He refused to answer whether he knew Mr. Mangushev.

Mr. Mangushev died in Ukraine in February 2023, when he was commanding an anti-drone unit during the Russian withdrawal from the Luhansk region city of Kadiyivka.

Russia's Investigative Committee is still examining the circumstances of Mr. Mangushev's death from a noncombat-related gunshot wound to the head, his

widow said.

Whether his creation or not, the crosses live on – ironically, most recently in Russia, where they were sighted on streets in Moscow before the World War II Victory Day celebrations in May 2023.

(Written by Elizabeth Owen based on reporting by Yekaterina Surnacheva of Systema)

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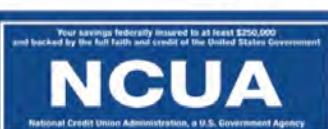
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