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France to announce proposal to send military instructors to Ukraine



Oleksandr Syrskyi official Facebook page

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleksandr Syrskyi (left) and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov speak via video call with French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu.

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – In a significant development in the partnership between the French and Ukrainian militaries, officials in Paris and Kyiv confirmed that the two countries are working on plans to send Western military instructors to Ukraine.

According to the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, more than 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have completed military training conducted by Kyiv's Western allies, but that training has come outside of Ukraine in the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland.

The French proposal, confirmed by Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, comes after a discussion between French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov.

According to Mr. Syrskyi, Paris said it is ready to send instructors directly to Ukraine, where they will first evaluate the capabilities of Ukrainian training centers.

"I welcome France's initiative to send instructors to Ukraine to train Ukrainian

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Stoltenberg floats talks on lifting of weapons restrictions before NATO meeting

As Russia pounds Ukraine again, killing more civilians



Office of the President of Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (left) and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson meet in Sweden in August 2023.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

PRAGUE – Ukraine can prevail in its battle to repel Russian forces with the "robust support" of its allies, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) chief Jens Stoltenberg said, as foreign affairs ministers from the military alliance's 32 member countries gathered in Prague to discuss a fresh military aid framework for Kyiv.

The NATO gathering in the Czech capital, which is being attended by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, is expected to discuss an aid package for Ukraine that would be presented at NATO's summit in

Washington in July.

Speaking ahead of the meeting on May 30, Mr. Stoltenberg said it was time for the countries supplying military aid to Kyiv to discuss restrictions placed on Ukraine more than two years ago when Moscow first launched its full-scale invasion.

In recent months, Russia has launched withering air and ground assaults against Ukraine, which has struggled with ammunition shortages. Kyiv has pleaded for an acceleration of deliveries of ammunition and also has asked to be allowed to use longer-range weapons – which came with restrictions on their usage into Russian territory – to their full extent.

"Allies are delivering many different types of military support to Ukraine and some of them have imposed some restrictions on the use of these weapons. ... These are national decisions," Mr. Stoltenberg said in a speech delivered in Prague.

"But I think that in light of how this war has evolved ... the time has come to consider some of these restrictions, to enable the Ukrainians to really defend themselves," he said.

Mr. Blinken, who arrived in Prague after a trip to Moldova, immediately held talks with his Czech counterpart, Jan Liptovsky, on the issue of combating Russian disinformation as Moscow tries to drive a wedge between allies supporting Ukraine.

The top U.S. diplomat called Moscow's use of misinformation and disinformation "poison" and signed an agreement with the Czechs to combat it.

Mr. Blinken also visited a Czech military base, where armored vehicles that Prague is sending to Kyiv were on display, and was

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Political analysts offer evaluation of Zelenskyy as president

Say he rises to occasion, concentrates power, but still novice in governance

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – When Volodymyr Zelenskyy was inaugurated as Ukraine's fifth post-Soviet president after garnering a record 73 percent of the popular vote in 2019, his detractors ridiculed his lack of governing experience and background as a former comedian and actor who also performed in Russia amid a war that Moscow started five years earlier.

A half-decade later and Ukraine's president has risen to the occasion. As the nation's second war-time president, Mr. Zelenskyy has come to symbolize courage, defiance and resistance against the world's second most powerful army after Russia launched a full-blown invasion on

February 24, 2022, three political experts told The Ukrainian Weekly.

After declaring martial law on the first day of Russia's full-scale war, Mr. Zelenskyy told his people to "stay calm, stay at home, the army is doing its work. Don't panic. We are strong. We are ready for everything. We will defeat everyone ... because we are Ukraine."

He also endured numerous Russian-planned assassination attempts and will be the nation's president until martial law is rescinded and an election can be held in a free and fair electoral environment.

His Western interlocutors had urged him to move his government further West in the country or go into exile, having believed Kremlin forces would take the

Ukrainian capital within days.

Instead, Mr. Zelenskyy said in a video address outside his office on Bankova Street in Kyiv on that fateful day that "we are still here ... everybody [the country's leadership] is here."

"Yet, still to the very end [despite warnings], he didn't believe that Russia would expand the war," said James Sherr, a British honorary fellow at the Vilnius-based International Center for Defense and Security. "The situation was so serious that [then-] military commander-in-chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi 'had to plan in secret to ensure that Ukraine was half ready [for the onslaught].'"

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Russia attempts new anti-peace offensive

by Pavel K. Baev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued reassurances of his readiness to negotiate an end to his war against Ukraine many times over the past 27 months, which Kyiv has duly rejected as attempts to pressure it to capitulate (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 29, February 6, 26, April 15). A maneuver executed last week may, however, signify a change in Russia's war strategy. Instead of yet another statement, the Kremlin orchestrated a series of "leaks" that were originally collected by the Reuters news agency. The agency immediately disproved the leaks, but in such an ambivalent way that the substance may appear confirmed (Reuters; RBC; RIA Novosti, May 24). The main message is that Putin is allegedly ready to freeze the hostilities along the current frontlines and is confident that he can "sell" this compromise as a victory despite abandoning the maximalist goals of rolling back North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement and enforcing the "de-Nazification" of Ukraine (Kommersant, May 24).

These leaks likely seek to derail the final preparations for the Ukraine peace summit, scheduled for June 15 and 16 in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, which the Russian propaganda machine relentlessly decries (Rossiiskaya Gazeta, May 24). Putin has complained about how Russia has not been invited while arguing that Russia is not

interested in discussing the Ukrainian vision of a peace settlement, which departs far from the "reality on the ground" (Kommersant, May 24). Moscow has taken note of the changes in the summit's agenda, which now focuses more on global problems such as food security and nuclear risks (Izvestiya, May 22). Additionally, Russian diplomacy has invested significant efforts in undermining the event's credibility. Moscow is now worried that Ukraine's readiness to downplay the crucial issue of restoring its territorial integrity might convince China, India and many states from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East to send delegations to Switzerland (RIAC, May 22).

China's position on this conflict is certainly of crucial importance to Russia. While making a ceremonial visit to Beijing two weeks ago, Putin expressed full support for Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's "peace plan," even if the implicit rejection of the Russian annexations is a tall stumbling block (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 13; Nezavisimaya Gazeta, May 22). Acknowledging this kowtow, Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi suggested during a visit to Brazil that a result-oriented peace conference must include Russia and take into account its security interests (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 17; The Moscow Times, May 24). Despite Putin's best efforts at cultivat-

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Russian Ministry of Defense conducts 'great purge'

by Pavel Luzin
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On May 23, Lt. Gen. Vadim Shamarin, chief of the Main Directorate for Communications and deputy chief of the Russian General Staff, was arrested. The arrest happened just two days after the apprehension of Maj. Gen. Ivan Popov, former commander of the 58th Combined Army, who fell out of favor after a conflict with Army Gen. Valery Gerasimov in 2023. The arrests of these two generals are a continuation of the so-called "anti-corruption" line, a tactic chosen by the Russian Investigative Committee and Federal Security Service (FSB), whose participation is inevitable in such criminal cases. Mr. Shamarin has been accused of bribery, and Mr. Popov is charged with fraud related to metal construction. For comparison, former Deputy Minister of Defense Timur Ivanov and ex-chief of the Main Directorate for Personnel Lt. Gen. Yuri Kuznetsov, who was arrested earlier, has been accused of bribery (see Eurasia Daily Monitor April 24, May 20). Vladimir Verteletsky, an officer of the Ministry of Defense's (MoD) department for arms procurement, was recently detained and accused of abuse of power. It is unclear whether all these activities are related to the dismissal of Maj. Gen. Sukhrab Akhmedov, commander of the 20th Combined Army, which became publicly known on May 23 (RBC, April 24, May 23 [1], [2]; Vedomosti, May 16; Vedomosti, May 21; Kommersant, May 23). This purge, along with economist Andrei Belousov's appointment as Defense Minister, points to Moscow likely prepar-

ing for the "long war" and new military projects, in which it must ensure complete loyalty from officials (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 22).

The main challenge of this anti-corruption campaign in the Russian MoD is that the purges are in fact unrelated to corruption (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 16, 20, 22). Within the Russian political-economic system, any contract related to procurements, research and development, or construction is impossible without violations of contradictory laws and regulations and the interests of other agencies and/or competing powerful actors. Public officials, military and top managers of state-owned factories and corporations in Russia must violate laws to execute their daily responsibilities. As a result, deciding who would be punished for these violations is always political, as every official has had to violate laws in one way or another. Today, the Kremlin and the FSB are attacking Russian military leadership.

The political motivation for these attacks, which promises to paralyze the MoD's work in many areas, is unclear. Besides the evident efforts toward auditing and optimizing arms procurements and recruiting, the purges could be an effort to find scapegoats responsible for Russia's troubles in the war on Ukraine (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 16). Alternatively, they could reflect tougher measures to maintain the generals' loyalty and break their resistance. The Kremlin must soon decide what to do next on the battlefield in Ukraine and what to do with its wider confrontation

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NEWSBRIEFS

Russia trying to thwart peace summit

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on May 29 that Ukraine continues to counter Russia's attempts to "weaken" a peace summit that is set to take place in Switzerland in two weeks. Mr. Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address that Russia is putting pressure on leaders and "openly threatens various countries with destabilization." He said this was a consequence of the world giving Russia too much time. "Unfortunately, evil knows how to adapt and is now using all its resources to divide the world and prevent the world from forcing Russia to make peace," Mr. Zelenskyy said. Despite these efforts, nearly 100 states and international organizations are associated with "global efforts" to resolve the conflict, he said. Mr. Zelenskyy wants the summit, scheduled for June 15-16 in Switzerland, to produce an international front to exert pressure on Russia and advance his "peace formula," which calls for the withdrawal of Russian troops and the restoration of Ukraine's 1991 borders. Moscow has dismissed Mr. Zelenskyy's plan as unworkable and Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier this week that Russia is prepared to negotiate an end to the conflict but said it would be possible to return to talks "only based on today's realities in the special operations zone." Mr. Zelenskyy has rejected Moscow's preconditions, including allowing Russia to retain the territory its forces have taken thus far in the war. Switzerland has not invited Russia to the summit, and Moscow dismisses the meeting as pointless without its participation. Ninety countries have agreed to attend, according to Mr. Zelenskyy. Earlier this week Mr. Zelenskyy played down potential peace talks with Russia after a report that the European Union plans to organize a meeting in Saudi Arabia later this year with Russia's participation. The meeting would come after the peace summit in Switzerland. "There is no faith in Putin," Mr. Zelenskyy said on May 27 during a press conference in Spain. The Ukrainian president said his country had held around 200 rounds of talks with the Kremlin and there were "no results." Many of the sessions took place long before Russia

launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. (RFE/RL)

Ukraine, Spain sign \$1 billion security deal

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez have signed a bilateral security agreement that provides for Madrid to provide Ukraine with 1 billion euros (\$1.08 billion) in military aid this year. The announcement was made at a joint news conference in Madrid, where Mr. Zelenskyy arrived on May 27 for talks with the head of the Spanish government and King Felipe VI. "For the period up to 2027, Ukraine will get 5 billion euros from Spain through the European Peace Fund," Mr. Zelenskyy told the news conference. Ahead of the visit, the Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that Madrid plans to send missiles for Patriot air-defense systems and Leopard tanks to Ukraine as part of the weapons package. The bilateral security agreement was the 10th signed by Ukraine with Western allies, following similar pacts with Britain, Germany, France, Denmark, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Finland and Latvia. Mr. Zelenskyy's office has said that bilateral security agreements are also in the works with the United States, Japan, Romania, Norway, Greece and the European Union. Mr. Zelenskyy will travel to Portugal on a working visit on May 28, according to a statement by Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's office. The statement said the leaders will seek to enhance relations, with a "special emphasis" on strengthening security and defense cooperation. Mr. Zelenskyy was forced to postpone his visit to Spain and other countries earlier this month after Russian troops launched a cross-border offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region. Outmanned and outgunned Ukrainian forces have been grappling with a severe lack of modern air-defense systems and ammunition as they struggle to stave off the Russian offensive amid a slowdown in deliveries of weapons, despite the U.S. Congress finally approving a \$61 billion military aid package for Kyiv after several months of delay. Highlighting Ukraine's increasing difficulties in protect-

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Belgium pledges \$1 billion in military aid, 30 F-16s for Ukraine

by Marek Hajduk and
Zoriana Stepanenko
RFE/RL

Belgium will deliver 977 million euros (\$1 billion) in military aid and 30 F-16 fighter jets for Ukraine under a 10-year bilateral security agreement signed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo on May 28 in Brussels.

The agreement is the second of its kind signed by Mr. Zelenskyy in as many days as he continues a whirlwind tour to secure more military aid for Ukraine's outgunned and outmanned troops as they struggle to fend off a Russian offensive and relentless strikes on civilian targets in the northeast region of Kharkiv.

"For the first time, such an agreement specifies the exact number of F-16 fighter jets – 30 – that will be delivered to Ukraine until 2028, with the first arriving already this year," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Mr. De Croo said at a joint news conference that Brussels will do "everything possible" to deliver the first fighter jets by the end of the year.

Asked by RFE/RL to specify how many warplanes will be delivered this year, Mr. De Croo did not answer, saying only that efforts of the aircraft coalition for Ukraine

were ongoing.

Mr. De Croo stressed that the planes are to be used only above the territory of Ukraine. "The security agreement stipulates that military equipment will be used by the armed forces of Ukraine and on the territory of Ukraine," he said.

The Belgian prime minister added that training was already underway for Ukrainian pilots on Belgian F-16s.

"Today, our planes are used to train new Ukrainian pilots. Our technical teams are used to provide technical support to keep aircraft in the air. Our teams are training Ukrainian technicians how to perform [technical support]," he said.

Mr. Zelenskyy, asked by RFE/RL about the progress of negotiations with partners on obtaining permission to strike targets on the territory of Russia, replied that he was "confident of a positive result both from some partners and from our production."

Ukraine has been frustrated by the lack of permission from some of its allies, mainly the United States and Germany, to hit military targets inside Russia with Western weapons systems.

The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, has backed Kyiv's request.

"According with the law of war, it is perfectly possible and there is no contradiction. I could retaliate or I could fight against



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (left) and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo sign a bilateral security agreement between the two countries in Brussels on May 28.

the one who fights against me from his territory," Mr. Borrell told journalists ahead of a meeting with European Union defense ministers.

"You have to balance the risk of escalation and the need for Ukrainians to defend," he said.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has also thrown his weight behind Ukraine's plea, saying concerns that the use of Western weapons inside Russia would implicate the alliance in the war are unfounded.

"Ukraine's use of weapons supplied by its Western allies against targets inside Russia would not make NATO and its members part of the conflict," Mr. Stoltenberg said in Brussels on May 28.

French President Emmanuel Macron added his voice, saying on May 28 that Kyiv should be allowed to "neutralize" Russian military bases from which Moscow troops have fired missiles into Ukraine.

"We think that we should allow them to neutralize military sites where missiles are fired," Mr. Macron said on a state visit to Germany.

He stressed, however, that Ukraine should not be allowed to hit other targets in Russia or civilian facilities.

But the White House on May 28 again

rejected ending restrictions on Kyiv using U.S.-supplied arms to strike Russian territory.

"There's no change to our policy at this point. We don't encourage or enable the use of U.S.-supplied weapons to strike inside Russia," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told a briefing.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned earlier on May 28 that hitting Russian soil with Western-supplied long-range weapons could set the war on a dangerous new path.

Speaking to reporters while on a trip to Uzbekistan, Putin said the use of such weapons would rely on Western intelligence data and imply the involvement of NATO military personnel.

"Representatives of countries that are NATO members, particularly in Europe, should be aware of what they are playing with," Putin said, adding that "countries with small territory and dense populations" should be particularly careful.

(With reporting by AP and AFP)

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Following a tour of Belgian F-16 jets for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (second from the left), Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (left) said at a joint news conference with Mr. Zelenskyy that Belgium will do "everything possible" to deliver the first fighter jets to Ukraine by the end of the year.

Russia attempts...

(Continued from page 2)

ing partnership, China's support for Russia's war effort remains conditional, and the volume of Moscow's imports of badly needed technologies and machinery has been curtailed by Western sanctions (Re: Russia, May 17; Svoboda.org, May 21). Beijing is keen to minimize the damage from the "long war" on Russia's economic ties with Europe, and the proposition for reducing the intensity of fighting answers very well its policy of exploiting differences in the European Union (see China Brief; Carnegie Politika, May 24; TopWar.ru, May 17).

The threat of nuclear escalation remains a main theme in the discourse on the global consequences of the war in Ukraine, which Moscow and Beijing interpret somewhat differently. China argues consistently for careful management, while Putin persists with brinkmanship. The most recent step is the joint Russian-Belarusian exercise of tactical nuclear forces (Interfax, May 21; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 23). It may appear counterproductive to proceed with this provocative drill while sending a mes-

sage of readiness for a ceasefire. Still, the demonstration of nuclear might has been executed to impress the risk-averse Europeans and make them more receptive to the pseudo-peace signaling (Izvestiya, May 6).

The main driver of the diplomatic intrigues is the course of pitched battles in trench warfare, in which Russia still holds the initiative (Republic.ru, May 21). The recent Russian offensive in the Kharkiv region has, however, yielded only a few destroyed villages at the price of heavy casualties. Even "military-patriotic" Russian commentators question its strategic rationale (TopCor.ru, May 22). This sequence of attacks has also compelled NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to state the obvious: U.S. and German objections to using supplied long-range weapons systems for strikes inside Russia's territory make no sense (Meduza, May 25). These small territorial gains may, however, play a significant political role in adding credibility to Putin's hints – a suggestion to withdraw back to the border can amplify the arguments for arranging a temporary ceasefire and "persuading" Ukraine to make it permanent.

The unprecedented cadre purge in the

Defense Ministry following the replacement of long-serving Sergei Shoigu by inexperienced Andrey Belousov at the helm constitutes corroborating evidence of the Kremlin's ambiguous scheme (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 16, 20, 22, 23; Svoboda.org, May 24). Mr. Shoigu seems to have been "punished" by his appointment as the secretary of the Security Council but keeps appearing with Putin on high-profile occasions, such as the visit to China (Carnegie Politika, May 20). Several of Mr. Shoigu's deputies, however, have been arrested on corruption charges (easily provable), and more have resigned (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 20). Mr. Belousov, who has no team of followers, is currently facing bureaucratic chaos in the huge and hostile ministry (Novaya Gazeta Europe, May 21). He needs time to establish new controls over massive financial flows, and a pause in the permanent force majeure produced by combat operations would be beneficial (Meduza, May 23). The leaders of the military-industrial complex, with whom Putin had a meeting last Saturday, would also prefer to transition from an emergency rush to a more stable demand codified in the new State Armament Program, which

the government has started to prepare (Vedomosti, May 24; RBC, May 25).

Putin may yet decide against taking a break in the ground offensive and the bombing campaign, concluding that a permanent domestic mobilization for the long war better guarantees the stability of his rule. Creating an option for a ceasefire, however, may grant him more flexibility in setting a new balance of parochial interests in the Kremlin court and maneuvering across the international arena. He can assume that direct threats boost European unity and transatlantic solidarity but may erode quickly if the confrontation is temporarily eased. Another consideration is the possible impact of a truce on the domestic situation in Ukraine, where the leadership of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is perceived as falling apart. Whatever intrigues Putin tries to spin, his aim of destroying Ukraine as an independent European state remains fixed – and is set to be defeated by Ukrainian resilience and Western resolve.

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

Russia has taken steps to protect its oil refineries. Ukraine is still hitting them.

by Todd Prince
RFE/RL

On May 19, a Ukrainian drone slammed into the 70,000-barrel-a-day Slavyansk oil refinery in southern Russia's Krasnodar region, sending a fireball into the sky, according to videos circulating on social media.

It was the third time in two months that Ukrainian forces hit the relatively small plant located several hundred miles from the front, dodging Russian air defense systems. The latest strike forced Slavyansk to temporarily shut down until the damage could be repaired.

The hits on the refinery were part of a campaign of drone strikes on energy infrastructure inside Russia that Ukraine has carried out in defiance of the United States, which has urged Kyiv not to target such facilities as it defends itself against a full-scale invasion now well into its third year.

The U.S. objections are related to a broader and increasingly heated debate over whether Ukraine should attack targets in Russia, particularly when it is using weapons provided by the West.

Following a spate of successful Ukrainian drone attacks on refineries earlier this year, Artyom Verkhov, a Russian Energy Ministry official, told parliament in March that there were plans to protect some oil and gas infrastructure with missile systems. Meanwhile, companies began taking matters into their own hands amid a reported shortage of air defenses, setting up mobile air defense groups armed with machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, and electronic warfare weapons as well as covering potential targets with metallic nets.

But in the cat-and-mouse game of drone and anti-drone innovation, Ukraine's rapid technological advances and growing output of unmanned aircraft is keeping it one step ahead of Russia's defenses, analysts say, leaving the Kremlin's vast energy infrastructure network in European Russia vulnerable.

Eduard Trudnyev, a Slavyansk security official, told Russian state news agency TASS that Ukraine used bigger and more powerful drones in the most recent strike than in previous attacks on the plant.

Ukraine has invested heavily in the development and production of long-range drones with heavier payloads and lower susceptibility to jamming. Some can hit targets more than 620 miles from the front lines.

That puts about half of Russia's refining capacity within striking distance, experts say. While it would be virtually impossible for Ukraine to knock out all that capacity at the same time, the intermittent attacks are a headache for the Kremlin and its energy industry.

The strikes "create uncertainty," Olga Khakova, an energy security analyst at the Atlantic Council, a U.S. think tank, told a conference on May 23. The campaign of attacks "forces Russia to think about how to

protect these critical energy infrastructure installations."

Russia has concentrated its air defenses along the front lines and the border with Ukraine to focus on protecting the Ukrainian airspace under its control and military bases in Russian border areas, said George Barros, an analyst at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

"It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to have those systems laid out like polka dots on the interior of your country, especially one as vast as Russia. You really intercept these sorts of threats at the borders of your airspace, not the interior," Mr. Barros said.

Andrei Kartapolov, chairman of the Russian parliament's defense committee, said last year that Russia only had enough air defense assets in the interior to protect important government and military facilities and recommended companies acquire their own capabilities.

Dara Massicot, a military analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Russia might choose to move air defense systems located in the Far East and Arctic, where there is no immediate threat, to the central regions to protect some facilities there.

Rapid rebound

Ukraine has now carried out more than 20 attacks on Russian refineries and energy infrastructure so far in 2024, temporarily knocking out 14 percent of capacity at the peak in late March.

Some refineries, like Slavyansk and Tuapse, also in the Krasnodar region, have been hit more than once, underscoring the difficulty of protecting such facilities, especially when drones are launched in large numbers. Ukraine launched at least 57 into the Krasnodar region on May 18-19, according to Russia.

After the first series of refinery strikes at the start of the year, Russia imposed a six-month ban on the export of gasoline, effective March 1, in an effort to ensure the domestic market is fully supplied and prices stay low. Like many governments, Russia fears that high gasoline prices could trigger social discontent.

In targeting refineries, Ukraine is seeking to curtail Russian oil export revenue, the single biggest source of money for the federal budget, and to disrupt the domestic fuel market, experts say. Some experts say the impact will be minor because Russia's oil industry has flexibility built into its structure.

Russia on average refines more than 5 million barrels of oil a day, far outstripping domestic demand, allowing it to cut exports in the face of a fuel price spike. Since the start of the war in February 2022, Russia has temporarily banned gasoline exports on more than one occasion to ensure price stability at home.

Overall, Russia has a refining capacity of

Ukrainian Strikes On Russian Oil Infrastructure

Ukrainian drone attacks have struck Russian refineries, storage depots, and other oil infrastructure in some two dozen locations so far in 2024, causing a drop in the country's refining output.



about 6.5 million barrels a day, according to the Britain-based Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, so it can use this spare capacity to absorb shutdowns. It also has the option of pushing back seasonal maintenance at some refineries if others are knocked offline.

Russia can also export more crude in lieu of refined products, offsetting revenue losses. Total Russian oil export revenue declined only marginally in April, as higher crude export volumes and higher oil prices largely offset a 16 percent decline in revenue from oil product exports, according to the Finland-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

Russia has been able to repair some of the damage to its refineries quicker than many expected. In a sign of a rapid rebound, Russia announced it would resume gasoline exports from May 20 to June 30 amid excess stock at refineries and ports.

In a monthly market update on May 15, the International Energy Agency said Russia's refineries have so far avoided significant production losses, adding that it initially overestimated the impact on second quarter output.

Russia's May refining level is estimated at 5 million barrels a day, the IEA said in a statement to RFE/RL. It would be between 5.2-5.3 million barrels a day without the strikes, implying a loss of just 4 to 6 percent.

"The reported damage, while widespread, does not appear to have disrupted processing rates to the extent we had anticipated and some refineries started up sooner than we had assumed," the IEA said in its statement to RFE/RL.

Sergei Vakulenko, the former head of strategy and innovations at Russian state-owned oil company Gazpromneft, said the Ukrainian strikes are more a nuisance than a calamity.

"Attacks on the Russian refining sector do create losses for Russia, but so far it has been mostly 'bothering fire,'" Mr. Vakulenko, who is now an analyst at the U.S.-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote in a May 9 post on Substack. "It has not been material. It has not created any shortages of fuels. It did not have serious effects on fuel prices in Russia."

Morale booster

But the attacks are a morale-booster for Ukraine and a display of its capabilities against the much larger invader. Moreover,

experts say that, if Ukraine keeps up the strikes on refineries, Russia could increasingly struggle to repair them in a timely fashion due to U.S. and European sanctions, experts say. Russia's oil refining industry is dependent on Western technology for some of its advanced processes.

While the strikes haven't had a massive impact yet, effects could manifest themselves in the longer run, said Isaac Levi, an analyst at CREA.

Continued strikes could also put pressure on Russia's expansive rail network if gasoline and diesel products must be shipped thousands of miles westward from refineries in the Urals and Siberia, experts say.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has urged Ukraine to stop targeting Russian refineries amid concerns it could push oil prices up at a time when inflation in many parts of the world is still high. Russia is one of the world's largest exporters of refined oil products.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the Senate Armed Services Committee that attacks on refineries could have "a knock-on effect in terms of the global energy situation." Ukraine is "better served in going after tactical and operational targets that can directly influence the current fight," he said.

So far, there has been no substantial impact on global markets. Oil prices were trading near a three-month low on May 28.

Ukraine says refineries are legitimate targets and does not seem to be heeding the U.S. requests.

Kyiv is likely to be able to continue to mount successful strikes on Russia's energy industry despite Moscow's attempts to boost defenses, experts say.

Ukraine has been slowly degrading Russia's air defenses, opening some gaps in coverage. And with production of long-range drones growing, it can launch a greater number of them into Russian territory at the same time, saturating air defenses.

"If the Ukrainians can launch a high volume of long-range drones, then even with a low success rate they are bound to pull off successful strikes," Mr. Barros of the ISW said.

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Oil tanks at the oil refinery in Slavyansk in Russia's Krasnodar region are seen with exterior metal cages meant to protect them from drone attacks.

Putin boasts of Russia's hypersonic weapons, but a dozen scientists in the field face treason charges

by Robert Coalson
RFE/RL

When 75-year-old Russian scientist Anatoly Maslov, a specialist in high-speed aerodynamics, was arrested on treason charges in June 2022, his colleagues were alarmed.

"The persecution of scientists in the field of aviation has become a regular thing in our country," more than 400 of his colleagues wrote in an open letter that has since been deleted.

In a closed session on May 21, a St. Petersburg court convicted Mr. Maslov, who is now 77 and has spent almost two years in jail, of giving classified information to German agents in 2014 – a charge he and supporters say is groundless. He was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

"Fourteen years for a 77-year-old who had a heart attack while in pretrial detention is a death sentence," a relative of Mr. Maslov's who asked not to be identified out of safety concerns told RFE/RL. Mr. Maslov formerly headed a laboratory at the Institute for Theoretical and Applied Mechanics (ITPM) in Novosibirsk, a longtime scientific hub in Siberia.

Since 2018, at least 12 specialists in the field of hypersonic aerodynamics have been charged with treason. At least three of the researchers, most of whom are older



Researcher Anatoly Maslov, pictured before his arrest, was convicted on a treason charge on May 21.

adults, have died in custody. Like Mr. Maslov, many of them have been sentenced to long prison terms, while others have been held for months in pretrial detention.

Lawyers involved in the cases suspect the rash of treason charges is related to President Vladimir Putin's personal interest in hypersonic weaponry.

"It's a favorite toy of Putin's," Yevgeny Smirnov, a lawyer with the legal aid organization First Department, which provides defense consulting in cases that allegedly involve state secrets, told RFE/RL. "He has repeatedly announced that only Russia possesses hypersonic weapons."

The cases, all of which are handled by the Moscow headquarters of the Federal Security Service (FSB), have one purpose, Mr. Smirnov said: "To demonstrate that all the world's intelligence services are gunning for Russian researchers."

"And our security agencies achieve this goal the only way they know how – by putting innocent people in prison," he said.

'Like a meteorite'

Putin has been touting the prospects of hypersonic weapons for nearly two decades, part of his frequent saber-rattling about Russia's military capabilities. During his nationally televised direct line question-and-answer session in September 2005, he said Russia was developing hypersonic weapons that he claimed would be "practically invulnerable."

A recent report by the BBC counted more than 70 examples of Putin boasting about the weapons in public appearances since then. He highlighted them in a particularly bellicose state of the nation speech in 2018.

In that address, he mentioned the Kinzhal hypersonic missile, which has since been deployed against Ukraine in the first battlefield use of hypersonic weapons ever. He also mentioned the Avangard hypersonic missile, which he said "travels to its target like a meteorite" at up to 20 times the speed of sound.

The Russian military reportedly accepted the first unit of Avangard missiles into service in December 2019. In comments to the U.S. House Armed Services Committee this March about Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), a senior U.S. Air Force commander said



Workers recover a fragment of a Kinzhal hypersonic missile that struck Kyiv in January.

Moscow had "expanded its force of ICBMs armed with the Avangard" over the past year.

'Conveyor of repression'

The accused scientists have all denied revealing classified information, saying their articles and speeches were strictly vetted by in-house security committees at their institutes.

Advocates for the scientists say the FSB simply ignores that fact.

"The FSB operatives arrive at some institute that is connected in some way with hypersonic research and look for researchers who have taken part in international conferences or such programs," Mr. Smirnov, the lawyer, said. "Having identified several victims, they prepare allegations that during a conference or international program the scientist supposedly passed on secret information to foreign colleagues who might use it to create weapons for NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] countries."

Many of the cases involve speeches or articles that are at least 10 years old.

The programs involved were often approved by the

(Continued on page 10)

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The logo of the Ukrainian National Association (UNA) and the Ukrainian Youth Congress (YHC). It features a circular design with the Ukrainian tricolor (blue and yellow) and the text "UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION" and "УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ НАРОДНИЙ СОЮЗ" around the perimeter. The year "1894" is also present.

THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

A preventable attack sows devastation in Kharkiv

The recent Russian missile attack on Kharkiv represents a heinous act of aggression that underscores the brutality of Russia's campaign against Ukraine. On May 25, a missile struck the Epicenter shopping center in Kharkiv, leaving at least 16 people dead and wounding nearly four dozen others. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the devastated city the following day, renewing his urgent plea for additional aid from international allies.

We believe that attack could have been averted had Ukraine's key military allies – the U.S. and Germany – allowed Ukraine to hit military targets in Russia, which is some 25 miles from the Russian border.

The attack on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, highlights the indiscriminate nature of Russia's offensive. As rescuers combed through the charred remains of the shopping center, the death toll was feared to rise further. Oleh Synyehubov, the governor of the Kharkiv region, and Ihor Terekhov, Kharkiv's mayor, confirmed the harrowing statistics and emphasized the tragic loss of civilian lives. Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko added that 16 people were still unaccounted for, deepening the sense of horror and uncertainty.

"The attack targeted the shopping center, where there were many people," Mr. Terekhov said. This unprovoked assault on civilians epitomizes terrorism, a sentiment echoed by many Ukrainian officials. Mr. Zelenskyy, reacting to the attack, described it as a manifestation of "Russian madness," highlighting the irrational and cruel nature of the strike.

The Russian state news agency TASS attempted to justify the attack by claiming, without evidence, that the shopping center housed a "military store and command post." This narrative fails to disguise the reality: civilians were the primary victims. A video released by Ukraine's national police captured the moment of the attack, showing ordinary people shopping for home goods. The personal stories of those affected, like Svitlana, who rushed to the site in search of her son, and Lyubov, who was desperate to find her colleagues amid the flames, paint a vivid picture of the human cost of Russia's aggression.

Kharkiv has endured intensified missile and rocket attacks as Russia has opened a new front in its offensive. This strategy aims to stretch Ukrainian forces to their limits, with the goal of bringing Kharkiv within artillery range. The escalation has resulted in not only physical destruction but also significant psychological trauma for the city's residents.

Mr. Zelenskyy's visit to Kharkiv underscored his call for increased international support. He urged U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping to attend a planned peace summit in Switzerland, stressing that no single nation can halt the war alone. Mr. Zelenskyy's plea is a call to the global community to unite in the face of Russia's aggression and to provide the necessary aid to bolster Ukraine's defenses.

Mr. Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials have consistently requested that Western allies step up deliveries of air defense systems and other military aid. These pleas have gained urgency as Ukrainian forces struggle to counter the superior firepower of the Russian military. Additionally, there are increasing calls for the United States to relax its restrictions on Ukrainian forces using U.S.-supplied weapons to strike targets inside Russia. This tactical shift is essential for Ukraine to effectively counter Russian offensives and protect its citizens.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has supported the notion that Ukraine should be allowed to use Western-supplied weapons against military targets inside Russia. This stance reflects a growing recognition that a more aggressive defense strategy is necessary to deter further Russian attacks and shift the balance in favor of Ukraine.

The attack on Kharkiv is a stark reminder of the war's human toll and the lengths to which Russia will go to achieve its objectives. It is imperative that the international community respond with decisive support for Ukraine, enabling it to defend its sovereignty and protect its people from further heinous Russian atrocities.

Stoltenberg...

(Continued from page 1)

informed about Prague's drive to supply Ukraine with 1 million rounds of ammunition by the end of the year.

"We know that a major front in the competition that we have, the adversarial relationship that we have, notably with Russia, is on the information front," Mr. Blinken said.

During the ministers' meeting, talks are scheduled on a plan presented by Mr. Stoltenberg in April on a framework that would transfer responsibility for military and civilian aid for Ukraine from an informal, U.S.-led group to the formal structures of the alliance.

NATO is currently not officially offering lethal military supplies to Kyiv. Individual NATO member states have been channeling supplies through the Ukraine Contact Group (UCG), an initiative chaired by the United States known informally as the Ramstein Group.

The ministers are also likely to debate whether to allow Kyiv to use Western-provided weapons to strike targets inside Russia. The United States and Germany have been opposed to allowing such a move, while Britain and France have been in favor.

Mr. Stoltenberg and the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, have also voiced their approval of allowing Ukraine to use Western arms to hit military objectives on Russian territory under certain conditions.

As the two-day informal meeting of the alliance was set to kick off in Prague, Russia launched a large-scale attack early on May 30, targeting military and civilian infrastructure in nine Ukrainian regions, causing casualties and damage while a spat of attacks earlier in the week claimed the lives of several civilians.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, Russian missiles struck two locations, wounding seven people, six of them women, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov reported.

"A two-story administrative building was hit, resulting in partial destruction, followed by a fire. Six women and one man received minor injuries," Mr. Synyehubov said.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, is located just 22 miles from the Russian border and has been repeatedly pounded by Moscow's artillery and air strikes over the past several weeks as Ukraine's depleted air defenses and ammunition face increasing difficulties in repelling such attacks.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said earlier that critical infrastructure, including a gas pipeline, was damaged in the strikes that also triggered a fire.

Separately, the Ukrainian Air Force said it shot down all 32 drones and seven of the 19 cruise missiles launched by Russia.

The missiles and drones were shot down over the Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhia, Odesa, Kherson, Kyiv and Vinnytsya regions, the air force said.

Meanwhile, NATO member Sweden on May 29 announced its largest military aid package for Ukraine so far. It will include modern radar surveillance planes as Russian attacks continued to target civilians, killing several people in three Ukrainian regions.

Two people were killed and three wounded early on May 29 when Russian troops shelled Krasnopil in the northeastern region of Sumy, the regional military administration reported on May 29.

Vadym Filashkin, the governor of the eastern region of Donetsk, said on May 29 that three civilians were killed and six were wounded by Russian bombardment the previous day.

In the northern region of Chernihiv, one person died in the hospital after being wounded by Russian shelling the previous day in Semenivsk, near the border, Ukraine's Interior Ministry reported on May 29.

Ukraine's air defense said it shot down 13 of the 14 drones launched by Russia early on May 29 at three of its regions – Mykolayiv, Kirovohrad and Rivne. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said in its daily summary on May 29 that the heaviest fighting had been observed in the areas around Kupyansk and Pokrovsk. It also said Russian forces continued their assault in the Vovchansk region, where Russian ground units were supported by guided aerial bombs launched from planes over Russia.

Russian troops "significantly intensified" their attack in the area around Kurakhiv, the General Staff noted, but the area around Pokrovsk continued to experience the largest number of clashes.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry said in two separate statements on May 29 that planes from its Black Sea Fleet had destroyed three Ukrainian Crimea-bound sea drones in the north-western part of the Black Sea.

In Stockholm, the Swedish government announced a package of 13.3 billion Swedish crowns (\$1.3 billion) in military aid for Ukraine – the 16th since the start of Russia's invasion and the largest so far.

The package includes two Swedish-made SAAB ASCC airborne early-warning-and-control aircraft.

Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonsson said the two planes would have the "greatest effect on the Ukrainian air defense," complementing and supporting the U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets pledged by several countries.

Stockholm has provided 43.5 billion Swedish crowns (\$4.1 billion) in military aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The Swedish donation was the third secured by Ukraine this week, following similar packages pledged by Spain and Belgium during visits by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The Belgian donation included a pledge of 30 F-16s to be delivered to Kyiv by 2028, with the first aircraft expected to arrive later this year.

Ukraine's air defenses have been struggling with insufficiently modern air-defense systems and dwindling supplies of anti-aircraft ammunition needed to counter an increasingly intense Russian bombardment, mainly in the northeastern Kharkiv region, where Russian President Vladimir Putin has claimed Moscow wants to establish a "buffer zone" against cross-border Ukrainian attacks on military targets inside Russia.

Ukraine has complained that some donors, chiefly the United States and Germany – have banned the use of modern Western missile systems by Ukraine to attack targets inside Russia.

However, French President Emmanuel Macron and Messrs. Borrell and Stoltenberg have been in favor of such strikes on military facilities located just across the border and used by Russia to bomb Ukrainian cities and civilian infrastructure.

However, Yuriy Sak, an adviser to Ukraine's minister of strategic industries, on May 29 told Bloomberg that Kyiv had used British-supplied missiles on targets inside Russia after securing London's approval.

"We already have a precedent. For example, Great Britain – they have already allowed Ukraine to use the long-range Storm Shadow missiles that they supply. And we successfully use them," Mr. Sak said.

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June
4
2019

Turning the pages back...

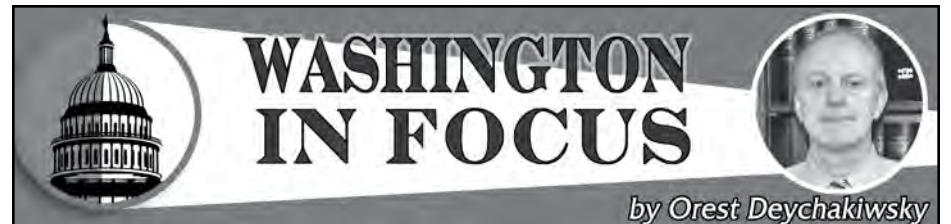
Five years ago, on June 4, 2019, more than 2,500 people witnessed the enthronement of Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak as the prime hierarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia. Bishop Gudziak, who was enthroned as the seventh metropolitan-archbishop of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia, succeeded Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka.

Bishop Gudziak, 58, is a native of Syracuse, N.Y., and was elected by the Synod of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops in September 2018 as the leading candidate. Pope Francis appointed Bishop Gudziak as metropolitan and archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia on February 18 and, upon his enthronement on June 4, he officially took canonical possession of the archeparchy.

A procession marked the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, led by seminarian Bohdan Vasylyv, followed by uniformed members of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization. Also present were members of the Knights of Columbus, who served as an honor guard.

Approximately 50 bishops from the Ukrainian Catholic, Eastern Catholic, Latin Rite and Ukrainian Orthodox churches, 125 priests, 11 deacons and 70 leaders from other denominations took part in the event. Notably present were Bishop Emeritus Basil Losten and Archbishop Emeritus Stefan Soroka of the Ukrainian Catholic Church; Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S.; Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York; and Archbishop of Philadelphia Charles Chaput, as well as Patriarch Sviatoslav

(Continued on page 12)



Lessons learned from long campaign to secure U.S. aid for Ukraine

Since President Joe Biden originally requested supplemental funding for Ukraine last August, the Razom Advocacy team was laser-focused on ensuring that Congress came through for Ukraine. The last eight months proved to be the most difficult fight to secure Ukraine aid since the full-scale invasion began. “Unfortunately, the months-long delay has come at a heavy cost – thousands of Ukrainian lives lost, further Russian encroachment on Ukrainian territory and increased devastation to Ukrainian communities and infrastructure,” wrote Mykola Murskyj, Razom’s director of advocacy, in a statement posted on X (formerly Twitter). “The delay underscores the evil that thrives in the absence of American leadership.” With supplemental aid now passed, here are three key takeaways that need to be considered for future aid packages to ensure continued support for Ukraine.

Bipartisan support for Ukraine remains, but in hiding

Ukraine aid passed the House by a vote of 311-112 and the Senate by a vote of 79-18. Nearly 73 percent of Congress supported aid for Ukraine eight months after it was first requested, indicating that Ukraine maintains real bipartisan support on the Hill, even during an election year with divisive political rhetoric causing delays. While Democratic support for Ukraine remains virtually unanimous, Republican support is fragmented due to internal party divisions. Such infighting threatens to undermine Republican support for Ukraine over future funding bills depending on what happens this election year.

Most Republican members of Congress we spoke with were supportive of Ukraine, yet did not feel comfortable expressing support publicly due to a fear of losing primary elections to isolationist candidates. For example, Rep. Victoria Spartz, the only Ukrainian-born member of Congress, faced a primary opponent who claimed that Ms. Spartz puts “Ukraine first.” Ms. Spartz would go on to vote against Ukraine aid and win her primary with 39 percent of the vote. Razom assesses that, of the 112 Republicans who voted against supplemental aid for Ukraine, approximately 40 Republicans would have voted to support aid for Ukraine if it were not for their upcoming primaries.

The good news is that as the primary season concludes pressure on Republican members of Congress should subside. If so, bipartisan support for Ukraine will further stabilize. However, do not expect to see support for Ukraine communicated publicly in this election season. With most American voters prioritizing issues like immigration and the economy, foreign policy should remain on the periphery of American political debate.

To maintain bipartisan support, politicians need cover from their constituents, and each other

The Washington Post reported that, after voting in favor of aid for Ukraine, Ohio Republican Rep. Max Miller was “bracing for backlash” after returning to the district for a town hall. Instead, Mr. Miller received the opposite reaction: a sustained round of applause. “Anything we can do to support the Ukrainian victory over the Russian

invasion would be a positive thing for the world,” said Randy Manley, who plans to vote for Donald Trump in November.

On May 8, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene acted on her threat to oust House Speaker Mike Johnson through a motion to vacate due to his leadership on passing foreign aid packages. Her efforts failed resoundingly, with 359 members of the House voting to keep Mr. Johnson in his seat. In April, Mr. Johnson said that supporting Ukraine was “the right thing” to do. Yet, many in Washington wondered to what extent the speaker had lost his grip on the position after going against a vocal minority in his own party. Ms. Greene’s failed motion to vacate and Mr. Trump’s refusal to back her drive home the message that supporting Ukraine is indeed the right thing to do.

In the case of Mr. Miller’s positive reaction from constituents after voting for Ukraine, and that Mr. Johnson’s seat was saved by the vast majority of his colleagues, we see the importance of communicating the need to support Ukraine from constituents. Calling your representatives and thanking them for their support is a critical way to ensure such support continues. Calls from constituents not only emboldens representatives to vote favorably on Ukraine-related legislation, but it also provides them with the political cover needed to lobby their colleagues on the Hill to support Ukraine as well.

There are members who will never support Ukraine; they are loud, but their position was inflated and they themselves have never been weaker.

Over and over again in our conversations with skeptical Congressional offices, we found themes repeating. For some offices, the fight over Ukraine aid was pure politics. U.S. President Joe Biden wants to help Ukraine, so they, as Republican offices, reflexively went in the opposite direction. When pressed on the merits of the policy of helping Ukraine, a rotating slew of excuses was offered. These included that “we don’t know where the money is going,” “Ukraine is too corrupt,” or “we have to secure our own border before we help Ukraine with theirs.”

For each of these charges, we prepared researched replies and, at times, even brought in an outside expert to lend extra heft to a point we really wanted to underscore. Most times our counter points would be politely accepted and we would leave the meeting feeling as if some small progress had been made, that the proverbial ball had been rolled forward by some tiny, but perceptible margin. Yet, when we would follow up with that office later, we would be met with exactly the same stale and disproven lines. Almost as if our previous conversation never occurred. Our team came to realize that for some offices such lines were not reasons, but rather excuses that politely covered the reality that a member simply didn’t support Ukraine.

Such offices are now easy to identify; they are the same ones that voted against Ukraine aid since Russian tanks attempted to take Kyiv. Representatives such as Thomas Massie, Matt Gaetz, Lauren Boebert and Ms. Green will not change their positions. Throughout the supplemental

Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine: The Human Dimension

Ukraine’s existential fight to defeat Russian aggression is not just about regaining lost territory. It is also about some 5 million men, women and children living under Russia’s boot in nearly 20 percent of Ukrainian territory whose elementary rights and freedoms have been trampled over with impunity.

To be clear, even if the territory occupied by Russia was uninhabited, Ukraine would be legally and morally justified in fighting to liberate every inch of that land. Russia has flagrantly contravened the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, including those of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders that are so essential to peace, security and international order.

One of the other principles that is a cornerstone of international peace, prosperity and justice is respect for human rights. Russia’s abuses of human rights in the Ukrainian lands it forcibly occupies are on a scale not seen since Stalinist times.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recent disingenuous proposal for a cease-fire along current front lines is a non-starter. The truth of the matter is that any cease-fire or peace agreement that does not result in the liberation of all internationally recognized Ukrainian territory would consign nearly 5 million Ukrainians to untold misery. There can be no just and lasting peace so long as Ukrainian land remains under Russian domination. In the words of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Oleksandra Matviichuk, “Ukrainians yearn for peace – but occupation is not peace.”

We can look no further than the horrendous war crimes that have been documented in now-liberated territories, including such places as Bucha and Irpin. Or we can look at the abysmal human rights climate in Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the decade since Russia’s initial 2014 invasion. They are an ugly playbook for what is happening throughout Russia-occupied Ukrainian lands today.

A recent United Nations human rights report describes the situation thus: “Russia has instilled a pervasive atmosphere of fear in the occupied regions of Ukraine, perpetrating egregious violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws in an attempt to cement its control.”

Several recent reports, including the State Department human rights report covering the Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine, chronicle the serious, widespread abuses perpetrated against civilians in the occupied territories. Among them, we see summary executions, disappearances, unlawful detentions and torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexual violence. Adults and children are abducted and forcibly transferred to Russia. The Russian occupiers and their lackeys especially target pro-Ukraine activists, and even those simply opposing or believed to oppose the occupation, including Crimean Tatars, journalists and civil servants. There are numerous political prisoners and detainees. Prison conditions are harsh and

life-threatening. Relatives of the repressed have been punished. People are encouraged to report on one another, exacerbating the climate of fear. Cultural artifacts are looted, and places of worship have been appropriated or destroyed. Homes and businesses are pillaged. These are just some among the litany of horrors that take a toll not only on the victims but on their loved ones. Russia’s actions in Ukraine even traumatizes larger communities.

There are also severe restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, peaceful assembly and association, religious and minority freedoms and abuses of those who attempt to exercise these rights. Mind you, this is far from the complete list of human rights violations and restrictions of freedoms.

The Russian government is conducting a systematic program to integrate the newly occupied areas, as it has been doing for the last 10 years in Crimea and the Donbas.

There is a relentless campaign of Russification. Individuals are forced to take Russian citizenship in a so-called process of “passportization.” Woe to those who refuse, as it is virtually impossible to receive health care, social benefits, humanitarian aid, work in the public sector or even drive without a Russian passport. As newly-minted Russian citizens, individuals are forced to serve in the Russian armed forces. All of this grossly violates international humanitarian law.

The Kremlin is working intensely to erase the Ukrainian language and rewrite history books. Moscow’s satraps eliminate Ukrainian literature and replace it with Russian propaganda that glorifies the invaders and demonizes Ukrainians as neo-Nazis and allies of Satan. Additionally, Russians are being brought in to colonize Ukrainian lands.

As is often the case, children bear the brunt of the trauma and harm, with Russian curricula replacing Ukrainian education in schools, or kids face indoctrination into Russian ideology and a rejection of all things Ukrainian. Russian military and patriotic education centers proliferate in occupied Ukrainian cities. They aim to prepare youth for military service. Children from “questionable” families are deported to Russia. All these practices fall squarely in line with the Kremlin’s despicable attempts to eradicate Ukrainian cultural, religious, historic, political and national identity.

One stark expression of Russia’s contempt for democracy was the farcical September 2023 local and March 2024 Russian presidential elections held in the Russia-controlled parts of the illegally annexed Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. These elections did not meet even the bare minimal standards for democratic elections. People were intimidated and coerced to vote – sometimes at gunpoint. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said that Russia’s pattern of holding sham elections in occupied Ukraine was a cynical attempt to “legitimize Putin’s illegal attempt at a land grab.”

The contrast between Ukrainians who

Orest Deychakiwsky may be reached at orestdeychak@gmail.com.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued on page 11)

Ukrainian American Credit Union Association holds Board meeting, reassesses organizational goals and objectives

UACUA

FEASTERVILLE, Pa. – The Board of Directors of the Ukrainian American Credit Union Association (UACUA) met at the Ukrainian Selfreliance Federal Credit Union's main office in Feasterville, PA on April 11. The meeting began with an informal gathering and dinner the previous night where attendees exchanged ideas in a

congenial, informal setting.

Board Chairman Anatoli Murha opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance and reviewing the proposed agenda items.

Executive Director Andriy Horbachevsky facilitated an important discussion centered on strategy that began with a reassessment of the UACUA's organizational goals and objectives.



Courtesy of the UACUA

Pictured during a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Ukrainian American Credit Union Association (UACUA) are (from left to right) Oleh Lebedko, CEO of the Ukrainian Federal Credit Union in Rochester, N.Y.; Stepan Kaczurak, chairman of the Ukrainian National Federal Credit Union on New York; Anatoli Murha, chairman of the UACUA and CEO of the Ukrainian Selfreliance Federal Credit Union in Philadelphia; Olena Danyluk, director of the Ukrainian Selfreliance Federal Credit Union in Michigan; George Oliarnyk, chairman of the NOVA UA Federal Credit Union in Clifton, N.J.; Roman Kozicky, CEO of SUMA Federal Credit Union in Yonkers, N.Y.; Bohdan Kurczak, CEO of the Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union; and Andriy Horbachevsky, executive director of the UACUA and chairman of the SUMA Federal Credit Union in Yonkers, N.Y.

As there are many organizations in the Ukrainian American community, the UACUA directors highlighted the importance for UACUA of "staying in its lane" and working within its charter while leveraging

its institutional core competencies.

Moreover, it was agreed that the clarification of goals will serve as a framework

(Continued on page 9)

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Plast announces fundraising effort to help displaced children attend summer camps

by Sofia Shyprykevych

JENKINTOWN, Pa. – Members of the National Council of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the United States have announced a fundraising initiative to benefit Ukrainian children displaced by Russia’s war on their country.

Recognizing the profound impact of camping on personal growth, Plast officials in the U.S. said the objective of the fundraising campaign is to raise \$100,000 to support displaced children from Ukraine so they can attend summer camps in the United States.

Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union has already contributed \$10,000 to the cause.

Plast officials in the U.S. encouraged individuals to contribute to the fund and spread information about the initiative to acquaintances, friends, colleagues, businesses and organizations.

That initiative, which aims to help children who have been impacted by Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine, kicked off in February 2022. Since that time, some 6.5 million Ukrainians have fled their country entirely, while another 8 million people have been displaced within Ukraine, according to the Office of the United



Vovcha Tropa Facebook page

Cub Scouts of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the U.S. play a game at the organization’s Vovcha Tropa campground in East Chatham, N.Y.

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Among Ukrainian families fleeing their homes, many have come to the United States to raise their children in a peaceful

and safe environment. Plast officials in the U.S. have sought to welcome them by offering ongoing support and aiding in their transition to a foreign country.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, some 200 children of displaced Ukrainian families have joined Plast in the U.S. They eagerly attend weekly meetings, acquire scouting skills and hope to attend summer camps, just as they previously did in Ukraine.

Participating in these camps offers more than just navigating challenges and acquiring skills; the summer camps also provide a refuge for children to enjoy the outdoors

and learn more about Ukrainian traditions. The camps also give children an opportunity to bond with peers, create lifelong memories, build inner strength, develop leadership skills, and strengthen a hunger for constant self-improvement.

Immediately following the beginning of Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine, Plast members worldwide assembled to aid the war-torn country and its people. Under the guidance of the National Plast Council in the United States, a group called Scouts for Ukraine was formed to raise funds and provide humanitarian aid for the people of Ukraine.

Over the past two years, the program has raised more than \$30 million that has been used to procure generators, solar panels, vehicles for the front lines, Christmas Eve dinners, and Easter baskets for soldiers celebrating holidays on the front. Plast members across America have also assembled individual medical and warming kits for Ukrainian soldiers.

Above all, Plast as a scouting organization is dedicated to raising upstanding citizens and Ukrainian patriots. As a result, the Scouts for Ukraine program has also allocated funds for scholarships for scouts and families of fallen Plast members at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine. It has also sponsored attendance at camps across Europe for Ukrainian children, laying the foundation for a stronger country after the war.

More information about the fundraising initiative – including directions on how to make a donation that will be used to support displaced children who want to attend a summer camp – is available online at www.scoutsforukraine.org.

UACUA...

(Continued from page 8)

for future UACUA programming and projects. Other topics discussed at the meeting included professional development for credit union managers and staff, collaboration opportunities between individual credit unions, sharing of best practices especially in such areas as online banking and cyber security, and improving the messaging of the great value that Ukrainian American credit unions offer their members.

The attendees also discussed the 2024 UACUA annual conference and general meeting that will take place in Boston on July 25-27. That conference will immediately follow the annual conference of the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU). The WOCCU represents 85,000 credit unions from 118 countries, including Ukrainian-affiliated credit unions from Ukraine, the

United States, Canada and Australia.

Those Ukrainian-affiliated credit unions fall under the umbrella of the World Council of Ukrainian Credit Unions (WCUC), which is currently headed by Oleh Lebedko, CEO of the Ukrainian Federal Credit Union based in Rochester, N.Y.

Plans are underway to leverage both Boston conferences as networking opportunities for Ukrainian credit union leaders from around the world.

The UACUA currently includes 11 credit unions with over 128,000 members (an increase of 26 percent from January 2022) and assets totaling \$4.4 billion. Despite facing difficult economic headwinds in the United States, UACUA credit unions donated over \$3.4 million in 2023 to various humanitarian and other community charitable causes. Overall, UACUA credit unions are committed to continue serving their members new and old while living up to the organization’s motto of “People Helping People.”

Russian Ministry...

(Continued from page 2)

against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which there are only risky and painful options, including the potential of nuclear warfare (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 23). Mr. Belousov demonstrates his mandate for the ongoing purge among the military leadership and is playing the role of “bad cop,” while Putin tries to play the role of “good cop” (Kremlin.ru, May 15).

The criminal case against Mr. Shamarin demonstrates how an anti-corruption campaign in Russia works. He is accused of receiving 36 million rubles (about \$400,000) as a bribe from the managers of the telephone plant Telta in Perm in exchange for patronage and contracts. Two major problems, however, accompany this accusation. First, the top managers of Telta have been under arrest since July 2023 and were accused of fraud, likely related to the use of Chinese-made components in devices supplied to the MoD. Second, Telta itself is not able to produce modern communication devices without imported components and exists as a relatively small final assem-

bly facility on the territory of a former Soviet-era telephone plant, most of which is rented out (Kommersant, July 25, 2023; Gazeta.ru, May 23; Web.archive.org, accessed May 23).

The Shamarin case is similar to the criminal accusation of his predecessor, Col. Gen. Khalil Arslanov, who was accused of stealing several billion rubles through the procurement of military radio communication sets in China (Kommersant, March 4, 2021). Similar cases are common for many other contracts and entities in Russia. Mr. Belousov cannot change the Russian military’s poor performance and hardly pretends to be able to do so. He must, however, maintain the absolute loyalty of the Russian generals to the Kremlin’s way of war to stay in power and accomplish the tasks set before him. The anti-corruption purge is merely a tool for the Kremlin to stoke fear in its underlings, ensure ultimate loyalty through the looming threat of arrest and deflect blame for the disastrous war against Ukraine.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

ing its skies against Russia's indiscriminate strikes on civilian targets, at least 14 people were killed and 43 wounded when Russia bombed a DYI store in the country's second-largest city, Kharkiv, located just some 35 kilometers from the Russian border. Following the Kharkiv attack, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called on May 27 on Ukraine's Western allies to step up their military aid to Kyiv. Speaking at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, Mr. Stoltenberg said Ukraine had the right to use Western weapons against military targets on Russian territory and called on Western countries to reconsider forbidding Ukraine to launch such attacks. "The time has come to consider whether it will be right to lift some of the restrictions which have been imposed because we see now that especially in the Kharkiv region the front line and the border line is more or less the same," Mr. Stoltenberg said. "If Kyiv

cannot attack military targets on Russian territory, then it ties one hand of the Ukrainians on their back and makes it very hard for them to conduct defense." (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Missing journalist turns up in Russian custody

Ukrainian journalist Viktoriya Roshchyna, who went missing in the Russia-occupied part of Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhia region last August, has turned up in Russian custody. The Russian Defense Ministry informed Ms. Roshchyna's father on May 28 that his daughter "was detained and is currently on the territory of the Russian Federation." No reason for her detention was given. Ms. Roshchyna covered Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine from its outset in February 2022. In March 2022, she was detained for 10 days by Russian authorities in the Russian-occupied city of Berdyansk. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Allies meet to discuss Czech munitions drive

The leaders of five European North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states reaffirmed their support for Ukraine on

May 28 at a meeting in Prague where the main focus was a Czech plan to procure up to 800,000 artillery shells from countries outside the European Union and provide them to Ukraine. Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said Ukraine can expect the first delivery of tens of thousands of 155-millimeter shells in the next few days. Mr. Fiala hosted the working dinner attended by Polish President Andrzej Duda, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Latvian Prime Minister Evika Silina and said they would also meet with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. At a news conference ahead of the dinner, Mr. Fiala said the officials would discuss how their countries can help Ukraine "at this critical stage of its defense from Russian aggression." They also would discuss to what extent the existing initiatives to arm Ukraine are working and what more could be done beyond the Czech initiative and a German initiative on supplying air defenses. Under the Czech initiative, Czech government officials and private companies have worked to source ammunition rounds from around the world. Fifteen European Union and NATO states have pledged around 1.6 billion euros (\$1.7 billion) to fund the project. The leaders said in a joint statement after the meeting that, with the current financing, they "expect to ensure the donation of half a million rounds of artillery ammunition before the end of the year." They added that they would continue the initiative as long as needed. Mr. Duda pledged to support the transport of the artillery shells and described the situation on the Ukrainian-Russian front as difficult. He said Russia had the initiative in the war and is preparing another major offensive, and artillery will play a key role in defense. "We need it [the ammunition] at the front lines as soon as possible," said Mr. Shmyhal, who also spoke about the initiative to provide Ukraine with air defense systems to secure its skies. "We need, [at] a minimum, seven Patriot systems and modern combat aircraft also as soon as possible," he said. Mr. Fiala also commented on Ukraine's request to use weapons supplied by its Western allies against targets inside Russia. "I see this as fully logical. Ukraine is a country that defends itself from Russian aggression. It needs to protect its territory and civilian population," he said. "Being a country under attack, it definitely has the full right

to use all means for its defense." NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and others have endorsed letting Ukraine use weapons on Russian targets, saying concerns that the use of Western weapons inside Russia would implicate the alliance in the war are unfounded. (RFE/RL, with reporting by Reuters and dpa)

Ukraine repels Russian drone attacks

Ukraine's air defenses shot down 13 of the 14 drones launched by Russia early on May 29 at three of its regions, the Ukrainian Air Force reported on Telegram. "As a result of anti-aircraft combat, 13 Shahed [drones] were shot down in the Mykolayiv, Kirovohrad and Rivne regions," the message said. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Meanwhile, Veniamin Kondratyev, the governor of Russia's southern Krasnodar region, said in a message on Telegram that a Ukrainian drone had been shot down by Russian air defenses over the city of Armavir. There were no casualties or damage, Mr. Kondratyev wrote. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Ukrainian drone attack on radar station

A Ukrainian military intelligence official claimed to RFE/RL that one of its drones targeted a Russian Voronezh-M early warning radar system, in one of Kyiv's deepest attacks inside Russian territory since Moscow launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor more than two years ago. According to the official who spoke on May 27, the drone covered a distance of 1,800 kilometers to hit a radar station in the city of Orsk near the Russian-Kazakh border. There was no immediate confirmation from Russian officials concerning the attack claim. Last week, a Ukrainian drone attack targeted a similar radar installation in Russia's southwestern region of Krasnodar. Satellite images showed that the Armavir radar station, which has two Voronezh-type radars, had suffered serious damage to the buildings housing the radar installations. The Ukrainian attack on the Armavir station came shortly after Russia began exercises with its tactical nuclear weapons forces in the Southern Military District. Russia's Defense Ministry said the exercises were held "in response to provocative statements and threats from certain Western officials." Separately on May 27,

(Continued on page 11)

Putin boasts...

(Continued from page 5)

Russian government during the 2008-2012 presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, when Putin was prime minister, Mr. Smirnov noted.

The government "approved the cooperation of a number of Russian institutes with European organizations doing physics research," he said. "Then, [a few] years later, they start coming to these people with searches and criminal cases, accusing them of treason for participating in those projects."

All of the research institutes connected with what are often called the "hypersonic cases" participated in the FP7 space cooperation program, which started in June 2011 and ended in May 2013.

In Mr. Maslov's case, his relatives said, the allegations were largely based on the testimony of a colleague named Aleksandr Kuranov. Mr. Kuranov, the 76-year-old former director of a St. Petersburg-based state research institute who worked on the Soviet-era Ayaks hypersonic aircraft, was given the minimum sentence of seven years in prison on treason charges in April. The court announcement said "mitigating circumstances" compelled the judge to

impose the shortest possible sentence.

A researcher at ITPM who was a co-author of papers with at least one of the arrested men and who spoke on condition of anonymity said the institute has cut all foreign contacts and canceled hypersonic research.

"It is difficult to work under such conditions," the scientist said. "Not just because of the restrictions but because of the lack of defined, comprehensible rules. We are waiting ... for common sense to prevail."

The investigations into "hypersonic cases" show no signs of abating, Mr. Smirnov said.

The year "2023 showed that the conveyor of repression of Russian scientists has not stopped and isn't going to be stopped," he said. "What does this mean? At least two to five more imprisoned researchers this year."

(Written by RFE/RL's Robert Coalson based on reporting by RFE/RL's North. Realities, Siberia.Realities, Russian Service and Current Time)

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 10)

Krasnodar Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev said several Ukrainian drones were shot down by Russian air defenses overnight in areas close to a giant luxury complex on the Black Sea coast near the city of Gelendzhik. The late Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's investigative group said in 2021 that the palace complex had been built for President Vladimir Putin, which he denied at the time. After the report by Mr. Navalny's team sparked debate across Russia, Putin's close associate, businessman Arkady Rotenberg, publicly said he is

the owner of the property in question. Another Ukrainian drone attack on May 27 targeted a gasoline station in the western Russian region of Oryol, killing one person, the region's governor, Andrei Klychkov, wrote on Telegram. Later on May 27, Moscow region Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said air defenses had downed a drone in Balashikha, just east of Moscow. He said drone fragments had landed on a house but nobody was injured. In recent months, Ukraine has stepped up strikes on Russian territory and off its shores, targeting, in particular, oil production and refining facilities, air defense installations and naval vessels. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian services)

Political...

(Continued from page 1)

By staying in the country, Mr. Zelenskyy galvanized Ukrainians as Russian forces approached Kyiv from both sides of the Dnipro River, which bisects the city.

"I need ammunition, not a ride," Mr. Zelenskyy told his embassy in Britain two days after the renewed invasion.

His diplomatic corps also started to recruit foreigners to fight in the International Legion and the president said he would "give weapons to anyone who wants to defend our country."

"Mr. Zelenskyy has the war to thank for being an outstanding leader," Mr. Sherr said. "The war and the progression of war is what created the Zelenskyy we know."

Before that, due to his inexperience, he mostly failed in domestic politics and could not quash corruption that had become a "system of governance" in the country, the British expert said. "Corruption is about personal enrichment; ... a system of resource, it's based on a patron-client relationship."

Like his war-time predecessor in Britain during World War II – then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill – the Ukrainian president remained defiant. He started to release nightly addresses on social media to the nation just as World War II-era U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt did on the radio during his "fireside chats."

After being elected and following the start of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine, Mr. Zelenskyy "adjusted swiftly in a way that brought out his best characteristics. There is reverence, irony, clarity that are all on display," Mr. Sherr said.

Hints of Mr. Zelenskyy's fortitude – some have said stubbornness – came as early as 2019 when he met Russian President Vladimir Putin in France for peace talks to bring an end to the ongoing war, the Briton said. That war is now more than 10 years old.

"Putin wasn't expecting his equilibrium and was unsettled by it. ... Russian presidential adviser Vladislav Surkov [once known as the 'Wizard of the Kremlin'] had a temper tantrum on the margins" during the negotiations, Mr. Sherr said.

As a result of his actions since 2022, the Ukrainian president is "now known worldwide," said Oleksiy Haran, a political science professor at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. "The question remains [during war time], has Zelenskyy formed a government of unity?"

Messrs. Haran and Sherr both alluded to Mr. Churchill who included members of the opposition among his leadership and Cabinet of Ministers.

Instead, Mr. Zelenskyy has since the full-scale invasion concentrated power within his office, largely neglected his cabinet and parliament, and has relied on a "narrow circle of people and rarely engages with Ukrainians in civil society and with experts – he displays abrasive reactions to [negative] public opinion," said Adrian Karatny-

cky, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Atlantic Council who also recently published a book on Ukraine, titled "Battleground Ukraine: From Independence to the War with Russia."

The epicenter of any advice that comes to Mr. Zelenskyy's lies largely around his chief of staff, Andrii Yermak, who is known as the gatekeeper of the presidential office.

During a time of martial law and war, "the inevitable" clustering of power has led to possible "tunnel vision," said Mr. Haran, adding that only "a narrow circle of trusted advisers" are around Mr. Zelenskyy.

Mr. Yermak "in effect sets the agenda for the government more than the prime minister," Mr. Karatnycky said. "He is extremely capable of working for Zelenskyy; you cannot fault Zelenskyy for being reliant on him, ... yet Zelenskyy should be curious to hear a range of opinions especially when things are not going right."

By including a mixture of opposition voices in his governing circle, Mr. Zelenskyy "would add more legitimacy" to his hold on power, Prof. Haran said.

The New York-based Ukrainian American expert and author added that, although the president is "pretty insular, he is very effective at feeling the nation and his public audience."

The bottom line, Mr. Haran said, is that "it is worrying that the government and parliament are run from Bankova Street [where the Office of the President of Ukraine is located]. This means that all the most important decisions are made in Zelenskyy's office, by a narrow circle of his trusted advisers."

Should the war end and presidential elections take place, Mr. Zelenskyy might not be in the right place to stay in power, Mr. Sherr said, referring to new problems that Ukraine would face after the war.

He "would be doing himself no favors to remain in power; ... he has to know when to go and that Ukraine would face new problems after the war," the British expert said regarding reconstruction matters, tackling corruption, forming better "career structures" for the state and "systems of accountability."

In the end, Mr. Zelenskyy deserves "high marks as an international voice and leader, he instills inspiration, but adaptation is something he does not seem to do deftly and easily," said Mr. Karatnycky.

He added that despite the war "Ukrainians are not living in economic desperation; ... yet Zelenskyy is still a flawed president. I don't think he had a big growth spurt and is still a novice president in the sense that he lacks governance [skills]."

Regarding the June 15-16 Global Peace Summit that Mr. Zelenskyy is holding in Switzerland with nearly 100 national leaders and diplomatic representatives, the U.S. expert said it is "a good initiative ... but it won't change anything."

"The only way Putin will have peace is if he feels a risk to continue the war and if there is an ability for Russia to feel the war [on its own territory]," Mr. Karatnycky said.

France...

(Continued from page 1)

servicemen. I have already signed the documents allowing the first French instructors to visit our training centers and familiarize themselves with their infrastructure and personnel," Mr. Syrskyi said.

"I believe that France's determination will encourage other partners to join this ambitious project. I thanked mister minister [Mr. Lecornu] for the friendly support of the French people and military and economic assistance to Ukraine to repel Russian military aggression," Mr. Syrskyi said.

Mr. Syrskyi announced that France and Ukraine had agreed to send French instructors on visit to Ukraine to see Ukrainian training centers firsthand. He expressed hope that France's move would encourage other partners to do the same.

Ukraine's Ministry of Defense said that as of February Kyiv has been expressing interest in receiving foreign instructors and that discussions with France and other countries are still ongoing.

The Defense Ministry and General Staff said they have begun working on the formal documents needed for the proposal so as not to waste time on bureaucratic issues if the plan is enacted.

The French Armed Forces said the plan to send its military instructors to Ukraine to train military personnel is still being considered, AFP reported.

A statement from the French Defense Ministry noted that military training in Ukraine "is one of the areas that were discussed" during a meeting between some of Ukraine's allies convened by French President Emmanuel Macron in late February.

"As in all other areas discussed on this occasion, we continue to work on this issue with the Ukrainians, in particular, to understand their exact needs," the ministry statement said.

The French proposal has drawn concern from some allies and criticism from Russia.

A decision on implementing the French plan could be announced in the coming weeks, according to a Reuters report that cited three diplomatic sources.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected in France on June 6 for the anniversary of the World War II allied invasion of Normandy.

Two of the diplomats cited by Reuters said France would initially send a limited number of personnel to assess the conditions of the mission before several hundred instructors could be deployed to Ukraine.

The training will focus on demining, equipment maintenance and technical expertise for Western military aircraft. Paris will also finance, arm and train a Ukrainian motorized brigade.

"The arrangements are very advanced, and we can expect something next week," one source told Reuters.

In mid-May, The New York Times reported that some North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members privately discussed sending military instructors or contractors to Ukraine to train the Ukrainian military and help repair equipment. Last week, a top U.S. general said that the United States is not planning to join such a move.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimnaitė said that Western military instructors could start working in Ukraine soon, provided that they are protected by air defense systems.

Speaking at a press conference following a meeting of European Union defense ministers, Josep Borrell, the E.U.'s top diplomat, said the group had not yet reached consensus on sending Western trainers to Ukraine.

Ukraine is desperately working to mobilize more soldiers, and Mr. Borrell emphasized that they will need to be thoroughly trained. The total number of Ukrainian soldiers trained by the E.U. training mission should reach 60,000 by the end of the summer, he said.

There is an agreement among E.U. states on the need to increase the number of trained Ukrainian soldiers, Mr. Borrell said, though he did not provide an exact figure.

"There have been debates about conducting part of the exercises in Ukraine, but there is no clear common European position on this," Mr. Borrell said.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius has said he is against sending German instructors to Ukraine, Bild reported.

Mr. Pistorius said the training of Ukrainian soldiers in Ukraine comes with too much risk for German soldiers.

"The added value that I do not see is disproportionate to the risk and effort that will have to be made, so this is not an option for us," he said.

The United States will also not send soldiers to Ukraine to train the Ukrainian military, said Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Brown following a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, also known as (Ramstein group).

Mr. Brown did not say address whether instructors from the United States were in Ukraine before Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022, but he did say that "now it is not the case."

"After the war is over, I suspect that we will have the opportunity to do this, but for now the United States has no plans to return military instructors to Ukraine," he said.

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said some countries have already sent their instructors to Ukraine to train the Ukrainian military. Ms. Kallas reiterated her belief that she sees no risk of a direct conflict with Russia if Ukraine's allies help Kyiv train Ukrainian soldiers on the territory of Ukraine.

Back in March, Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Radosław Sikorski suggested that a number of Western troops were already present in Ukraine, adding that their presence in the country was not a secret.

As Ukraine continues to bolster its defenses against Russian aggression, the deployment of French military instructors represents a crucial step in strengthening Kyiv's military training infrastructure. The French proposal signifies deepening Franco-Ukrainian military cooperation and sets a precedent that could encourage broader international support.

The coming weeks will be pivotal as France and Ukraine finalize arrangements for the plan, potentially setting a new standard for military assistance and collaboration in the ongoing war.

Russia-occupied...

(Continued from page 7)

live in the 80 percent portion of the country that is free – even under wartime conditions of martial law – and those who live under the Russian yoke could not be more glaring.

The Ukrainian government's goal, shared by most Ukrainians, is to free their repressed fellow citizens living under

Moscow's terror. Putin's goal is to keep the illegally annexed territories and forcibly integrate them into Russia. The two goals are diametrically opposed. As much as we yearn for Ukraine to emerge victorious, we simply do not know what the future will bring. But we do know that continued Western commitment vastly improves the chances that, sooner or later, Ukrainians in Russia-occupied territories will be liberated from bondage and their human dignity will be restored.



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- Dr. Walter Zarycky, Executive Director, Center for US Ukrainian Relations
- Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, Professor, Royal Military College of Canada
- Ivana Stradner, Research Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies; Special Correspondent, Kyiv Post
- Steven E. Moore, Founder & CEO, Ukraine Freedom Project
- Members of Congress

Light hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. Business attire is requested. This is a widely attended event designed to comply with all federal ethical guidelines.

Please RSVP to secure your place at this important dialogue.

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Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, who presented Metropolitan Gudziak with his pectoral cross and bishop's crozier.

Following the bishops and clergy venerating the symbols of Metropolitan Gudziak's ecclesiastical authority, the metropolitan greeted Metropolitan Antony of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., in a gesture of ecumenism.

The combined choirs of the parishes of the Philadelphia Archeparchy sung in Ukrainian and English under the direction of Bohdan Henhalo and Stephen Szyszka as the music organizer.

Metropolitan Gudziak in his homily expressed his gratitude to his parents and teachers, and those who put him on the path toward the priesthood, as he acknowledged his role to advocate for those who are marginalized through illness or physical handicaps.

Greetings were also delivered by Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, Valeriy Chaly, and Paul Grod, president of the Ukrainian World Congress.

The Rev. Paul Makar of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Minersville, Pa., commented: “[Metropolitan Gudziak] is highly educated and brings to the table a lot of practical experience as evidenced by his work with the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. He inspires loyalty for the Church and for himself. I believe there will be changes, but they will be for the better.”

Bishop Bohdan Dzyurakh, secretary of the Ukrainian Synod of Bishops in Kyiv, said that he rejoices with the entire Church in the choice of Bishop Gudziak as metropolitan – a man of compassion and deep faith. The bishop joked that the only people who are unhappy are the clergy and the faithful of the Eparchy of St. Volodymyr in Paris, who lost their revered shepherd who was one of them for the last seven years.

Source: “Gudziak enthroned as seventh metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholic Church in U.S.,” by Myroslawa Masurok Hill (Special to *The Ukrainian Weekly*), *The Ukrainian Weekly*, June 9, 2019.

Lessons learned...

(Continued from page 7)

campaign, these members yielded much power by convincing their colleagues that voting for Ukraine is unpopular and indicative of an “America Last” position that would lose them their seats. But today, this group – including Sens. J.D. Vance and Josh Hawley, too – have never been weaker. The final passage of Ukraine aid with overwhelming bipartisan support, and the rejection of Ms. Greene's motion to vacate, left this small minority of members isolated and generally disliked by their colleagues.

The fragile bipartisan support for Ukraine carefully maintained behind the scenes throughout the supplemental campaign finally came out swinging against isolationists in Congress. Mr. Johnson found his strength, and with it the U.S. regained its power by investing in Ukrainian victory through the passage of aid. Although this aid should have come much sooner, the campaign for its passage brought forth many takeaways and a better understanding of the Congressional landscape that can inform how we can ensure the swift passage of future aid bills for Ukraine. When that time comes, Razom will be at the forefront of the advocacy effort in Washington, D.C., and will be counting on you to call on your members of Congress to support Ukraine, and then thank them when they do.

The column above was written by Greg Kulchycky and Anastasiia Shiusarenko.



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Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine will compete in Paris Olympics

On May 20, Sports Minister Matviy Bidnyi formally confirmed that Ukraine will send a team of athletes to the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games despite the ongoing war with Russia. The official announcement was made on the website of Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sports.

"These games are of particular importance for Ukraine," the announcement said, "as it is an opportunity to show the world our will and strength of spirit." Team Ukraine's slogan at the Olympic Games will be "The Will to Win." Bidnyi went on to add that Ukraine has already won since Russia was suspended from the Olympic movement following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Ukraine's National Olympic Committee President Vadym Gutzeit echoed Bidnyi's words saying that Ukraine's participation at the Paris Games would send an important message to the world. "It is already a victory that we are able to take part under conditions of invasion. The athletes have prepared for the Games under rockets and bombs," he said.

Most Ukrainian athletes have trained outside the country in preparation for the Olympics. Russian and Belarusian athletes can only participate in the Games as neutrals, minus the use of national flags or anthems. Athletes who have supported the Russian invasion will not be allowed to participate.

Ukraine has helped the International Olympic Committee (IOC) by providing documentation on Russian and Belarusian athletes who support Russia's actions in Ukraine.

As of May 22, at least 100 Ukrainian athletes will compete in the Paris Games.

Ukrainian women's saber team wins gold

The International Fencing Federation completed its 2023-2024 senior World Cup competition season on May 17-19 with four events.

Plovdiv, Bulgaria, hosted the women's saber competition, where 152 individual fencers and 16 teams competed as a testing ground and elite preparation for the upcoming Paris Olympics.

In the women's individual saber final, France's Sara Balzer was pitted against four-time world champion Olga Kharlan with Balzer prevailing by a score of 15-8. Kharlan settled for the silver medal.

In the women's team saber competition, Ukraine faced Spain in the final and emerged victorious, capturing the gold medal thanks to Kharlan's decisive victory after the team trailed 37-40. The final result was 45-43 for Ukraine.

Ukraine earns final Para rowing Olympic license

Ukraine earned its last Paralympic license in rowing at the final Paralympic qualifying academic rowing regatta in Lucerne, Switzerland, on May 19-21.

In the PR3 mixed double sculls (PR3Mix2x), there were three boats on the starting line racing for one qualifying place. Halfway through, Brazil was comfortably in the lead before Ukraine started to close the gap. In the last 500 meters, a Brazilian rower lost control of an oar and the Ukrainian tandem of Stanislav Samoliuk and Daria Kotyk sculled to first place and a Paralympic license.

The win was Ukraine's fourth license in Para rowing, as the team previously earned licenses in men's and women's Para single sculls (PR1M1x, PR1W1x) and Para mixed double (PR2Mix2).

Sixty-eight Para rowers from 22 countries competed in Lucerne. Only two Ukrainian Para rowers competed in this event and they captured the gold medal and final license.

This also was Ukraine's 98th license for the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris in 13 different Para sports, which include 113 Ukrainian Para athletes. Ukrainian Para athletes hope to qualify in 17 Para sports for the Paris Games.

Ukraine places third in Para Judo Grand Prix

One hundred eighty-eight Para athletes from 46 countries gathered in Tbilisi, Georgia, from May 14-19 for the IBSA Judo Grand Prix. Ukraine's delegation consisted of eight vision impaired athletes competing against the world's best judoka with vision impairments to qualify for the 2024 Paralympics by earning ranking points.

Ukraine finished in third place out of 23 countries earning medals with six medals, including two gold and four bronze medals. Ukrainian gold medalists included Nataliya Nikolaychuk (J1, -48 kilograms) and Anastasiia Harnyk (J1, +70 kilograms). Bronze medalists were Yuliia Ivanytska (J2, -48 kilograms), Anzela

Havrysiuk (J1, -57 kilograms), Davyd Khorava (J2, -60 kilograms) and Oleksandr Nazarenko (J2, -90 kilograms).

Svitolina on a mission to develop tennis in Ukraine

Elina Svitolina is out to develop and improve women's tennis in Ukraine, using her foundation to make a difference for her fellow countrywomen. She believes Ukraine can become a force in the Billie Jean King Cup with the deep talent pool in Ukrainian women's tennis.

Svitolina has invoked a new approach, attempting to involve a more updated training program and transition out of a very simplistic, dated system within the Ukrainian tennis ranks. She feels tennis needs to evolve with different on- and off-court strategies complete with instruction, mental preparation and dietary standards.

Enthusiasm is high, and with the tournament's new format, the Ukrainian women have the potential to become one of the stronger teams.

The sport is growing throughout the country, both in terms of popularity (more people are watching tennis) and more youngsters want to learn tennis. Svitolina organizes youth competitions, offers mental health services to young athletes and hosts summer camp programs. She recently signed a deal with a television network to guarantee tennis matches will be televised throughout Ukraine.

Svitolina believes tennis' growth will have a positive impact on Ukraine. As part of promoting sports in Ukraine, she has made tennis her personal focus. Understanding that the ongoing war with Russia monopolizes the news in Ukraine, she believes Ukrainian youth face mental challenges because they have little time to play and express themselves. She sees tennis as a form of therapy and relief for these children.

Svitolina is on a mission to ensure Ukrainian children can play and one of her goals is taking a big step forward with the Billie Jean King Cup. She sees herself moving into a new career phase and seems to be preparing herself for a leadership role once she steps away from the tennis court.

She will turn 30 in September and, having given birth to a daughter in October 2022, she has a different approach and outlook on life. She's also had to cope with more injuries than in the past, all of which have changed her perspective on her tennis career and life in general. One of her new philosophies is that the journey can be more important than reaching specific goals.

Ukraine finishes first at Cadet European Judo Cup

Ukraine's four gold medals put them atop the medals table at the Bielsko Biala Cadet European Cup 2024 in Bielsko Biala, Poland, on May 18-19. Ukrainian judokas won an additional two bronze medals, as the team finished with six total medals.

There were 833 competitors from 30 countries (521 men, 312 women) competing in eight separate weight classes for both men and women.

Ukrainian gold medalists included Khazar Heydarov (55 kilograms), Illia Nazarenko (66 kilograms), Dmytro Lebid (90 kilograms) and Anna Oliinyk-Korniiko (70 kilograms). This was Oliinyk-Korniiko's second gold medal this season with The



X.com/FIE_Fencing

Olga Kharlan won a silver medal in women's saber at the World Cup in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on May 17-19.

Olympic Dreams participant having previously won the European Cadet Judo Cup in April on the tatami in Teplice, Czech Republic.

Ukraine wins four medals in acrobatic rock 'n roll

The European Championship in Acrobatic Rock 'n Roll and the World Cup Cork 2024 took place in Cork, Ireland, on May 18-19. Ukraine captured a total of four medals in the competitions including two gold and a pair of silver medals.

Yelyzaveta Kaverina and Heorhii Taraibai won gold in the juniors division acrobatic rock 'n roll while teammates Anna Nahovitsyna and Illia Pyvovar won silver. In the juveniles competition, Evelina Subacheva and Yaroslav Sliunin won gold and Avrora Stiahlyk and Makar Kabashniy earned a silver medal in the children's class.

Seventeen countries participated in various competitions that included dancing couples and formations in main class free-style, contact style and couple dance show, among others.

Undefeated heavyweight Rogava defeats Woods

Ukrainian boxing dominated sports headlines in May after Vasiliy Lomachenko, Oleksandr Usyk and Denys Berinchyk won championship titles. Hoping to someday follow in their footsteps is undefeated heavyweight contender Tsotne Rogava (8-0, 7 KO) who idolizes Ukrainian heavyweight legends Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko along with current champ Usyk.

The Ukrainian heavyweight prospect won an eight-round unanimous decision over experienced journeyman Terrell Jamal Woods of the U.S.A. on May 23 in San Jacinto, Calif. The 31-year-old won by three identical scores of 80-71 and remained undefeated. Woods, owner of a very deceptive-looking career record, fell to 29-60-10 (21 KO). The 34-year-old Woods forced Rogava to work a bit harder than he did in his previous four fights, which each ended in less than one round. Rogava attacked Woods' body and connected on several high

(Continued on page 15)



European Judo Union

Anna Oliinyk-Korniiko won gold in the women's 70-kilogram division at the Bielsko Biala Cadet European Cup 2024 in Bielsko Biala, Poland, on May 18-19.

OUT & ABOUT

June 2 New York	Film screening and discussion with filmmaker, "Veselka: The Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World," New Plaza Cinema, https://veselka.com/pages/veselka-the-movie	June 11 Lancaster, PA	Performance, "Daniel," Ukrainian American Senior Citizens Association in Philadelphia, Sight and Sound Theater, 215-699-6068
June 4 Ottawa	Conversation with Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Canada-Ukraine Foundation, Cafe Ukraine, www.cufoundation.ca	June 13 Washington	Conference, "U.S.-Ukraine Working Group Yearly Summit XII: Providing Ukraine with an Annual Report Card Amidst War - Year Three," National Press Club, waz102@columbia.edu or 917-476-1221
June 6 Toronto	Conversation with Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Canada-Ukraine Foundation, The Old Mill, www.cufoundation.ca	June 14-16 Yonkers, NY	Yonkers Ukrainian Heritage Festival, St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church, www.yonkersukrainianfestival.org
June 7-8 San Diego, CA	Film screening, "Veselka: The Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World," Digital Gym Cinema, https://veselka.com/pages/veselka-the-movie	June 15 Kenmore, NY	Fundraiser for Ukraine, Ukrainian National Women's League of America (Branch 97), St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church hall, ckonowka@gmail.com
June 8 Jamison, PA	47th annual golf outing, Ukrainian American Sports Center - Tryzub, The Bucks Club, www.tryzub.org	June 15, 22 Somerset, NJ	Gerdan Traditional Beading Workshop, with instruction by Stephanie Milan, two courses each: Bracelet Loom Workshop and Beaded Necklace Workshop, Ukrainian History and Education Center, www.ukrhec.org
June 8 Maplewood, NJ	Maplewood Ukrainian Day 2024, picnic featuring cultural program, food items and vendors, Holy Ascension Ukrainian Orthodox Church, https://ukraineorthodoxchurchmaplewood.com	June 16 Horsham, PA	Father's Day Heritage Fest, featuring Ukrainian cultural program, Ukrainian American Sports Center - Tryzub, www.tryzub.org or 267-664-3857
June 8 Winnipeg, MB	Conversation with Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Canada-Ukraine Foundation, The MET, www.cufoundation.ca	June 16 Horsham, PA	U.S. Amateur Soccer Association Region 1 Open and Amateur (men's, women's over-30, etc.) National Cup Championship Finals, and Northern Pennsylvania Soccer League match between the Philadelphia Ukrainian Nationals versus PA Classics, Ukrainian American Sports Center - Tryzub, www.tryzub.org
June 8 Rochester, NY	Film screening, "Veselka: The Rainbow on the Corner of the Center of the World," The Little Theater, https://veselka.com/pages/veselka-the-movie	June 17 New York	Performance, "Mariupol: Diaries of War and the Tree of Life," Yara Arts Group, Bohemian National Hall, www.yaraartsgroup.net
June 9 New York	Performance, "Unheard Voices: An Immigrant's Dream," featuring Caravan Duo, presented by Encompass New Opera Theatre, The Greene Space, www.EncompassTheatre.org or 212-594-7880	June 18 Jersey City, NJ	Performance, "Mariupol: Diaries of War and the Tree of Life," Yara Arts Group, Jersey City Theater Center, www.yaraartsgroup.net
June 9 Online	Virtual children's workshop, "Birch Tree 'Yarn Resist' Painting," Ukrainian History and Education Center, www.ukrhec.org	June 22 Chicago	Benefit Gala, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, www.uima-chicago.org
June 10 Washington	Book launch, "National Tribune - Legacy of Liberated Nations: The Life and Ideas of Ivan Vovchuk," and panel discussion, "Countering Russian Propaganda," Vovk Foundation, (location of event is kept private), 412-334-7555 or www.vovkfoundation.org	<i>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.</i>	

Ukrainian pro... (Continued from page 14)

right uppercuts, scoring a knockdown in the fifth round with a quick left-right combination to the head.

Woods enjoyed some success in the fourth and eighth rounds when he let his hands go. The final round was the best of the bout with both fighters letting the leather fly. Rogava impressed with a heavy-looking right hand and, despite losing his 100 percent knockout record, he did get in a solid eight-round workout.

The 6-foot-3, 265-pound Rogava is trained by Hall of Fame coach Joe Goossen. After seeing his fellow Ukrainian boxers enjoy such unprecedented success, his goal is to join them and make his mark in the sport.

Rogava is interested in taking on the biggest fights possible. He feels he is ready to show his fighting class to the world by taking on all credible contenders. He believes he'll be ready to challenge for a world title within two years based on his lengthy fighting experience. He has some 300 amateur Muay Thai fights, 30 amateur boxing bouts and 35 professional kickboxing fights under his belt.

Rogava is ethnically Georgian and his family moved to Odesa, Ukraine, when he was 3. In 2023, he relocated from Ukraine to Marina Del Ray, Calif., to fast track his boxing career in the United States.

The Ukrainian has been guided by Goossen and coach Jonathan Walley. Goossen thinks Rogava can make a world

title run by next year, convinced he has what it takes to make it to the top.

Goossen describes Rogava as "a big badass who's aggressive with combinations, quick-handed and relentless with a great body attack." He owns quick hands, doesn't retreat, is accurate with his punches and has "exquisite technique." He has a variety of punches with a lot of substance. He applauds Rogava's high-level sparring and high-level boxing in a match, a rarity, stating that this is a strong indicator of what's ahead.

He has fights lined up in mid-June and at the end of September, which he says are proof that he wants to move forward at a torrid pace.

Usyk acting in MMA film

Fresh off his historic victory over Tyson Fury to claim boxing's first undisputed heavyweight championship in 25 years, Oleksandr Usyk has accepted a primary role in Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's upcoming MMA film "The Smashing Machine." Usyk will be cast as rival fighter and Ukrainian martial arts icon Igor Vovchanchyn.

In 2000, HBO released a hard-hitting documentary, "The Smashing Machine," which chronicled the struggles of MMA star Mark Kerr. Johnson, playing Kerr's starring role, has partnered with independent Studio A24 for the movie rights of the same name with Benny Safdie directing.

The result of Usyk's win over Fury sets him up to new heights of fame. Before he re-engages with Fury in a contractual rematch, his next chapter in the fight world

will be portraying Ukrainian Igor Vovchanchyn.

Igor "Ice Cold" Vovchanchyn, a professional kickboxer and MMA sensation, was quite famous in Ukraine, making his mark in no-holds-bar matchups (before Ultimate Fight Club). Aside from "no-holds-barred" one-night events, he won nine open-weight mix-rules tournaments. His 37-fight undefeated streak is the second-longest in MMA history. In terms of knockout wins, he is also the second most successful MMA fighter of all time.

Vovchanchyn compiled a most respectable 56-10-1 (1 no contest) record, including one win over Mark Kerr who will be played by Dwayne Johnson. Kerr was a two-time UFC Heavyweight Tournament Champion, World Vale Judo Championship Tournament winner and a PRIDE FC competitor. He faced Vovchanchyn in Japan.

Usyk will be challenged in portraying the Zolochiv Oblast native. He will need a bigger midriff in his role and it remains to be seen if Usyk decides to bulk up for the part.

Kerr and Vovchanchyn fought twice in their careers. The film will feature fighting scenes between Usyk and The Rock in some manner. The length of Usyk's role in the film has not yet been confirmed. Since Mark Kerr is the primary focus of attention, Usyk's portrayal of Vovchanchyn might turn out to be a short but relevant adventure.

(Based on reporting by Inside the Games, World Rowing, Tennis 365, Interfax-Ukraine, World Rock 'n Roll Foundation, Boxing News, Boxing Scene and Yardbarker.)

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