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# THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

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## Kyiv launches new offensive in Russia-occupied Kharkiv region amid ongoing Kursk invasion

**Analyst: Russia conquers over dozen villages near Pokrovsk over 17 days**

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – The trajectory of the Russo-Ukrainian war has changed once again after a new offensive was reportedly launched in Russian-occupied areas of northeastern Kharkiv Oblast in Ukraine as the invasion of the Russian Kursk region enters its third week.

Videos appeared on social media, particularly from Ukraine's Third Assault Brigade, saying that it is "taking territory" in the oblast that borders Russia.

It is not clear whether this latest maneuver is part of the overall strategy of the invasion of the neighboring Russian Kursk region that began on August 6.

Nearly one square mile has been liberated, the brigade said. The area is presumably along the Vovchansk salient near the border, which is east of Kursk Oblast.

"The main task of the operation was to knock down the offensive potential of the 20th army of the Russian Federation. For the moment, this task has been accomplished," said the brigade commander, Col. Andriy Biletskyi, who founded the Azov volunteer armed group when Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014.

That group has since been integrated into the Armed Forces of Ukraine and former Azov members mostly comprise the current assault force of the Third Brigade.



Public Domain

**A Russian cargo ferry used to transport fuel and other equipment to the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula from the Kavkaz Port in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, was reportedly struck by a Ukrainian drone on August 22.**

Because of operational silence, it was not clear when the operation first began, but it appears to have started earlier in the week.

"In four days, the enemy lost 300 men in manpower, and a significant amount of equipment and weapons were destroyed or damaged," the brigade said. Russian forces reacted by "trying to regain what was lost. But the Third Assault Brigade is holding the line!"

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## Rada approves bill banning religious organizations linked to Russian Orthodox Church

Legislation must still be signed by Zelenskyy



Facebook via RFE/RL

**Lawmakers on July 23 block the rostrum in Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada, urging parliament to continue considering a bill to ban the long Moscow-linked Ukrainian Orthodox Church.**

by Roman Tymotsko

PARIS – In a major step toward cutting ties with Moscow, Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, approved a bill on August 20 banning religious organizations linked to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The bill, which had the support of a large majority of Rada members, also paves the way for future action against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which has long been linked to Moscow. It was previously known as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP).

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the decision as crucial for Ukraine's "spiritual independence."

The bill, which was approved by 265 members of parliament, must still be signed by Mr. Zelenskyy before it becomes law. Four members of the Servant of the People faction, 17 members of the Opposition Bloc – For Life, and 7 members of the Restoration of Ukraine faction voted against the bill.

Mr. Zelenskyy in December 2022 tasked

(Continued on page 6)

## Sources say Ukraine behind airfield strike inside Russia as Zelenskyy visits Sumy

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Ukraine's military intelligence was behind a drone strike on an airfield hundreds of miles inside Russia, security sources told RFE/RL, in the latest move by Ukraine to turn the tide of the war amid a surprise incursion in Russia's border region of Kursk that shocked the Kremlin and reaped operational gains for Kyiv.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, traveled to Ukraine's Sumy region that borders Kursk for the first time since the start of Ukraine's invasion there on August 6.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) together with the Special Operations Forces early on August 22 struck the Marinovka airfield in Russia's Volgograd region, located 171 miles east of the Ukrainian border, SBU sources told RFE/RL on the condition of anonymity.

The strike targeted a storage site for fuel, antitank missiles and glide bombs, the security source said.

Ukrainian intelligence has lately focused on striking airfields inside Russia used to conduct attacks on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure.

The SBU source also said that Marinovka is such an airfield.

Glide bombs are standoff weapons launched by warplanes from a distance sufficient to allow the aircraft to evade enemy fire.

Russia has been increasingly using such bombs, which are relatively cheap to produce, against Ukrainian cities.

After the impact, "plumes of black smoke and a powerful detonation" occurred on the airfield surface, the SBU source said.

Earlier, Russian Telegram channels, citing eyewitnesses, reported a series of

explosions at Marinovka, and the Astra channel on Telegram posted a video showing what appeared to be a large explosion and plumes of black smoke rising above the airfield.

Volgograd Gov. Andrei Bocharov said drone strikes ignited a fire at a military facility in the region but claimed the attack had been repelled.

"As a result of the UAV crash, a fire broke out on the territory of a ministry facility. Fire and rescue services quickly began extinguishing the fire," Mr. Bocharov said on Telegram.

Mr. Bocharov said there are no casualties after the strike.

Meanwhile, the airport of the regional capital Volgograd, a city of some 1 million people 34 miles east of Marinovka, restricted the arrivals and departures of commercial aircraft.

Volgograd is the current name of Tsaritsyn, which from 1925 to 1961 bore the name Stalingrad, after Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. Stalingrad became famous for repelling a monthslong Nazi siege in 1942-1943 during World War II.

In Bryansk, another Russian region bordering Ukraine, Gov. Aleksandr Bogomaz said Russian forces prevented a separate attempt by Ukrainian troops to enter the region.

Bogomaz said the attempted breakthrough occurred in the Klimovo district of the region, which borders the Chernihiv region of Ukraine.

His claim could not be independently confirmed, and Ukraine has not commented.

During his trip to Sumy, Mr. Zelenskyy met with Ukraine's top military commander, Oleksandr Syrskiy, who briefed him on

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Russia and Belarus hold joint non-strategic nuclear exercises

by Alexander Taranov  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On August 13, the Belarusian and Russian air forces kicked off joint military exercises at the Ashuluk training ground in Belarus (Belta, August 13). The exercises come as the second phase of joint non-strategic nuclear exercises, which started this summer, came to a close. On July 3, Belarusian leader Alyaksandr Lukashenka said that the rapid checks of the joint Regional Grouping of Forces (RGF) of Belarus and Russia, the first-ever training of non-strategic nuclear forces in the history of Belarus, showed that the defense capabilities of the Union State are stronger than ever (Belta, July 3). He then summed up the results of the second phase of the exercises with non-strategic nuclear forces that started in May (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 17). Joint exercises between Belarusian and Russian forces have picked up in recent months, with Chinese forces joining the "Attacking Falcon" anti-terrorist exercise in July (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, July 15). Belarusian and Russian officials claim the exercises are necessary to respond to Western escalations in Ukraine and elsewhere. In the West, these exercises have inflamed fears of Russia's war spreading deeper into Europe.

One of the last known episodes of the second phase of the exercises started on

June 10 (TASS, June 10). Belarusian and Russian forces began working out issues of ensuring combat readiness with nuclear training ammunition (e.g., dummy warheads and aerial bombs). The two sides also worked out issues of the joint preparation of Belarusian units by Russian nuclear support units for the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs). Specifically, mobile formations of the 12th Main Directorate of the Russian Ministry of Defense (known as 12th GUMO and primarily responsible for nuclear munitions), together with Belarusian units, ensured the delivery of training warheads to field storage points of a missile brigade and an operational airfield of assault aircraft. According to Lt. Gen. Igor Kolesnikov, head of the 12th GUMO, the tasks for ensuring combat readiness with nuclear training ammunition were successfully carried out (T.me/mod\_russia, June 13).

During the second phase, at least one missile battalion equipped with the Iskander-M operational-tactical missile system and a squadron of Su-25 fighter jets were among the Belarusian carriers of TNWs. One artillery battalion of the 336th Rocket Artillery Brigade (Osipovich), armed with Polonez-M multiple launch rocket systems, was also involved in the training (Belvpo.com, June 11). Pavel

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## Ukraine's Kursk operation demonstrates Russia's dysfunctional authoritarianism

by Pavel Luzin  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

The Ukrainian Armed Forces' operation in Russia's Kursk Oblast began only several weeks ago but has already revealed the disorganized state of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime and its armed forces (The Moscow Times, August 14). Russia appears to be relying on conscripts and troops from less critical areas to combat Ukraine's incursion, demonstrating how unprepared Moscow was for this advancement. Despite official statements made over the past several months, the Russian Armed Forces face a severe lack of manpower, which will force the Kremlin to use drafted soldiers in the war or conduct another wave of mobilization that could begin targeting Russian city centers (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, September 28, 2023). Additionally, independent journalists report that the Kremlin and Russian General Staff ignored reports

about the possibility of Ukraine crossing the border (Istories.media, August 8; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 14). Russia's political institutions remain dysfunctional, as they have been since the Wagner Group mutiny in June 2023 (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, July 7, 2023). Seemingly no one within the Russian state is willing to execute their duties without direct orders from above, and no one seems willing to take responsibility for making decisions for fear of retaliation, should those decisions go against the Kremlin's wishes (Ukrainska Pravda, August 13).

Russian society has been largely indifferent to the developments in Kursk. The Kremlin is trying to control the narrative about what is happening to curb any domestic discontent at its mismanagement of the defense of this border region, keeping the Russian population ignorant about the seriousness of the situation (T.me/svo-bodnieslova, August 8).

### Dysfunctional authoritarianism

Russia's system of governance has demonstrated once again that its civilian officials and military and security officers do not execute their duties and do not take any initiative without orders from above. The same inaction took place during the Wagner mutiny in June 2023 and during the terrorist attack near Moscow in March (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, March 26, 2023). In response to these issues, the cumbersome Russian government institutions created commissions and emergency headquarters, delegated decision-making responsibility from the bottom up and suf-

(Continued on page 4)

## NEWSBRIEFS

### "Increased risk" of Russian air attacks

The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv has warned of an "increased risk" of Russian air attacks in the coming days as Ukraine prepares to celebrate Independence Day on August 24. The embassy "assesses that during the next several days and through the weekend there is an increased risk of both nighttime and daytime Russian drone and missile attacks throughout Ukraine in connection with Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24," it said in a statement on its website. Ukraine will mark its 33rd year of independence from the Soviet Union on August 24. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Belarus deployed troops near Ukraine border

Belarus has deployed nearly one-third of its troops to the border with Ukraine, the country's authoritarian leader Alyaksandr Lukashenka told Russia's state-run Rossiya-1 television channel on August 18. He said the decision was made in response to Ukraine allegedly maintaining 120,000 soldiers near the border with Belarus and amassing more forces. Mr. Lukashenka also insisted that Kyiv had raised the stakes by launching a surprise offensive in Russia's Kursk region. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

### Decisions needed on frozen Russian assets

Ukraine needs a real mechanism that will enable Russian frozen assets to work for the country in the coming months, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Mr. Zelenskyy said in his evening video address that the topic was discussed with Ukraine's partners on August 21 "to bring real decisions closer to the promised \$50 billion from frozen Russian assets." There has been a lot of discussion in the past about the transfer of the funds to Ukraine, but Mr. Zelenskyy said that despite these statements Ukraine still needs a real mechanism. "It is necessary that the funds from the aggressor's assets work for real assistance in defense against the aggressor," he said. "Relevant discussions have been going on for too long, and finally solutions are needed." Western countries froze some 276 billion euros (\$300 billion) in sovereign Russian wealth funds following Moscow's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine

in February 2022. In June, the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized countries decided to service a \$50 billion loan for Ukraine with proceeds generated by the so-called immobilized assets. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has suggested that the G-7 could agree on the terms of providing Ukraine with a \$50 billion loan secured by the assets by October. Ms. Yellen said in June that there was "no legal problem" in providing Ukraine with the loan. She also rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's accusation that the use of income from Russian assets for the benefit of Ukraine was theft. Most of the frozen Russian sovereign funds – some 210 billion euros (\$228 billion) – are held in Europe, while about \$10 billion (\$11.1 billion) is in the United States, the news website Euractiv.com estimates. Some \$30 billion (\$33.4 billion) are in Japan and \$10 billion in Britain. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced last month that 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) of "proceeds from immobilized Russian assets" would be transferred to Ukraine for defense and reconstruction. "There is no better symbol or use for the Kremlin's money than to make Ukraine and all of Europe a safer place to live," Ms. von der Leyen said on July 26. In reaction to Ms. von der Leyen's announcement, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would not leave the European Union's move unanswered but said Moscow's response had to be carefully planned. The Foreign Affairs Ministry said that "any encroachment on Russian state property under the guise of any contrived 'reparation mechanism' would be nothing more than theft at the state level." Western countries have discussed the possible confiscation of frozen assets, but it is associated with greater legal difficulties than using the proceeds from them. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Ukrainian lawmakers ratify Rome Statute

Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, on August 21 ratified the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC), lawmakers Yaroslav Zheleznyak and Oleksiy

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### Correction

The article "New York University arts student takes top honor at UNA's yearly Miss Soyuzivka competition" (August 18) incorrectly stated that the camp director of the 2024 Roma Pryma Bohachevsky Ukrainian Dance Camp nominated Sophia Zalipsky for the Miss Soyuzivka pageant held on August 10. In fact, the camp director, Anya Bohachevsky Lonkevych, did not nominate Ms. Zalipsky for the contest. Ms. Bohachevsky Lonkevych encouraged all women at the dance camp who were age 18 or older to take part in the contest. The correction has been made to the online version of the story.



# Blown bridges: As Ukraine's invasion expands, Russia closes in on Donbas city

by Mike Eckel  
RFE/RL

Up until recently, the western reaches of the Seym River, a meandering waterway flowing west across the Kursk region into Ukraine, was spanned by three low, two-lane, concrete-and-asphalt bridges that served road traffic for the southern Russian territory.

As of August 20, however, those three bridges are now impassable, partially destroyed by a series of Ukrainian attacks that pose serious problems for Russian forces struggling to contain Ukraine's two-week-old expanding invasion of Russia.

The goal of the effort – which has stunned Russia, surprised the West and possibly rewritten the narrative of the entire war – remains uncertain, although President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signaled that at least one of the aims is to create a buffer zone.

But it's an open question whether a border buffer zone will change the fact that, some 249 miles to the south, Russian forces are on the verge of capturing Pokrovsk, a Donbas city whose fall would imperil Ukrainian supply and logistics lines all along the front line across the Donbas.

Here's a look at where things stand 30 months into Europe's largest land war since World War II.

## All eyes on Kursk

The last time Ukraine pulled off an offensive maneuver that reset the battlefield, not to mentioning gobsmacking outside observers, came in late 2022: in the eastern part of the Kharkiv region, and further south, on the west side of the Dnipro River, in the Kherson region.

Ukraine tried to pull off an even more ambitious counteroffensive last year, but that ground to a halt, resulting in major personnel and equipment losses and widespread disappointment.

The Kursk invasion has surprised observers, but it's unclear if it will reset the



battlefield.

More than 1,000 troops, including some of Ukraine's most battle-hardened units, backed by tanks and heavy weaponry, were believed to have been involved in the initial foray on August 6, which quickly overran undermanned and underbuilt border defenses. The number of Ukrainian troops has reportedly grown by at least five times since.

According to Ukrainian and Russian officials, open-source intelligence and analysts, Ukrainian troops have been spotted digging fortified defensive positions in several locations. That suggests the invasion's goal is not just to attack Russian positions and retreat back across the border but to hold territory as a chip for future negotiations.

"It's a calculated risk that they've taken; they knew what they were doing," said Pentti Forsstrom, a retired Finnish Army

lieutenant colonel who is now a senior researcher at the National Defense University in Helsinki.

"People were thinking: 'This is the attritional phase of the war, nothing special will happen, the fighting goes on, but nothing changes, so this is a good time to do something,'" he said. "And the Ukrainians did it. They didn't wait. They took the initiative into their own hands, forcing Russia to respond."

The strikes on the Seym bridges, in Kursk's Glushkovo district, are also significant: The bridge that was apparently hit sometime over the weekend – announced in a drone video issued by Ukraine's air force commander on August 18 – was the third to have been rendered impassable in recent days.

Destroying the bridges hinders Russia's ability to move forces and mount an effective defense, an effort that to date has been

shambolic – though that might change as more experienced units arrive. It also increases the risk that some Russian forces could be encircled.

"The strikes on the bridge crossings ... and the advance of Ukrainian defense forces' forward units to the western bank of the river suggest that the objective ... is to take control of a portion of Kursk Oblast south of the Seym," according to the Center for Defense Strategies, a Kyiv think tank headed by a former Ukrainian defense minister.

Satellite imagery shows Russian troops have tried to erect a handful of temporary pontoon bridges across the Seym.

On August 18, in his first remarks outlining the objectives of the incursion, Mr. Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces were seeking to destroy "as much Russian war potential as possible," as well as to create "a buffer zone on the aggressor's territory."

There was another goal, said Mykhaylo Podolyak, a top adviser to Mr. Zelenskyy.

"The third task is, of course, to show the type of war that Ukraine is waging, compared with the type of war that Russia is waging," he said in an interview with Current Time. "Russia is destroying populated areas. Russia, in fact, is going to occupy and seize populated areas. Ukraine does not intend to seize populated areas. It does not intend to occupy this territory."

In a separate speech, Mr. Zelenskyy trumpeted Russia's flat-footed response as an illustration that Moscow's threats about major escalation were illusory.

"It is the time when the world is shedding its last and very naive illusions about Russia, illusions that have significantly hindered the defense of Ukraine," he said.

Western observers, meanwhile, have been surprised not only by the Ukrainian success but also by the ineffectual Russian reaction.

"Russia is still pulling together its reaction to this incursion," U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, the North Atlantic

(Continued on page 8)

# Zelenskyy again asks for permission to use long-range weapons to hit targets deep inside Russia

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, RFE/RL's Russian Service and Current Time

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has again pushed for permission from Ukraine's allies to use long-range weapons to strike targets deep inside Russia.

"Ukraine is separated from halting the advance of the Russian Army on the front by only one decision we await from our partners: the decision on long-range capabilities," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a speech to Ukrainian ambassadors on August 19.

The United States and other allies of Ukraine have placed restrictions on the use of the weapons over concerns that it could escalate the war.

Mr. Zelenskyy also told the diplomats that Ukrainian forces have taken control of 92 settlements in the Kursk region of Russia and now control more than 482 square miles of enemy territory in the nearly two weeks since the start of the surprise cross-border incursion.

"Ukrainian soldiers continue the defensive operation in certain areas of the Kursk region of the Russian Federation," he said. "We are continuing to strengthen our positions, stabilize certain areas and replenish the exchange fund," Mr. Zelenskyy said in an apparent reference to Russian troops taken prisoner by Ukraine.

The operation is "our biggest investment

in the process of freeing Ukrainians from Russian captivity. This is one of our goals," he said.

Mr. Zelenskyy said earlier on Telegram that Ukrainian forces were fulfilling their objectives while pressing their incursion into Kursk, while Moscow acknowledged that Ukraine has damaged a third bridge over the River Seym critical to Russian troop movements in the region.

A video statement from a representative of Russia's Investigative Committee was posted on the Telegram channel of Russian state television anchor Vladimir Solovoyov. In the video, the investigator said Ukrainian forces had struck the bridge a day earlier.

On August 18, Ukraine's Air Force Commander Mykola Oleschuk said his troops had damaged a second strategic bridge over the Seym, limiting Russia's supply capacity as it tries to prevent Ukraine from bolstering its positions.

Russian military bloggers previously posted an image of the first bridge that was hit near the village of Zvannoye in Kursk.

According to Russian security officials, the destruction of that bridge cut off part of the Glushkov district.

Analysts say taking out bridges over the Seym is crucial for Ukraine to ensure a secure flank to its offensive in Kursk by making it difficult for Moscow to supply its troops south of the river.

"If the Ukrainians can make it impossible for the Russians to supply troops south of the Seym, they will at a minimum provide a secure flank to their offensive," said Philips P. O'Brien, a professor at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. "The Russian military is ponderous and needs heavy logistical supply to undertake operations. Without bridges, it's hard to see the Russians supplying the needed forces to keep that area effectively militarized," Mr. O'Brien wrote in a blog post on August 18.

Ukraine launched its surprise counteroffensive into Russia's Kursk region on August 6, altering the dynamics of the 2 1/2-year war and causing 120,000 people to flee.

Mr. Zelenskyy on August 18 said that Ukraine's main task is "to destroy as much Russian potential as possible and conduct maximum counterattack work," with the aim of creating a "buffer zone."

Meanwhile, intense fighting continued in the eastern region of Donetsk, Mr. Zelenskyy said, as Russia's Defense Ministry claimed to have captured the village of Zalizne.

"Heavy fighting continues in the Pokrovsk direction, and the defense of Toretsk," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his message on Telegram, while regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said, "We are starting the forced evacuation of families with children from the Pokrovsk community."

Earlier on August 19, Russian shelling in

Donetsk killed three and injured nine people, according to Mr. Filashkin. He also said casualties were reported in Myrnohrad, Toretsk and Rozliva.

Gov. Vasily Golubev of Russia's Rostov region that borders Ukraine said on August 19 that a state of emergency was introduced in the town of Proletarsk. The day before, 18 firefighters were injured while trying to extinguish a massive fire caused by drone attacks.

Mr. Golubev also said four firefighters are in serious condition, adding that despite all efforts to extinguish the fire, the situation remains "the same."

Local authorities said on August 18 that Ukrainian forces staged two drone strikes at the oil depot.

Kyiv said the attacks were organized by the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Ukraine's HUR military intelligence service.

Russia also launched 11 Shahed-type drones toward Donetsk and several other regions, including Kyiv, but the Ukrainian Air Force said they had all been intercepted.

(With reporting by Reuters)

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# Ferry carrying fuel tanks sinks in Russian port after Ukraine missile strike

RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian Services

Ukrainian forces sank a Russian ferry carrying fuel tanks in a missile strike on a port in Russia's southern Krasnodar region on August 22, Russian officials said.

"As a result of the damage, the ferry sank in the waters of the Kavkaz port," the Krasnodar region's operational headquarters said on Telegram.

The headquarters reported earlier that "a railroad ferry with fuel tanks in the Kavkaz port was attacked" and that emergency services had been dispatched. Images circulating on social media showed a plume of dark smoke rising in the area of the ferry crossing.

The port sits in the Kerch Strait separating Russia from Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula that Moscow illegally annexed in 2014. Ukraine has issued no official comment on the incident, but Darya Zarivna, a communications adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, posted a photo on Telegram showing a large fire at the port and the word "Beautiful."

Fyodor Babenkov, the district head of the Russian town of Temryuk, was quoted by Reuters as saying that the ferry was carrying 30 fuel tanks. The vessel sustained significant damage as a result of the attack, which caused a fire, Mr. Babenkov said.

The Russian state-run news agency RIA Novosti said five people were on the vessel at the time of the attack and were unaccounted for. The Russian online news channel Baza reported that the number of people on board was 15 and all were missing.

All port employees were evacuated, TASS reported citing the Transport Ministry.

Ukraine in recent weeks has taken bold steps, including a surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region and attacks on fuel storage facilities and airfields inside Russia used to conduct attacks on Ukraine's civil-



Smoke rises over the Kerch Strait from a fire in the Russian port of Kavkaz after a Russian fuel ferry was hit in a missile strike on August 22.

ian infrastructure, in an effort to turn the tide of the war.

A drone strike earlier on August 22 on an airfield hundreds of miles inside Russia was the work of Ukraine's military intelligence, security sources told RFE/RL.

Mr. Zelenskyy, meanwhile, traveled to Ukraine's Sumy region that borders Kursk for the first time since the start of Ukraine's invasion there on August 6.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) together with the Special Operations Forces early on August 22 struck the Marinovka airfield in Russia's Volgograd region, located 171 miles east of the Ukrainian border, SBU sources told RFE/RL on the condition of anonymity.

The strike targeted a storage site for fuel, antitank missiles and glide bombs, the security source said.

After the impact, "plumes of black smoke and a powerful detonation" occurred on the airfield surface, the SBU source said.

Earlier, Russian Telegram channels, citing eyewitnesses, reported a series of explosions at Marinovka, and the Astra channel on Telegram posted a video showing what appeared to be a large explosion

and plumes of black smoke rising above the airfield.

Volgograd Gov. Andrei Bocharov said drone strikes ignited a fire at a military facility in the region but claimed the attack had been repelled.

"As a result of the UAV crash, a fire broke out on the territory of a ministry facility. Fire and rescue services quickly began extinguishing the fire," Mr. Bocharov said on Telegram, adding that there were no casualties.

Meanwhile, the airport of regional capital Volgograd, a city of some 1 million people 35 miles east of Marinovka, restricted the arrivals and departures of commercial aircraft.

Volgograd is the current name of Tsaritsyn, which from 1925 to 1961 bore the name Stalingrad, after Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. Stalingrad became famous for repelling a monthslong Nazi siege in 1942-1943 during World War II.

In Bryansk, another Russian region bordering Ukraine, Gov. Aleksandr Bogomaz said Russian forces prevented a separate attempt by Ukrainian troops to enter the region.

Mr. Bogomaz said the attempted breakthrough occurred in the Klimovo district of the region, which borders the Chernihiv region of Ukraine.

His claim could not be independently confirmed, and Ukraine has not commented.

During his trip to Sumy, Mr. Zelenskyy met with Ukraine's top military commander, Oleksandr Syrskiy, who briefed him on the operational situation in the area controlled by Ukrainian forces in Russia's Kursk, Ukraine's presidential administration said in a statement.

Sumy Gov. Volodymyr Artyukh told Mr. Zelenskyy that, following the start of Ukraine's operation in Kursk, the number of cross-border shellings and the casualties among civilians had dropped drastically, also allowing the start of infrastructure repairs badly needed after months of incessant Russian bombardments, the statement said.

Ukraine's leadership has repeatedly said that its bold move into Kursk aims to establish a buffer zone inside Russia meant to protect Ukrainian civilians from cross-border Russian shelling.

Ukraine has also said it is not pursuing territorial gains from Russia.

The Ukrainian military had earlier announced the destruction of a Russian pontoon bridge with U.S.-made weapons during their incursion in Kursk.

A video posted by Ukrainian special forces showed strikes on several pontoon crossings built by Russia after Ukraine destroyed at least three bridges over the Seym River.

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## Ukraine's Kursk...

(Continued from page 2)

ferred from insufficient interagency communication and lack of information (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 18).

During the first days of Ukraine's offensive into Kursk Oblast, the Kremlin lacked information on the severity of the situation and underestimated the significance of the combat threat. This was evident in how Putin did not cancel his ceremonial participation in launching a new infectious disease hospital in Perm, a new school in Nizhny Novgorod and a new nursery school in Simferopol in occupied Crimea. The Kursk regional government could not do anything by itself without support from the Kremlin. The federal deputy ministers and Putin's aide Alexei Dyumin tried to coordinate the movement of civilian authorities on the ground. Several days later, the federal ministers and vice premiers replaced their deputies as coordinators. In addition, Sergei Kirienko, first deputy head of the Presidential Executive Office, became involved in the operations at the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant to evaluate its construction and the current situation in the region (Kremlin.ru, August 7, 8, 12; Interfax, August 15).

The final crisis-management system created was a "double triumvirate." The first "triumvirate" consists of the Ministry of Defense (MoD); the Federal Security Service (FSB), together with its border troops; and Rosgvardia (the Russian National Guard) units. With the support of FSB border troops, the MoD is responsible

for combat activity against Ukrainian forces. The FSB is responsible for counterinsurgency activity behind the frontlines and Rosgvardia is accountable for protecting critical infrastructure and regional civil authorities. The second "triumvirate" consists of Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff; Alexander Bortnikov, head of FSB and the national anti-terrorist committee; and Mr. Dyumin, who likely manages inter-agency contradictions. This system appears to leave no significant room for the commander of the Moscow Military District, Col. Gen. Sergei Kuzovlev, or for the commander of the Leningrad Military District, Col. Gen. Alexander Lapin, who also commands Russian troops in Ukraine's Kharkiv region (Kremlin.ru, August 7, 9, 12; TASS; RTVI, August 13).

The entire structure resembles a sophisticated authoritarian "checks-and-balances" system. The absence of political trust, however, creates a lack of bottom-level initiative, permanent needs for commissions, endless meetings and delegating the decision-making process and coordination directly to the Kremlin. Only such emergency activity allows Russian leadership to consolidate political power in Russia, providing them with motivation and the necessity to conduct their affairs efficiently.

### Lack of manpower

The significant number of drafted soldiers who found themselves on the frontlines and in the role of prisoners of war clearly demonstrates that the Russian Armed Forces have a serious manpower deficit. Those 700,000 Russian troops Putin mentioned two months ago simply do not

exist, and the actual number of combat-capable forces would be much lower at this point than those reported (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 13; Kremlin.ru, June 14; Istories.media, August 14; Svoboda.org, August 14). Additionally, forces from less critical fronts have been transferred to Kursk Oblast (The Kyiv Independent, August 14).

As a result, the Kremlin will have to make tough decisions on how to at least partially restore its manpower in the coming months. Moscow will likely either use the available mass of drafted soldiers in the combat and/or combat support operations or conduct another wave of mass mobilization. Even today, there is evidence that drafted soldiers are being forced to sign contracts and consequently join the Russian troops in Kursk Oblast as contracted soldiers (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 7; RTVI, August 9; Verstka.media; Chita.ru, August 13; Agents.media, August 14).

### Indifference of Russian population

Despite the severity of the situation, Russian society prefers not to acknowledge the reality of the war (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 1). There is no evidence of a "rallying around the flag," significant empathy for the people in Kursk Oblast, or a growing number of those who would like to join the Russian army. Most Russians just do not care as they have other issues to worry about in their everyday lives, such as the deteriorating economy (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, July 10). If Russians do not care about Kursk or other Russian regions on the border with Ukraine, they will hardly care about Donetsk, Luhansk, Crimea and other

occupied territories. The presumptions that Russian society will never accept a withdrawal from Crimea and that the Kremlin will need significant territorial concessions from Ukraine and the West for the war to end could be considered inaccurate.

On the one hand, the absence of societal pressure allows the Kremlin to do what it wants. On the other hand, the Russian leadership needs the people's active support for its combat and political efforts, as it is consistently losing manpower in Ukraine and is in dire need of more soldiers. The absence of such support makes Russia's political situation less predictable for the Kremlin and limits Moscow's capabilities, as it does not have enough information to gauge how the Russian population will react.

Ukraine's Kursk operation has exposed critical vulnerabilities within Russia's authoritarian regime and military apparatus. The lack of preparedness and the reliance on conscripts from less critical areas highlight the systemic inefficiencies and the growing manpower crisis facing the Russian Armed Forces. Disorganization and lack of initiative within the Russian government raise questions about the long-term sustainability of its political and military strategies. As the situation in Kursk unfolds, Ukraine's offensive serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of the Kremlin's authoritarian model, in which both the leadership and Russian society appear increasingly detached from the war's realities.

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# Chicago motor rally highlights plight of Ukrainian POWs held in torturous conditions by Russia

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – Ninety percent of Ukrainians that Russia holds in captivity are subjected to torture and malnutrition, Ukraine’s Prosecutor General Andrii Kostin says.

The United Nations also says that the captives are subject to “repeated beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, prolonged stress and mock execution,” the international organization said earlier this



Auto rally organizer Roman Hlyva holds a sign on August 18 in Chicago in support of Ukrainian prisoners held captive by Russia.

year in a report. “Over half of them were subjected to sexual violence.”

A car rally held on August 18 in the third most populous city in the U.S. sought to highlight the plight of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) being held in Russia. It was the 12th such event organized by Roman Hlyva, a young activist from Ukraine who is not affiliated with any registered civil society groups.

The rally, which included motorcyclists, was staged at the parking lot of a local pharmacy in Chicago’s Ukrainian Village neighborhood.

Asked why no permit was applied for to hold the event, Mr. Hlyva said the protest on wheels “is about freedom of speech.”

Dozens of motorists and motorcyclists came to the rally and disembarked along Chicago Avenue, the main artery in the ethnic neighborhood while honking their horns. The rally included slogans either painted on vehicles or signs that drew attention to Ukrainian POWs.

Most of those signs drew attention to the soldiers who defended the Donetsk regional Azov Sea port city of Mariupol, most of whom were from the Azov 12th Special Operations Unit of the National Guard. Special operations personnel, police and other armed forces members defended the city and held it as the last bastion of the vast steel plant of Azovstal. Invading Russian forces took control of the region’s second most populous city in May 2022 when the Ukrainians surrendered.

Up to 1,000 defenders of Mariupol remain in Russian captivity, according to an association run by relatives of the Azovstal plant.

“This is a civil initiative. It’s about pris-



Orest of western Ukraine is pictured before a rally on wheels in Chicago’s Ukrainian Village neighborhood on August 18 that sought to draw attention to Russia’s captivity of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel.

oners of war, about torture; all our information is based on primary sources,” Mr. Hlyva said.

The young Ukrainian immigrant said that the events he informally organizes are often improvised and held at localities in Chicago’s Ukrainian neighborhood.

Motorcyclist Myroslava Ilinkiv, 27, of Lviv came with a pink-colored R7 Yamaha racing motorcycle adorned with Ukrainian paraphernalia.

“The whole world should know how Russia tortures Ukrainian prisoners,” she said while explaining the purpose of her participation in the car rally. “It’s about how the Russians treat them, torture them and

don’t feed them. ... I believe these actions are equivalent to war crimes.”

Third Assault Brigade paratrooper Radyslav, 22, of Sumy region, is a veteran of the war who partially lost his two legs while fighting in the Serebryanskyi Forest in the Luhansk region. A non-profit organization in Minnesota provided him with prosthetics and he is currently undergoing rehabilitation.

“I came here to support my comrades who are currently being held as prisoners and are undergoing torture by their captives,” Mr. Radyslav said, as he interrupted

(Continued on page 12)

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## THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

# Has Kyiv cracked a looming deadlock?

As Ukraine marked Independence Day on August 24, the war against Russia, now in its third year, continues to surprise and evolve in ways few could have predicted. What many assumed would become a frozen conflict, with entrenched front lines and limited military movement, has been anything but static. In recent weeks, the balance of power has been shifting on the battlefield, and perhaps even more importantly within Russia itself.

The narrative of the war has been dramatically altered by Ukraine's bold incursions into Russian territory, the most significant of which occurred earlier this month in Russia's Kursk region. This operation, which saw Ukrainian troops seize control of hundreds of square miles of Russian land, was not just a tactical maneuver but a strategic masterstroke that has sent shockwaves through Moscow and beyond.

Russia has sought to project an image of stability and control throughout the war. State-controlled media has shielded the Russian public from the true extent of the war's toll, portraying it as a righteous struggle against Western aggression rather than a costly, bloody conflict that is slowly decimating its economy and population.

But the façade is beginning to crack. Ukraine's incursion into Russia, coupled with a series of drone strikes deep within the country, has shattered the illusion that Russia is immune to the violence it unleashed. These attacks have brought the war home to ordinary Russians in a way that Moscow's carefully curated propaganda cannot easily counter.

The reaction within Russia has been telling. President Vladimir Putin convened an emergency session of his Security Council following the Kursk incursion, underscoring the seriousness with which the Kremlin views these developments. Meanwhile, reports from inside Russia indicate growing unease among the population, particularly among mothers of conscripted Russian soldiers and in border regions that have become the front lines of a war they never expected to reach their doorsteps.

Ukraine's strategy of fighting inside Russia is a calculated risk. By launching operations on Russian soil, Kyiv has not only forced Russia to divert resources from its southern offensive but it sent a clear message: Ukraine is not just defending its territory; it is actively challenging Russian President Vladimir Putin's carefully managed veneer as a strong ruler capable of protecting Russia from its enemies, perceived and real.

This shift in strategy comes at a crucial time. Ukrainian forces, while still facing immense pressure on multiple fronts and a renewed Russian advance in the Donbass, have demonstrated an ability to adapt and innovate. The incursion into Kursk is part of a broader campaign to stretch Russian defenses, create new dilemmas for Russian commanders, and undermine the morale of the country's troops and its civilian population.

Inside Russia, the war is increasingly impossible to ignore. The Ukrainian raids, combined with the economic strain of sanctions and a ballooning number of casualties, are slowly eroding the support for what Putin has called a "special military operation." While open dissent remains dangerous, there are signs of discontent simmering beneath the surface, particularly among Russian mothers.

The economic impact of the war is also being felt more acutely. Sanctions have crippled key sectors of the Russian economy, leading to shortages and price increases that are affecting the daily lives of ordinary Russians. The war, once distant and abstract, is now having a greater impact on the quality of life within Russia's borders.

A shift in the war's dynamics suggests that Ukraine, despite the immense challenges it faces, may have cracked a looming deadlock. It also raises the stakes for the Kremlin, which must now contend with the very real possibility that Putin's war is spiraling out of his control. The front lines are anything but frozen and fierce battles are being waged on Russian soil, while Putin – ever the tyrannical strongman ruler – has seen his redlines decimated by a vibrant, young democracy that proudly marked the 33rd anniversary of independence from the Kremlin's yoke.

Aug.  
27  
2021

## Turning the pages back...

Three years ago, on August 27, 2021, Ukraine's military aided in the evacuation of Afghani translators in Kabul who were working with the Canadian army and a Canadian newspaper.

The last Canadian plane left Kabul airport on August 26, just hours after a terrorist attack took place at the gates of Hamid Karzai International Airport. The United States issued a policy

change that only foreign nationals would be allowed to enter the airport and not Afghans with visas.

As allied forces were preparing to withdraw from Afghanistan on August 31, Ukrainian special forces troops marched into Kabul to escort two mini-buses filled with 19 Afghans to the airport so that they would be evacuated. Ukrainian forces identified the vehicles using license plate information.

"They [the Afghani translators] said 'Ukraine?' We said 'Yes!' and they took us inside," said Muhammad Sharif Sharaf, who was among the evacuees.

Two previous attempts, one by the Canadian military and another by the U.S. State Department, to evacuate citizens from the airport in Kabul were unsuccessful. As a result, Mr. Sharaf's group could not get to the airport to leave the country. In the failed operations, the Canadians and their families needed to reach specific meeting points near the airport gates, but doing so proved impossible amid the chaos. The evacuees were stunned that Ukrainian troops had taken such a great risk to save them. The risk was too great for Canadian and U.S. troops.

(Continued on page 12)

## Rada approves...

(Continued from page 1)

the Rada with crafting a bill to ensure Ukraine's "spiritual independence from Moscow."

Since then, the initiative has been the subject of controversy both in Ukraine and in the West, where lawyers defending Ukrainian businessman Vadym Novynskyi, a protodeacon and patron of the UOC-MP, have come to the defense of the UOC.

The Ukrainian government officially calls the UOC a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, but lawyers and hierarchs within the UOC insist it broke away from Moscow in May 2022.

The UOC condemned the adoption of the law and called the actions of the Ukrainian authorities "persecution."

The Russian Orthodox Church officially supports Russia's war against Ukraine and strongly supports the actions of the Russian military.

According to opinion polls conducted in Ukraine, most people in the country support the ban on the UOC. Polls show that over 50 percent of Ukrainians now support the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which has about 8,000-9,000 parishes. Only 5 percent of Ukrainians support the UOC, which also has about 9,000 parishes.

"After the adoption of the law banning religious organizations associated with the Russian Federation, the UOC-MP plans to continue to live as a true church, and any attempts to ban it may lead to discrediting those who seek this," Metropolitan Klyment, head of the UOC-MP Information and Education Department, told the Ukrainian news site Hromadske.

"The Ukrainian Orthodox Church will continue to live as a true church, recognized by most practicing Ukrainian believers and local churches worldwide. This is an objective thing. Any attempts to ban an objective thing will only lead to discredit, including international discredit, of those who want to implement it," Metropolitan Klyment said.

He added that the bill is no longer about the church itself, but about its property.

"The UOC has no administrative ties with foreign centers," Metropolitan Klyment, adding that "there is not a single Ukrainian document that would confirm this."

When asked if the UOC-MP plans to unite with the OCU, Metropolitan Klyment said that the UOC "has repeatedly called on the OCU to seek ways to unite Ukrainian Orthodoxy," but they have not heard "anything adequate in response."

According to the press service of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, criminal proceedings have been opened against more than 100 UOC-MP clergy; almost 50 of them have been notified of suspicion, and 26 have received court sentences.

Metropolitan Epifaniy, the primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, said on national television in Ukraine that the law banning religious organizations associated with the Russian Federation would make it possible to reject the Russian yoke. He called on Orthodox believers to join the OCU and is ready for a dialogue with Metropolitan Onufriy of the UOC-MP.

"The parliament supported this bill in both the first and second readings. Therefore, we have, indeed, an appropriate historical decision. The law allows all religious structures that have not yet done so to be completely freed from Moscow's control. And we, for our part, again and again, call on all Orthodox Christians in Ukraine who have not yet done so to finally reject this Russian yoke. We are open to dialogue

without preconditions," said Metropolitan Epifaniy, who added that the OCU has always supported the need to protect the Ukrainian religious space from Russian religious centers.

"We are appealing, we are open, and we have extended our hand to Metropolitan Onufriy, the bishops and clergy with a call to start a dialogue without preconditions. We appeal to the faithful. After all, our common Ukrainian future depends on them. Every community according to Ukrainian law and the newly adopted law can change its jurisdiction. We are ready to unite in this difficult time of war when the aggressor is trying to destroy us," Metropolitan Epifaniy said.

Many religious communities in Ukraine have decided to join the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine. To make the transition, the community must convene a meeting, make a decision and amend its charter, Metropolitan Epifaniy said.

He added that Metropolitan Klyment's comments about the lack of dialogue between the OCU and the UOC-MP were "strange." Metropolitan Epifaniy said that since 2019 he and the church Synod have appealed to the UOC-MP, but in response they received only an ultimatum.

"We are open and ready for dialogue but have not received any response. We are waiting, but unfortunately, they do not even want to communicate with us," Metropolitan Epifaniy said.

The new bill bans, at the request of Ukrainian authorities, the activities of organizations linked to the Russian Orthodox Church, and it explicitly bans the ROC itself. The bill does not directly mention the UOC, but Rada deputies have confirmed that the UOC is a target of the measure.

According to the bill, the Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) will determine which structures in Ukraine have subordination and ties to ROC. After that, the Department of Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience would be tasked with ordering such organizations to sever any ties. If they refuse, the Ukrainian authorities can ask a court to ban them.

The DESS has previously concluded that the UOC is subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the UOC is not a single legal entity; it consists of separate dioceses and parishes – about 9,000 legal entities – and each has the right to launch an individual appeal.

Parliament earlier postponed any action to ban the UOC, extending the transition period when it must sever any ties with Russia from one month to nine. Individual court cases are expected to continue for at least several months, so the real ban on any UOC structures in Ukraine may come only a year after the president signs bill into law.

The bill also stipulates that, even before any court decisions, the authorities can confiscate state or municipal property leased by the UOC, including churches and architectural landmarks. The leases for those properties will be effectively terminated once the new law is signed by Mr. Zelenskyy. Some 3,000 UOC communities use churches and other buildings that would be impacted by the new law.

On August 21, Mr. Zelenskyy spoke with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew about the bill, which was also supported by the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations.

"An independent country and an independent people must also be independent spiritually. Today, Moscow is losing another lever of influence on Ukraine and Ukrainians," the president said.

Mr. Zelenskyy added that Ukraine will continue to support Orthodoxy throughout the country and would promote an open dialogue between churches.



# Russian forces are advancing in the Donbas. Ukraine's response? Invade Russia.

by Mike Eckel  
RFE/RL

Ukraine has repeatedly crossed the border into Russia since the start of Moscow's all-out invasion: intelligence operatives doing clandestine operations; drones targeting airfields hundreds of kilometers away; ragtag, unofficial militia groups raiding border villages.

This time, it's different.

Hundreds of uniformed Ukrainian troops, backed by armored vehicles and other heavy equipment, punched into Russia's Kursk region north of the Ukrainian city of Sumy. As of August 9, the troops had seized control of about 232 square miles of territory, and more than two dozen settlements, according to local officials, pro-war bloggers and open-source intelligence reports.

The head-snapping incursion – the largest by Ukrainian forces since Russia launched the invasion in February 2022 – comes as Ukrainian troops struggle to hold back Russian advances in at least three locations across the 684-mile front line further to the south. Russian troops are nearing a major Donbas highway whose capture would threaten Ukrainian supply lines along the entire front.

"The situation in general is not good for Ukrainian forces," said Ivan Stupak, a Ukrainian military expert and former intelligence officer. For Russia, "the main idea is to split the Ukrainian armed forces into two pieces; split the enemy and to try and destroy them part by part, step by step. It's much easier to destroy that way."

Confused? Here's what the battlefield looks like nearly 900 days into the biggest land war in Europe since World War II.

## The bad news for Ukraine

To the southeast of the logistical hub of Pokrovsk, the situation is "much more dangerous" and "critical," according to military experts and open-source analysts. Momentum there turned toward Russia in April, when its forces took the village of Ocheretyne amid a Ukrainian troop rotation that some reports say was botched, and they have steadily moved west and north since then.

As of August 6, Russian forces were reported on the eastern outskirts of Vozdvizhenka, a village located about 3 miles from the T-0504 highway.

"The situation in the Pokrovsk direction is extremely difficult," said the Center for Defense Strategies, a Kyiv think tank headed by a former Ukrainian defense minister.

Running out of Pokrovsk is a highway, known variously as the N23 or the T-0504, that heads east and then northeast toward Kostyantynivka, a railway junction city that has served as a critical supply line for

Ukrainian troops.

Russia wants the highway badly.

Taking the road, which is used to shuttle ammunition and supplies, as well as transport of wounded soldiers, would be a major rupture of Ukrainian supply lines.

The road is not the only route in this section of the battlefield, Mr. Stupak said. But it's the best one: Other routes might be more circuitous and unpaved, meaning slower driving speeds – and when the weather turns and autumn rains begin, Ukraine's legendary mud will make them nearly impassable.

"If you cut the road, [Ukrainian] forces will start suffering," he said. "It's not the end of the war, but it's also not good."

## Feint and parry

If nothing dramatic changes in the coming days and weeks, Russia will get the highway, putting Ukraine's fraying defenses in an even more tenuous position.

Which may be why Ukraine decided to invade Russia.

"To say that this incursion into the Kursk Oblast caught many, including the Russian command, by surprise is an understatement," said one Ukrainian military observer who writes under the name Tatarigami.

For three days after the initial reports of the raid, Ukrainian officials said nothing, aside from suggestions that official Russian reports were grossly understating its scale. On August 8, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also offered a hint.

"Everyone can see that the Ukrainian army knows how to surprise. And knows how to achieve results," he said at an event.

Mykhaylo Podolyak, a top Zelenskyy adviser, made a less veiled confirmation.

"War is war, with its own rules, where the aggressor inevitably reaps corresponding outcomes," Mr. Podolyak said in a post to Telegram.

But Russian authorities, military bloggers and local officials and residents point to an unusually large invading force, with armored vehicles and even tanks, that has moved quickly, overcoming light Russian defenses and undermanned border guard units. Analysts said the vehicles involved, including U.S.-supplied Stryker armored vehicles, pointed to the 22nd Mechanized Brigade – one of Ukraine's more battle-hardened units – as leading the charge.

Satellite imagery and reports by Deep State, an open-source organization with ties to the Ukrainian Army, suggested troops had advanced as far as 56 miles from the border in some places. Russian military bloggers point to similar advances. Estimates from both Russian and Ukrainian analysts as to the amount of territory captured ranged from 193 to 232 square miles as of August 9.

Russian President Vladimir Putin called



Marian Kushnir/RadioSvoboda.org via RFE/RL

A drone view shows the remains of Chasiv Yar on July 7. The Russian Army recently managed to capture an eastern district of the Donbas city.

a session of his Security Council on August 7, and he opened the meeting with televised remarks calling the offensive a "large-scale provocation." Russia's top military commander, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, said the force might be the size of an entire battalion: as many as 1,000 men.

Residents of a Kursk region border town, Sudzha, posted an angry video to Telegram on August 8, saying Putin was being misled by his commanders as to the scale of the invasion.

"These lies are making the residents die," one woman said. Military commanders "told you the situation is under control, but today huge battles are underway" in the district.

The goal of the operation is unclear, and analysts say chances of a major tactical success are slim. Diverting an experienced battalion-sized unit from the front line to stage an uncertain incursion is problematic: Ukrainian commanders do not have deep reserves of men or equipment at their disposal, which is why units across the Donbas front have been unable to check Russian advances.

Ukraine also did not notify its biggest supplier of weaponry, the United States, before conducting the incursion.

In June, as Russian forces pressed a localized cross-border offensive northeast of Kharkiv, the U.S. administration softened a standing policy and gave the green light for Ukraine to use U.S. weaponry to hit Russian targets inside Russia.

Despite not getting advance notice, the administration did not consider the incursion a violation of the wider U.S. prohibition, U.S. officials said.

"It is consistent with our policy and we have supported Ukraine from the very beginning to defend themselves against attacks that are coming across the border," Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said August 8.

## Crossing the canal

About 34 miles northeast of Pokrovsk, at the other end of the T-0504 highway, is Kostyantynivka, with a railway spur that runs northwest to Slovyansk and Kramatorsk – bigger, heavily fortified cities where Ukrainian forces have hospitals, forward command posts and other critical infrastructure.

Russia wants Kostyantynivka, but in order to occupy it, Moscow's forces need to take Chasiv Yar, a height-of-land city with a manmade waterway, the Siverskiy Donbas Canal, that splits the town's main district from the eastern Kanal district.

Russian troops occupied all of the Kanal

district sometime in June, and have pushed forward to the canal itself, which is a natural defense that the Ukrainians have relied heavily on. Over the past months, small groups of Russian soldiers have tried to cross the canal and establish positions on its west side. Other Russian units have also tried to flank the canal from the north and south.

"The Russians attack in small groups. They drive all the way to a hideout in light vehicles, gather a few people, and then this small group starts to storm and reach the positions of our guys without being noticed," Andriy Polukhin, a spokesman for the 24th King Danylo Mechanized Brigade, told RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service. "But at the moment, it is not true; [Russian troops] crossing the canal and positioning on the other side. This has not happened."

Serhiy Hrabyskiy, a retired Ukrainian Army colonel, said the attacking Russian units are still dismounted infantry – units that do not have cover from tanks or artillery.

For Ukraine, "the tactic is exhausting, but the Russians are still able to advance with ... numerical superiority. The question is how long they can continue in such a manner," he said.

## Nyu-York: A hell of a town

To the east of Pokrovsk, Russian units have successfully pushed a bulge, a salient, in Ukrainian lines, toward Nyu-York, which is frequently spelled New York. On August 7, Russian military bloggers reported that Russian troops had entered one of the town's districts.

The Russian bulge at Nyu-York puts more pressure on Ukrainian defenses just to the north, at the city of Toretsk, where Russian troops have also gradually crept forward.

Capturing Toretsk would give Russia control of a wider, sprawling urban region that includes the main regional city, Donetsk, and places like Horlivka, Makiyivka and other industrial locations, Mr. Hrabyskiy said. Capturing Toretsk will also threaten Kostyantynivka, 14 miles to the northwest.

"Will it cause a total break in Ukrainian positions? No, because the Ukrainians have been able to build other defensive lines," he said.

## Wait, didn't Ukraine just mobilize its population?

Manpower has been one of the biggest problems Ukrainian commanders have grappled with. While Russia has been able

(Continued on page 12)





## Blown bridges...

(Continued from page 3)

Treaty Organization's (NATO) top military commander, said on August 15 during a talk in New York. "There has been a fairly slow and scattered reaction to it. Part of that is because it's not exactly clear who is in charge."

### Send in the conscripts

The Ukrainian advance has sent tens of thousands of Kursk residents fleeing; at least 130,000, as of August 20. It is a flood of people that has stretched resources and nerves in the regional capital, also called Kursk.

For the Kremlin, there's another, bigger people problem looming: the role of conscripts being deployed against Ukrainian troops.

Under Russian law, all men between the ages of 18 and 40 are required to serve in the armed forces. The law also puts some limits on deploying conscripts to war zones, requiring a minimum of four months of service and specialized training, and including an outright prohibition on deployment outside of the country.

That means the war in Ukraine has been fought only with contract volunteers – "kontraktniki" – as well as recruited prison inmates.

That, in turn, has insulated the wider Russian population from the horrors of the Ukraine war, which has killed or wounded at least 350,000 Russian soldiers (and a comparable number of Ukrainians), according to Western estimates.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said multiple times that conscripts would not be deployed to combat areas. But the Ukrainian invasion of Kursk is changing that calculus.

At least 22 Russian conscripts went

missing in the Kursk region in the first week of Ukraine's invasion, according to the news outlet iStories.

In the northern region of Murmansk, mothers of conscripts who began service in early July have circulated petitions demanding their sons not be sent to the Kursk region.

Relatives of conscripts from the central region of Bashkortostan told the news organization Vyorstka that some of their brothers and sons who had been stationed in the Kursk region had gone missing and may have been captured.

"What right do they have to send conscripts there?" one woman, who asked to be identified only as Olga, told RFE/RL's Siberia Realities. Putin promised that only kontraktniki would fight, she said.

Ukrainian forces have also released videos and photographs purporting to show scores of Russian prisoners of war, and observers say more than 1,000 soldiers may have been captured during the Kursk incursion. If true, that would present the Kremlin with an even bigger headache.

Idite Lesom, a non-governmental organization that helps Russians being mobilized or conscripted, said it had fielded scores of calls from parents complaining that their sons had gone missing or were set to be deployed to fight Ukrainian troops.

"Formally, they cannot all be sent to the combat zone, but their commanders are obviously much more concerned now that they will get a slap on the wrist if they do not promptly carry out the order" to deploy to Kursk, Grigory Sverdlin, the NGO's founder, told RFE/RL's Russian Service.

Oksana Deyeva, a woman from the Voronezh region whose son was drafted in 2023 and had served near the Kursk village of Korenevo, published a petition on the website Change.org, calling on Putin to order the withdrawal of any conscripts.

"A full-scale offensive is under way on our territory today. Save the lives of soldiers who are not prepared for military action. You promised parents that [conscripts] would not participate in military action!!!! We believe in you," the petition read.

Ms. Deyeva did not respond to multiple messages from RFE/RL seeking further comment.

### Pokrovsk has (almost) fallen

Ukraine's successes have eclipsed more dire news further south, along other parts of the 684-mile front line.

Russian commanders, who have more men, more weaponry and more willingness to conduct infantry-wave assaults, are grinding down Ukrainian defenses in three locations along a 43-mile section of the front: Chasiv Yar, Toretsk and Pokrovsk.

Pokrovsk, in particular, is under critical threat, according to analysts and open-source maps and intelligence. On August 20, Russian forces were reported within 7 miles of the city, which has a dwindling civilian population of around 50,000. Authorities have called on civilians to evacuate the city, as well as the neighboring town of Myrnohrad.

"If Pokrovsk still has two weeks, then Myrnohrad has only a few days left," Yuriy Tretyak, the head of the local military administration, told RFE/RL's Donbas Realities.

Now a garrison town with supply depots and trauma facilities, Pokrovsk sits astride a key highway – known variously as the T-0504 or N23 – which heads northeast toward Kostyantynivka, a city with a major railway junction. Russian forces were even closer to the highway, less than 5 miles, as of August 19, according to Deep State, an open-source mapping group with ties to Ukraine's military.

Russia's Defense Ministry on August 21

claimed it had captured Nyu-York, a town also often spelled New York, located to the east of Pokrovsk. Ukrainian officials did not immediately confirm the town's loss, which would put more pressure on the defense of Pokrovsk.

Russia's seizure of the highway would be a major rupture of Ukrainian supply lines and would put further pressure on Kostyantynivka, which is being threatened from the northeast by Russian advances into the city of Chasiv Yar.

As of August 20, Russian forces controlled Chasiv Yar's Kanal district on the eastern side and have started sending scout units to try to establish a foothold across the Siverskiy Donets, the Donbas Canal, which Ukraine has relied on for defense.

The relentless Russian advances have again highlighted one of Ukraine's biggest problems: manpower.

Despite passing a new mobilization law this spring, the system for recruiting, equipping, training and deploying new recruits continues to work slowly, experts said, giving Russia the advantage, overwhelming Ukrainian positions with bloody but effective infantry assaults.

"It's not about materiel, weapons. I have the feeling that Western aid is adequate enough. But the Ukrainians don't have the personnel to use those materials, to fire those weapons," Mr. Forsstrom told RFE/RL. "The Russians have the same problems in recruiting, but of course Russians have the money to attract soldiers. The Ukrainians don't. So they have to rely on the morale of the Ukrainian people."

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# Ukrainian arts non-profit 'Borshch of Art' launches fellowship for emerging art scholars and writers

by Nicholas Gordon

NEW YORK – The nonprofit organization Borshch of Art announced the launch of the Ukrainian-American Arts Research Fellowship, which aims to support recent college graduates, graduate students and scholars interested in researching American artists of Ukrainian descent.

Tasked with writing papers exploring artists' work, legacies, influences and connections with other artists, each fellow will receive a \$500 stipend upon successful



Anastasia Kondratiuk  
Borshch of Art's founder and President of the Board Anastasia Gudko.

completion of the 12-week fellowship. The deadline to apply is Tuesday, September 10.

"We want to encourage art scholars to create new angles of exploration and build academic knowledge about artists," said Anastasia Gudko, Borshch of Art's founder and President of the organization's Board of Directors. "We want to create a community for art curators, writers, critics and artists as well as art enthusiasts and collectors that will help to raise or create interest in Ukrainian-American arts and illuminate this very specific sector of American art history."

Borshch of Art's newly launched Discover Database, a platform that "features and celebrates the Ukrainian origin of renowned American artists and highlights overlooked talent," as stated on the website, can be used as a starting point for fellows' research, Ms. Gudko said.

Borshch of Art staff will provide fellows with guidance and support in bi-weekly virtual meetings held throughout the fellowship. Creating community and opportunities for interaction will be central to the fellows' experience, just as it has been for Ms. Gudko in her career.

Originally from Kyiv, Ms. Gudko moved to the U.S. in 2013. Having previously worked in the pharmaceutical industry in Ukraine for six years, Ms. Gudko had a career epiphany while she explored galleries and museums in Manhattan. She discovered that she wanted to work in the art world and support Ukrainian arts and culture as much as she could.

A defining moment for her art world focus came when she was visiting the Metropolitan Museum and saw one of her



Krystyna Lysova  
The Ukrainian arts non-profit Borshch of Art led attendees on a recent special exhibition tour of "Objects on the New Landscape" featuring works by the pioneering abstract expressionist Sonia Gechtoff at Bortolami Gallery.

favorite artists, Louise Nevelson, listed inaccurately as being from "Kyiv, Russia." This finding gave birth to the central idea for Borshch of Art and their motto of "reclaiming Ukrainian heritage."

"When the American art world boomed after World War II with talented artists coming from Europe, a large number of them had immigrated from Ukraine. However, many institutions have inaccurate attribution of their origins, oftentimes mislabeling them as Russians," Ms. Gudko explained, likening the mistake to identifying artists from India as being from the British empire. "We all need to do work on decolonization and review the old narratives pushed by imperial powers," she added.



"Part of our goal with Borshch of Art is to continue raising awareness for Ukrainians' heritage and roots," Ms. Gudko

said. "It's about showcasing that Ukraine is its own country with its own unique arts and language."

After earning her master's degree in arts administration from Baruch College, Ms. Gudko gained vast and varied professional experience in the arts, working as an accounts manager for a marketing and public relations agency and as part of the development team as an executive assistant at Free Arts NYC, and doing fundraising in theater and audience engagement for the Hispanic Society Museum and Library.

She also focused on membership and development management at the Art Students League of New York. Ms. Gudko described how in the beginning of her career change she took any opportunity she could as a means of both building her


(Continued on page 12)



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## NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

Honcharenko reported. They said the move was supported by 281 deputies. Ukraine signed the statute in January 2000 but had not ratified it. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on August 15 submitted to parliament the bill on the ratification, which is a key requirement for Ukraine to eventually join the European Union. Ratification will increase the ICC's effectiveness in "prosecuting crimes by Russian citizens on the territory of Ukraine," presidential aide Iryna Mudra said. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Beheading of dead soldier under investigation

Ukraine's Prosecutor-General's Office has opened an investigation into the alleged beheading of a Ukrainian soldier participating in the Russian incursion. A video circulating on social media on August 16 showed a Russian soldier beside a pole with a severed head, allegedly of a Ukrainian soldier. The Telegram channel DeepState identified the Russian soldier in the video as a member of the 155th Marine Brigade, which is deployed near the Kolotilovka checkpoint in the Belgorod region. According to DeepState, Ukrainian forces were fighting in the area on August 12. It is not the first time in the 30-month

war that Russian soldiers have posted such videos. The desecration of soldiers' bodies, including mutilation and beheadings, is a war crime. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Russia postpones elections Kursk region

The Russian Central Election Commission said on August 21 that it has postponed local elections scheduled for September in seven districts of the Kursk region, parts of which have been under the control of the Ukrainian Armed Forces since early August. "The process of preparations and holding the elections will resume when the full safety of voters is secured," the commission said in a statement on Telegram. According to the latest official data from Russian authorities, 31 people have died and another 143 were injured in the area since the incursion by Ukrainian armed forces into the Kursk region. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

### Russia angry over American journalists

The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry said on August 20 that it had summoned the U.S. Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Stephanie Holmes to protest what it called "provocative" reports by U.S. journalists from the Kyiv-controlled part of Russia's Kursk region who "illegally" crossed the Russian border. The ministry also claimed that "evidence" showed the presence of unspecified U.S. private military groups'

involvement in Ukraine's ongoing incursion into the region, adding that "necessary investigative actions to bring them to justice" will be carried out. (RFE/RL)

### Temporary residence permits extended

Lithuania's government has extended temporary residence permits for Ukrainian war refugees for another year. The validity of such residence permits, currently due to expire in March of next year, has been prolonged until March 4, 2026, in the European Union country. According to Lithuania's Migration Department, 30-40 new applications for temporary residence permits are registered every day. Currently, more than 44,300 Ukrainians have valid temporary residence permits in Lithuania.

### Russia bans Clooney Foundation

The office of Russia's Prosecutor General on August 19 said that it had banned a foundation launched by American movie star George Clooney and his human rights lawyer wife Amal Clooney. In a press release, it said the Clooney Foundation for Justice had been designated as an "undesirable" organization for carrying out extensive work to discredit Russia, actively supporting false patriots, backing banned terrorist and extremist groups and advancing criminal probes against Russia's top leadership. The foundation along with several other non-governmental organizations appealed to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, accusing Russia of violating the rights of Ukrainians killed in a 2022 missile attack on Vinnytsya. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

### Putin arrives in Azerbaijan

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Azerbaijan for a two-day state visit, the Kremlin's press service said on August 18. Russian television broadcast

images of Putin's plane arriving in Baku in the evening. Putin was due to hold talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, on bilateral relations and "international and regional problems" during his visit, the Kremlin said. One of the main topics to be discussed was to be the further development of the "Russia-Azerbaijan strategic partnership and alliance," the Kremlin's press service said. Other "relevant international and regional issues" were also expected to be discussed. According to the Kremlin, a joint statement and several other documents will be signed. RIA Novosti reported that in addition to signing the documents, Mr. Aliyev and Putin were also scheduled to make statements to the press. Putin was expected to comment on peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which have been taking place following years of conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Yerevan and Baku have been negotiating a peace treaty since Azerbaijan retook control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in September 2023 in a lightning offensive. A traditional ally and partner of Russia, Armenia recently has turned toward improving its ties with the West and putting on ice its relations with Moscow, which Yerevan has blamed for failing to support it in its conflict with Azerbaijan. Moscow, which regards both former Soviet republics to be in its sphere of influence, has been perturbed by Armenia's efforts to deepen its ties with Western countries, especially the United States. Also on Putin's schedule was a wreath-laying on August 19 at the tomb of Heydar Aliyev, the father of the current leader, who was president from 1993 to 2003. Putin last visited Azerbaijan in September 2018. During that visit, he watched the judo world championship and

(Continued on page 11)

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## Russia and...

(Continued from page 2)

Muraveiko, chief of the Belarusian General Staff, noted that Iskander missile systems and corresponding units moved to designated positions along with special ammunition and docked their missiles. Military aviation did the same (T.me/modmilby, June 12). These units were notified of a prospective strike only 30 minutes before launch, indicating that the warheads had been pre-deployed to be launched from a state of high alert.

Meanwhile, a missile unit from Russia's Leningrad Military District practiced obtaining and using special training ammunition for the Iskander-M missile system, equipping launch vehicles with them, and secretly moving to designated positions to prepare for missile strikes. Some crews of the Russian Baltic Fleet were also involved, equipping sea-launched cruise missiles with special training warheads and entering designated patrol areas (TASS, June 10).

Officially, these exercises were aimed at maintaining the readiness of personnel and equipment for the Russian TNWs on Belarusian soil to ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Union State in various scenarios (TASS, June 11). Mr. Muraveiko stressed that the Belarusian Armed Forces are ready, in agreement and coordination with Russia, to strike the enemy with non-strategic nuclear weapons in the event of full-scale aggression against the Union State (Belvpo.com, June 18). Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin asserted that the expanded involvement of the Belarusian Armed Forces in the second stage of exercises was necessary due to the increase in regional tensions coming from Western provocations. In particular, he mentioned the West's aggressive military policy, unwilling-

ness for constructive dialogue with Minsk, failed attempts to drag Belarus into a "color revolution," and alleged plans for the use of military force against Belarus (T.me/modmilby, June 10).

In July, Mr. Kolesnikov and Vyacheslav Kruglov, a retired major general and fellow at the 12th Central Scientific Research Institute of the Russian Ministry of Defense, gave some clues to the perceived threats emanating from the West. They argue that the recent deployment of new U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formations in Poland, Romania, the Baltic states, Finland and Sweden is an operation to prepare the West for direct military conflict with Russia and Belarus. NATO's blockade of Kaliningrad is seen as a provocation and possible pretext for such a conflict (Kolesnikov and Kruglov, Voennaya Mysl, July 2024).

Poland's blockade of cargo traffic transiting from Belarus has been another justification for the joint nuclear exercises (Belarusinfocus.pro, June 24). Mr. Lukashenko has repeatedly said that such a blockade and sanctions are a form of aggression against Belarus (Belta.by, May 20). Earlier, Mr. Muraveiko pointed out that Belarus has every reason to use weapons to "break through the vital corridor" for the transit of goods through Lithuania (Minsknews.by, October 24, 2023).

Messrs. Kolesnikov and Kruglov also contend that the United States and NATO are secretly preparing to unleash nuclear war against Russia and that Moscow and Minsk need to take measures to counter these plans. This starts with ensuring the combat readiness of all Russian and Belarusian nuclear forces and their special support systems and requires improving tactical methods of action, including maneuverable ones, to escape and defend against potential enemy strikes (Kolesnikov and Kruglov, Voennaya Mysl, July). The

scenario undergirding the second phase of the nuclear exercises thus proceeded from the conclusion that military hostilities would soon spill over into Belarusian and Russian territory.

Even so, Alexei Arbatov, head of the Center for International Security at the Moscow-based Institute of World Economy and International Relations, points out that no real launches were carried out during the exercises. The proper handling and preparation of TNWs seemed to be the primary tasks. According to Mr. Arbatov, the exercises are a signal to the West, and, for the first time, they were accompanied by an official statement from the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry expressing hope that the exercises would "sober up [Western] hot-heads." Mr. Arbatov claims that Moscow has warned Western leaders directly about the serious consequences of a NATO military presence in Ukraine and if the alliance allows Ukrainian units to strike Russian territory with long-range systems and munitions. Thus, he concludes that the deployment of NATO troops in Ukraine would mean direct conflict with Moscow, which could escalate to the nuclear level (RBC, June 1).

Dmitry Trenin, a research professor at

the Moscow Higher School of Economics, agrees with this assessment. He believes that the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear forces in Belarus in 2023 was the first practical step to raising the stakes in the proxy conflict with the West and that these non-strategic nuclear exercises are another warning signal. Mr. Trenin believes that the logical conclusion of the exercises would be to test non-strategic nuclear weapons at the Novaya Zemlya nuclear test site off Russia's northern coast during the third phase (Russia in Global Affairs, July 1).

The Russian expert may be right, as it would appear that the demonstration of a nuclear strike at the Novaya Zemlya test site (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 24, 2023) is scheduled for the third phase of the joint exercises (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 17). If so, the third phase is sure to set off alarm bells in the West regarding possible nuclear provocations from Russia and/or Belarus and may trigger a response from Belarus's European neighbors.

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## NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 10)

participated in the ninth plenary session of the Russia-Azerbaijan interregional forum. The Caucasus country is a close partner of Moscow but also a major energy supplier to Western countries. Azerbaijan is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court, meaning Putin is able to travel to the country without fearing arrest under the international warrant issued for him by the court for war crimes in Ukraine. (RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service, with reporting by AFP)

### Refugees forced onto Hungarian streets

Dozens of Ukrainian refugees, many of whom are children, spent the night sleeping on the street in Hungary after a government-approved legal change revoked their access to state-subsidized accommodation. The refugees were evicted due to a decree signed by nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban that took effect on August 21. The decree limits state support for refugees who came to Hungary from parts of Ukraine that Budapest says were not affected by Russia's full-scale invasion and the war it has sparked. "Since the publication of the government decree, we have continuously warned the parties involved and civil organizations about the problem hoping that there will be some solution. This shouldn't happen in a state based on the rule of law," Magdolna Szecsi, an equal-opportunities expert at the Civil College Foundation in Hungary, told RFE/RL on August 22. Ms. Szecsi said many of those forced onto the street are Transcarpathian Roma who do not want to return to

Ukraine, where their living conditions were "inhumane." Transcarpathia, located in the western part of Ukraine, is home to a large ethnic Hungarian community. Since moving to Hungary, she added, they have begun to integrate by sending their children to school and getting jobs. However, without the subsidies for housing, they cannot afford a place to live. "I don't know what kind of solution can be found, but it is certain that these people do not want to leave here," Ms. Szecsi said. According to the Hungarian government, 13 regions in Ukraine are currently accepted as directly affected by the war. While all parts of Ukraine have been subjected to attacks by Russia, the front line of the war runs mainly through the eastern and southern parts of the country. Norbert Pal, the government commissioner responsible for those who have fled Ukraine, said the decree was "reasonable and proportionate" and that those who "wanted to get back on their feet in Hungary have been able to do so." Last week, the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, expressed "concern" over the law, saying up to 3,000 Ukrainians could lose access to subsidized accommodation. "UNHCR consistently calls on E.U. Member States to interpret and implement the Temporary Protection Directive in a uniform and inclusive manner. The directive also requires Hungary to provide those with asylum status with suitable accommodation and housing," it said in a statement. "Accordingly, the UNHCR urges the Hungarian Government to review the current amendment. All changes related to collective accommodation must be gradual and adequate measures must be taken to prevent anyone from becoming homeless or forced to destitution as a result of the changes," it added. (RFE/RL's Hungarian Service)



## Stefan Kaczaraj

4/11/1941-8/10/2024

On Saturday, August 10th, 2024, we lost our beloved Tato, Stefan Kaczaraj, a caring husband, father and grandfather and dedicated leader in the Ukrainian-American community. Tato was immensely proud of us and instilled a strong work ethic, to strive to always be better, to be generous with our time and to give back to the community.



Stefan, of Budd Lake, NJ, was born on April 11, 1941, in Verbycia, Ukraine, and spent his youth in Ulm, Germany prior to emigrating to the United States in 1955. He graduated from City College in 1966 with a Bachelors in Business Administration. Following his graduation, Stefan joined the U.S. Army, serving with commendable performance as Specialist Fifth Class in the Office of the Executive for Requirements in Washington, DC.

Following his honorable discharge in 1968, Stefan returned to New York, where he met his beloved wife Siania at a zabava hosted by the Ukrainian Chorus Dumka. Stefan was active in Dumka and Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization as a member of the Chervona Kalyna fraternity. Stefan and Siania married in 1970, and over the next 54 years, Stefan dedicated his life to family, friends and the Ukrainian-American community.

Stefan began his career in 1968 at the accounting firm of David Berdon & Co. and worked as a public accountant before joining the Ukrainian National Association (UNA) in 1993. He served UNA for almost 30 years, including as an executive officer for more than 25 years. Stefan was elected president of the UNA at its 35th Regular Convention in 2002, a position he held until his retirement in 2022.

In addition to his service to UNA, Stefan had unwavering dedication to the Ukrainian-American community and held leadership roles at a number of organizations. These included serving as a director of the Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union for more than 30 years with a period as its Chairman of the Board; Chairman of the National Council (Krayova Rada) of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America since 2004; and a board member of The Ukrainian National Foundation. Stefan was also an active member of The Ukrainian Museum and Ukrainian Institute of America, among other organizations.

When not engaged with his community activities, Stefan enjoyed visiting Soyuzivka, watching classic movies and spending time with his family.

Stefan is survived by his loving wife Swiatoslawa (Siania), his children Adriana (Hal) and Talia (Barry), grandchildren Alexa, Gregory and Ella and his sister Maria (Michael). Stefan was preceded in death by his parents, Anna (née Seniwi) and Mykhailo.

Visitation and Funeral Liturgy were celebrated on Saturday, August 17, 2024, at St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church in Whippany, NJ, followed by interment at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery in Campbell Hall, NY.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made in Stefan's memory to the Ukrainian Catholic University, UNA Publications (with annotation 'The Ukrainian Weekly/Svoboda Press Fund') or The Ukrainian Museum in New York City.

**Вічна пам'ять!**



## Chicago motor...

(Continued from page 5)

the interview to respond to the Ukrainian slogan "Glory to Ukraine."

Latino protester David Flores, who is married to a Ukrainian whose father is serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, said he "wanted to show a little peace of mind in

this cause."

More than 52 prisoner exchanges have taken place between Russia and Ukraine via back-channel communications since the full-scale invasion began in February 2022.

International observers say Ukraine mostly adheres to the Geneva Conventions, whereas Russia doesn't adhere to them on an ethical and moral level in terms of the treatment of POWs.



Mark Raczkiewicz

A caravan of passenger vehicles in Chicago on August 18 gathered to draw attention to Ukrainian civilians and military personnel being held by Russia.

## Ukrainian arts...

(Continued from page 9)

skill sets and learning from others.

"I knew that, as someone entering a new industry in a new country, I needed to grow my network as much as possible," Ms Gudko said. "It's all about relationship building for me."

The Ukrainian-American Arts Research Fellowship will have multiple cycles and chances for relationship building as well. At the end of each cycle, fellows' research papers will be published and there will be an opportunity to present at a Borshch of Art event.

For Fellows interested in presenting their research at additional events or academic conferences, Borshch of Art staff may provide further support. As the cohorts of Ukrainian-American Arts Research fellows grow, alumni will be encouraged to stay connected to the community, attend events

and contribute to building a professional network, Ms. Gudko said.

The fellowship is open to recent college graduates, graduate students and pre-doctoral students who are studying subjects such as arts administration, creative writing, art journalism, art criticism, curatorial practice and more. Papers that "examine social justice and the arts, reimagine the canon of art history or consider the role of art in exposing erased histories are particularly welcome," Borsch of Art says on its website.

"Through the fellowship project and Discover Database we hope to inspire future researchers and scholars and gain appropriate attribution for artists and their origins," Ms. Gudko said. "There are important Ukrainian-American artists who deserve to be known."

Information on applying for the fellowship can be found at [www.borshchofart.org/fellowship](http://www.borshchofart.org/fellowship). The Discover Database can be found at [www.discover-database.org](http://www.discover-database.org).

## Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

Roman Waschuk, who served as Canada's ambassador to Ukraine (2014-2019), was instrumental in coordinating personnel from The Globe and Mail and Ukraine's Presidential Office. Mr. Waschuk said, "The Ukrainian forces acted with boldness, valor and fearlessness. In the terrible circumstances in Afghanistan, Ukraine has demonstrated that it has Canada's back, and we are grateful to them."

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

informed The Weekly that it planned to continue evacuations in Afghanistan beyond August 31.

"Protecting the rights and interests of Ukrainian citizens abroad is one of the top priorities of the foreign policy strategy," Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "Ukraine does not give up, and the evacuation from Afghanistan once again proves this principle by concrete actions."

Source: "In a bold and dangerous military operation, Ukrainian troops evacuated Canada-bound Afghani translators from Kabul," by Roman Tymotsko, *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 5, 2021.

## Russian forces...

(Continued from page 7)

to replenish its units by enticing volunteers with extraordinarily high wages and benefits, Ukraine was slow in passing legislation to codify mobilization rules.

With passage of the law in May, Ukrainian recruiters were able to start getting men into the pipeline for training and equipping. Some frontline units have already reported the arrival of new recruits, and Mr. Hrabyskiy said the bulk of the newest soldiers should appear by mid-September.

"To be honest, I'm surprised how our guys are able to hold their lines. They're

completely exhausted, not enough men, not enough ammunition," he said.

That should stabilize the front lines, Mr. Hrabyskiy predicted, but mounting another counteroffensive – like two successful drives in 2022 or the one that fizzled last year – is likely impossible for now.

"I'm doubtful that Ukrainian forces will be able to do anything before the middle of 2025," he said.

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## Kyiv launches...

(Continued from page 1)

The latest development comes as Ukraine's chief military commander, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, announced that 93 Russian localities are under Ukrainian control and that some 485 square miles of Russian territory has been taken by Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian forces have taken some 13 villages near the Donetsk regional town of Pokrovsk over the span of 17 days, according to Julian Ropke, the German senior editor of Bild newspaper's Security Policy and Conflicts section.

Nyu-York (which is also spelled New York) and Toretsk in the Donetsk region also remain under duress from ongoing Russian advances, according to the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

Ukrainian officials, including from the Foreign Affairs Ministry, have justified the invasion into Russian territory as an effort to create a "buffer zone" from constant aerial strikes that originate in the neighboring country.

The United States, Kyiv's main ally and weapons supplier has so far not allowed Ukraine to use projectiles against Russian bases that have been used to fire rockets and drones into Ukraine.

"Since the beginning of the war, Ukraine has been fighting two fronts: Russia on the battlefields and intransigent Western governments in the halls of power," said Colby Badhwar, an analyst of Archives Defense. "Fear of escalation has severely limited the quantity and quality of weapons willingly provided to Ukraine."



Courtesy of the Third Assault Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

A view from the turret of a Ukrainian tank shows the vehicle firing presumably at Russian positions in the Russian-occupied portion of northeastern Kharkiv Oblast on August 22.

## Sources say...

(Continued from page 1)

the operational situation in the area controlled by Ukrainian forces in Russia's Kursk, Ukraine's presidential administration said in a statement.

Sumy Gov. Volodymyr Artyukh told Mr. Zelenskyy that, following the start of Ukraine's operation in Kursk, the number of cross-border shellings and the casualties among civilians had dropped drastically, also allowing the start of infrastructure repairs that are badly needed after months of incessant Russian bombardments, the statement said.

Ukraine's leadership has repeatedly stated that its bold move into Kursk aims to establish a buffer zone inside Russia meant to protect Ukrainian civilians from cross-border Russian shelling.

Ukraine has also said it is not pursuing territorial gains from Russia.

The Ukrainian military had earlier announced the destruction of a Russian pontoon bridge with U.S.-made weapons during their incursion in Kursk.

A video posted by Ukrainian special forces showed strikes on several pontoon

"Ukraine has been forced to comply with absurd restrictions placed on them out of fear that it would jeopardize what security assistance they do receive from the United States. Efforts by the UK [United Kingdom] to have the Biden administration lift the restrictions have been unsuccessful," he added.

However, if one of Ukraine's objectives of the invasion is to divert Russian forces away from the Donetsk region, that has not happened, he said.

"The Russian forces have hardly been redeployed. They have sufficient reserves in place, both in our direction and toward Pokrovsk," Third Assault Brigade deputy commander Maksym Zhoryn said this week.

## Air strikes hit Russian ferry, airfield in Volgograd, target Moscow

Nearly 50 Ukrainian drones were used to attack Russian territory overnight on August 21-22, with 10 having targeted Moscow.

The capital's mayor, Sergei Sobyanin, said on social media that all 10 drones were intercepted.

Successful strikes were geolocated by The Ukrainian Weekly at the Kavkaz Port in Krasnodar Krai, Russia, on August 22.

A cargo ferry was seen ablaze and reportedly had 50 fuel tanks aboard at Russia's second-largest commercial port, which straddles the Black and Azov seas.

A Ukrainian Neptune projectile reportedly struck it, while drones successfully hit an airfield in Volgograd Oblast, according to open intelligence sources.

Regarding the strike on Marinovka airfield, one resident of the area cursed on social media while saying "this is a serious tragedy."

crossings built by Russia after Ukraine destroyed at least three bridges over the Seym River.

"Where do Russian pontoon bridges 'disappear' in the Kursk region? Operators ... accurately destroy them," Ukraine's Special Operations Forces said on Telegram.

Separately, United Nations nuclear agency head Rafael Grossi on August 22 confirmed that he will visit Russia's Kursk nuclear power plant next week.

The International Atomic Energy Agency on August 9 urged Russia and Ukraine to exercise "maximum restraint" to "avoid a nuclear accident with the potential for serious radiological consequences" as fighting approached the plant.

In Kyiv, the U.S. Embassy warned of an "increased risk" of Russian air attacks in the coming days as Ukraine prepares to celebrate its Independence Day on August 24, when it will mark its 33rd year of independence from the Soviet Union.

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## Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

### Kharlan auctions off saber, raising 10 million hryvnia

Olympic fencer Olha Kharlan's gold-medal winning saber raise some 10 million hryvnia (\$242,300) in a charity auction to solicit funds for automated Shablia turrets for the Ukrainian infantry. The auction was announced on Kharlan's Instagram account and by the Serhiy Prytula Charitable Foundation via social media.

The foundation thanked Kharlan for her valuable artifact, saying that the "saber has already brought one victory and its price will soon bring victories on the battlefield."

The Shablia turret is described as a remote-controlled, bulletproof system for machine guns. It can operate effectively from various positions and aims to protect machine gunners by allowing remote operation up to 100 meters (328 feet) away, with an accurate firing range of 1,200 meters (3,937 feet).

#### Dovbyk signs with Italian club Roma

Italian football club Roma has completed the signing of Ukrainian striker Artem Dovbyk from Girona for a reported fee of \$33.3 million. The 27-year-old Ukrainian national was La Liga's top scorer with 24 goals and eight assists in 36 games. He reportedly rejected serious offers from Atletico Madrid and Borussia Dortmund (Roma plays in the Serie A, the top football league in Italy).

Dovbyk joined Girona in the summer of 2023 in a transfer from SK Dnipro in a deal worth \$8 million, with the Spanish club set to profit from the sale. Reports indicate that the transfer fee could rise to \$42 million.

The Italian press indicated Dovbyk forfeited over \$1.5 million to complete the



Surrounded by members of his staff, Serhiy Prytula holds the saber used by 2024 Paris Olympic gold medalist Olha Kharlan after the fencer donated it for auction to support the defense of Ukraine.

transaction.

Dovbyk will be the first Ukrainian in AS Roma history to play for the club. It was the first time the club purchased a previous season's top scorer from any European league.

#### Hasek asks NHL owners to ban Russian players

Nation Hockey League (NHL) Hall of Fame goaltender Dominik Hasek continued his outspoken criticism of Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine by calling on NHL owners to ban Russian players from the NHL in the wake of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Speaking from Ukraine's

Volia Space in Paris on August 5, Hasek asked that Russian citizens not be permitted to skate in NHL rinks. He said NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and 31 NHL club owners are capable of deciding to ban Russian players, but they have chosen not to get involved in the controversial issue.

Hasek also said he would have liked to have all Russian athletes banned from participating in the Summer Olympics. He stressed that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and France's leaders had the opportunity to "stop this huge advertisement for the Russian war and Russian crimes."

He swept aside the idea that Russian athletes are hesitant to speak out about

Russia's role in the invasion due to fear of retribution against themselves and their families. He encouraged them to speak up as athletes of the world beholden to no one.

Hasek entered the political arena in his native Czechia since retiring from hockey in 2008, and is currently running for a Senate seat.

#### Jazz sign Mykhailiuk to 4-year deal

After contributing as a valued reserve when given the opportunity in a National Basketball Association championship season with the Boston Celtics, Sviatoslav Mykhailiuk received a raise in pay and a lucrative free agent contract from the Utah Jazz. On August 14, it was announced the Ukrainian sharpshooter signed a four-year, \$15 million deal with \$3.5 million guaranteed (his 2024-2025 salary) and a team option for the Jazz in the final year. His non-guaranteed salaries are \$3.675 million for 2025-2026, \$3.85 million in 2026-2027 and \$4.025 million for 2027-2028.

The Jazz are in the middle of rebuilding after trading top players Donovan Mitchell to Cleveland and Rudy Gobert to Minnesota. The hope is that Mykhailiuk will provide some scoring punch from the bench.

The 6-foot-7, 205-pound Kansas product appeared in 41 games for the world champion Boston Celtics last season, averaging 4.0 points on 38.9 percent shooting from beyond the arc with 1.2 rebounds in 10 minutes per game. Over his six-year career, he has played in 293 games for the Celtics, Hornets, Knicks, Pistons, Lakers,

(Continued on page 14)

### Ukraine capitalizes on Olympics to gain global recognition amid war fatigue

by Ihor N. Stelmach

National Olympic fan clubhouses are established to create a fun atmosphere with celebrations and partying to laud their country's culture and athletes. In Paris at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Ukraine's Volia Space stood out for its melancholy ambiance featuring moments of silence for war victims and screenings of documentaries about the destruction caused by Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion.

The goal was to keep the ongoing situation in Ukraine front and center for everyone in the world after two-and-a-half years of war.

Ukrainian war fatigue has set in since the invasion in February 2022 and international attention has shifted to the war in Gaza or the upcoming elections in the United States. By keeping the war in the headlines, Ukraine would ensure its Western allies continue to help Kyiv survive the crushing war of attrition.

With the world's eyes focused on the 2024 Olympics, Ukraine took advantage of the situation to ensure people knew Kyiv's overriding goal included more than just winning medals – it was competing for the world's attention.

In Paris, Ukrainians utilized different ways of getting their message out, including through expressive art exhibits and Olympic medalists who, having won medals, used their victories to speak openly about the war raging in their homeland.

Ukraine's Volia Space was the epicenter for this public relations strategy. There was



Jamala (left), the 2016 Eurovision contest winner, took part in a discussion at Volia Space in Paris during the 2024 Summer Olympics, where she also performed for visitors of all ages.

a replica of an improvised barbell on wheels that Olympic high jumper Andriy Protsenko used to keep in shape while in Russian-occupied Kherson. Visitors to the clubhouse could try out the makeshift barbell and pose for photos. While doing so, they learned how Protsenko made it to the Olympics under very challenging conditions – a clever, fun way to engage and educate visitors about the current reality in Ukraine.

Ukraine's athletes visited the hospitality house, including world-record high jumper Yaroslava Mahuchikh, whose gold medal win allowed her to speak about the war, much more so than if she had won a silver

or bronze medal.

Ukrainian organizers showed documentaries about athletes being affected by the war, cities occupied by Russians and life during blackouts when Russia attacked Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

The goal was to show the effects of what has been happening in Ukraine since February 2022, and better illustrate what impact the war is having on Ukrainians.

The food cart at Ukraine House proved to be very popular, offering traditional Ukrainian cuisine such as borsch and varenyky. A souvenir shop featuring Ukrainian embroidered shirts and other apparel and crafts attracted many customers.

Ukraine also connected with visitors by promoting its culture via popular artists like 2016 Eurovision Song Contest winner Jamala and celebrity chef Yevhen Klopotenko.

To combat the notion that after 30 months people in Europe and the United States are tired of images of missile attacks, devastation and casualties, modern technological advances are creating non-traditional communications for Ukraine on the international stage. An example was a banner featuring an artificial intelligence-generated image of Nazarii Hryntsevych, a fallen Ukrainian soldier and soccer fan.

Another way of generating more awareness of the Ukrainian people and their plight is to focus on Ukrainian culture and art.

Lidiia Guzhva, a Ukrainian artist in the military, created an exhibit that aimed to demonstrate the emotional experience of living during wartime.

Her project displayed provocative paintings of naked women with severed arms, personifying vulnerability and helplessness during a war. Recorded sounds of air raid sirens echoed in the room. A white wardrobe with two tall windows wrapped crosswise in tape, a common way to protect against blasts from bombings, stood closed with a sign that read, "Storage of unprocessed emotions and feelings."

Many visitors viewing the exhibition said it moved them to tears.

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## Ukrainian pro sports update: boxing

by Ihor N. Stelmach

### Ortiz wins decision over Bohachuk

Vergil Ortiz, Jr., survived two knockdowns and a bloody slugfest to squeak out a victory over Ukrainian Serhii Bohachuk on August 10 in Las Vegas. Ortiz (22-0, 21 KO) lost his knockout streak, but managed to outpoint Bohachuk (24-2, 23 KO) and become the new interim World Boxing Council (WBC) champion.

The two former gym mates clobbered each other from the opening bell with Bohachuk connecting with a left hook in the first round to knock Ortiz down, although the referee ruled it a slip. The fight was later stopped before the fifth round when a replay substantiated the first-round knockdown.

A countering left hook by Bohachuk in the eighth round resulted in a second knockdown of Ortiz, although again it looked like a slip. In a hole after suffering two knockdowns, Ortiz went on a savage assault, but he could not put his Ukrainian challenger away.

After 12 rounds, one judge scored it 113-113, with two others scoring it 114-112 for Ortiz. A very close, hard-fought battle had promoters from both sides labeling it a potential fight of the year.

#### Usyk confirms desire to fight Joshua a third time

Heavyweight boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk has confirmed he is interested

in a third fight against Anthony Joshua of Great Britain after his rematch with Tyson Fury. The Ukrainian defeated Joshua in 2021 and 2022. Usyk unified the World Boxing Association (WBA), WBC, World Boxing Organization (WBO) and International Boxing Federation (IBF) heavyweight titles earlier this year when he got the better of Fury, the first boxer to accomplish the feat since Lennox Lewis did it in 2000.

Speaking about the possibility of a third bout with Joshua, Usyk assumed he will once again beat Fury and Joshua will defeat Daniel Dubois to set up a third showdown with the British heavyweight.

Joshua has rallied back from his two defeats against Usyk, stringing together four consecutive victories in the ring including a brutal knockout of former Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) champion Francis Ngannou (Cameroonian-French). Keeping his future options open, Joshua has entertained the notion of challenging Fury down the road.

#### Mbilli too much for Derevyanchenko

France's highly-ranked Christian Mbilli powered his way to a unanimous decision over Ukraine's Sergiy Derevyanchenko in a battle between two of boxing's top super middleweights. Mbilli (28-0, 23 KO) was not able to knock out the tough Dere-



Cris Esqueda/Golden Boy

Serhii Bohachuk (left) covers up during a bout against Vergil Ortiz, Jr., on August 10 in Las Vegas. Bohachuk lost against the American by majority decision after 12 rounds.

vyanchenko (15-6, 10 KO), but he managed to thoroughly dominate the 38-year-old on August 17 in Quebec City, Quebec.

Mbilli featured a two-fisted attack focusing on the head and body with little to no defensive strategy. Derevyanchenko enjoyed strong showings in the third and fourth rounds by shortening his punches and in the seventh round with a barrage of repeated rights. Mbilli withstood the blows and re-established his attack, forcing the battered Ukrainian into survival mode.

Derevyanchenko persevered through the entire bout, boxing the second half of the fight with an injured left bicep muscle.

There were no knockdowns by either fighter and after 10 rounds all three judges scored in favor of the Frenchman 100-90, 99-91 and 98-92.

(Based on reporting by The Sweet Science and Express.)

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## Boxer who died before Paris Games passed on Olympics to fight Russians

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Maksym Halinichev was one of Ukraine's more promising boxing prospects and could have been spared from the war with Russia. Ukraine sent many of its top athletes abroad to train for the 2024 Summer Olympics. Of course, not everyone wants to be saved. Some feel obligated to defend their country on the battlefield rather than in a sports arena.

Halinichev's priorities changed in April 2022 when he was driving from his home in the Sumy region to Kyiv to train for an upcoming championship. It was soon after Russian forces retreated from the area, and all along the highway he saw towns and cities demolished by Russian shelling during

their brief occupation.

Halinichev resolved that he did not want his young daughter living in occupied territory among Russian aggressors, according to one of his coaches, Volodymyr Vinnikov. The coach did his best to convince the young boxer to defend his nation's honor in the boxing ring, but Halinichev was ready to learn how to shoot a rifle and help on the frontlines.

Although boxing was important to him, he wanted and needed to do more. His training city of Kherson was under occupation and Halinichev heard of the Ukrainians' suffering there. He could not come to grips with the fact that he could go to Europe for training when his friends and coaches in Kherson were facing grave danger and couldn't even train.

A 21-year-old Halinichev joined the airborne assault troops in May 2022, according to Ukraine's boxing federation. Before the year ended, he was wounded near Bakhmut and suffered an injury to his foot. Shrapnel was stuck so deep in his leg that doctors could not remove it. After a brief recovery, during which time everyone hoped he would leave the army, he returned to the battlefield with his wounds unhealed.

His life partner and the mother of his daughter Vasilisa, Polina Ihrak, last had contact with Halinichev on March 9, 2023. Weeks later she learned that he was killed in Luhansk on March 10, 2023, when she was scrolling through battlefield photos of dead and injured Ukrainian soldiers.

At a recent commemorative observance for her father in the gym where he trained, 4-year-old Vasilisa bounced around the boxing gym with oversized boxing gloves on her tiny hands. Her father will not teach her how to fight, but Ihrak respected Halinichev's desire to make a difference at the front.

Among other Ukrainian athletes who have given their lives fighting for their homeland were pistol shooters Ivan Bidnyak and Yehor Kikitov, judoka Stanislav Hulenkov and weightlifter Oleksandr Pielieshenko, a 2016 Olympian. Acrobatics coach Anastasia Ihnatenko, her husband and 18-month-old son were killed by a Russian missile strike on the city of Dnipro.

Coach Vinnikov was confident that Halinichev would have represented Ukraine at the Paris Games if the invasion did not thwart his plans.

He might have even won a medal. The potential was there: He won a gold medal at the 2017 European Youth Champion-

(Continued on page 15)

### Kharlan...

(Continued from page 13)

Thunder and Raptors, averaging 6.3 points, 1.7 rebounds and 1.3 assists.

#### BC Prometey terminates activities

On August 14, BC Prometey Slobozhanske officially announced the termination of all team activities, including the volleyball side of the organization. The basketball club reached the Euro Cup semifinal in 2022-2023 and twice won the Latvian-Estonian League title.

The announcement was made by team founder Volodymyr Dubinskiy and the general managers of the basketball and volleyball teams.

Ukrainian journalist Oleksandr Proshuta reported that Dubinskiy revealed on August 13 that the men's and women's volleyball teams would be shutting down. The basketball team was set to compete in the Ukrainian League for the 2024-2025 season and had begun pre-season training camp.

As per Proshuta's reporting, the club's termination follows a recent weekend incident where Ukrainian police and investigators searched Dubinskiy's company offices and his hotel room in Kyiv.

Dubinskiy said the move was "pressure from law enforcement" and denied all alle-

gations of money laundering or other violations, claiming the club's operations were all legitimate.

Despite Dubinskiy's claims, several partners withdrew their support, leaving him unable to sustain the organization alone and forcing the dissolution of the club.

#### Tennis team to play Billie Jean King Cup match in Texas

The Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge Playoff between Ukraine and Austria scheduled for November 16-17 will be played at Gabe Nesbitt Park in McKinney, Texas. The city will provide a home for the Ukrainian tennis team during their stay in the U.S. for the event.

The competition will be a best-of-five match series and one of eight held worldwide in November. The playoff begins on November 16 with two singles matches. Two reverse singles matches and a doubles match will follow on November 17.

Elina Svitolina's Foundation, which manages the Ukrainian women's national team in the competition, issued a press release in which Svitolina said, "I am so excited to be part of this opportunity at The Courts of McKinney to bring a world-class international tennis event back to North Texas."

(Based on reporting by The Kyiv Independent, Hockey Feed, Clutch Points, Basket News and North Texas e-News.)



Wikimedia Common

Maksym Halinichev, seen when he was an Olympic boxing hopeful, was killed on March 10, 2023, near Luhansk.



# OUT & ABOUT

August 30 through September 2  
Emlenton, PA  
Family Fest, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A.,  
All Saints Camp, [www.allsaintscamp.org](http://www.allsaintscamp.org)

August 31  
Wilmington, DE  
Benefit, "An Evening to Support Wounded Ukrainian Soldiers," Revived Soldiers Ukraine, Chambers Memorial Hall of Millcreek Fire Company, 215-962-7236

September 5  
New York  
Book presentation with Oleh Sentsov, "Diary of a Hunger Striker" and "Four and a Half Steps," Ukrainian Institute of America, [www.ukrainianinstitute.org](http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org)

September 7  
Toronto

Ukrainian Heritage Day, Ukrainian Museum of Canada (Ontario Branch), [museum@umcontario.com](mailto:museum@umcontario.com) or 416-923-9861

September 8  
Stamford, CT

55th Connecticut State Ukrainian Day Festival, St. Basil Seminary, 203-269-5909

September 13-15  
Toronto

Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival, <https://ukrainianfestival.com>

September 14  
Jenkintown, PA

Ukrainian Flea Market, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, [www.ueccphila.org](http://www.ueccphila.org)

September 15  
New York

Concert, "A Tribute to Virko Baley, 85th Anniversary Celebration," Shevchenko Scientific Society, Ukrainian Institute of America, [www.ukrainianinstitute.org](http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org)

September 16  
New York

Book presentation by Andrea Chalupa, "In the Shadow of Stalin: The Story of Mr. Jones," in conversation with Terrell Jermaine Starr, Ukrainian Institute of America, [www.ukrainianinstitute.org](http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org)

September 18  
Cambridge, MA

Book talk, "The Voices of Babyn Yar" with Marianna Klyanovska, Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky, Harvard University, <https://huri.harvard.edu>

September 18-28  
Ottawa

Performance, "First Metis Man of Odesa," National Arts Center English Theater, <https://nac-cna.ca/en/tickets/under30>

September 22  
Ottawa

Lanark County Ukrainian Fest, Carleton Place, <https://uflc.ca>

September 26-28  
Ottawa

18th annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine, University of Ottawa, [www.danyliwseminar.com](http://www.danyliwseminar.com)

September 29  
Chicago

Film screening, "Bucha," followed by discussion with producer Oleksandr Shchur, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, [www.uima-chicago.org](http://www.uima-chicago.org)

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

## Boxer...

(Continued from page 14)

ships, a silver medal at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games and a silver medal at the 2021 European under-22 championships.

In his empty apartment in the town of Shostka, his parents have shelves full of their son's early achievements: medals and trophies from 2010 to 2021 neatly arranged by year. His photograph stands in one corner with a candle, pictures from his childhood, a religious icon and flowers, all next to his boxing gloves.

Halinichev's parents no longer live there, having relocated to the Czech Republic. Polina Ihrak is thinking about moving to Germany.

Halinichev won his silver medal at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires in a match-up described as a context between two great young fighters. To Halinichev, it was a loss because he didn't win gold, but it provided him with a plan for the future.

His future plans included beating that

boxer in a rematch, teaching his daughter some boxing basics so she could defend herself and win a medal for Ukraine at the Paris Olympic Games. He listed his athletic ambitions in an interview with the Ukrainian Boxing Federation website in December 2021 while Vladimir Putin was massing Russian troops on Ukraine's borders.

When questioned if he felt fear before a boxing match, he explained his train of thought. He believed fear influences a person in different ways – some are incapacitated by it, while others are freed by it. If a person can control his or her mind and body, the fear will disappear.

Unfortunately, Halinichev did not have the opportunity to prove his philosophy in the Olympic boxing ring in Paris. He was one of almost 500 Ukrainian athletes killed since the outbreak of the war with Russia, and his body has not yet been recovered.

(Based on reporting by the Associated Press.)

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