



UKRAINE  
CELEBRATES  
INDEPENDENCE DAY

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## India's Modi calls for peace during historic visit to Ukraine



Office of the President of Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (right) greets Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kyiv on August 23.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 23 again called for peace as he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a historic first visit to Kyiv as the war triggered by Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine neared the two-and-a-half-year mark.

Mr. Modi, who arrived by train from Poland, sat down for talks with Mr. Zelenskyy after both men visited a memorial exhibition in Kyiv dedicated to children killed

during the war.

"We have stayed away from the war with great conviction. This does not mean that we were indifferent," Mr. Modi, seated alongside Mr. Zelenskyy, said in remarks to the media posted on his X account.

"From day one, we were not neutral. We have taken one side, and we stand firmly for peace," the Indian prime minister said.

Mr. Modi did not elaborate on his vision for a peaceful resolution of the war, which

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## Kyiv, Moscow swap prisoners as Ukraine marks Independence Day



Iryna Sysak, RFE/RL

Ukrainian soldiers who were part of the prisoner exchange pose for a photo on August 24. Russia and Ukraine exchanged 115 prisoners each.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

As Ukraine marked 33 years of independence on August 24, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that 115 Ukrainian prisoners were released in a swap with Russia.

"Another 115 of our defenders have returned home today. They are warriors from the National Guard, the Armed Forces, the Navy and the State Border Guard Service," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a message on X.

"We remember everyone. We are searching for them and making every effort to bring them all back," he said.

Some of the released Ukrainian prisoners spoke to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service from a location Ukrainian authorities requested not be disclosed.

Ihor, who provided only his first name, said he was captured while serving as a conscript in National Guard Unit 3057, part of the Ukrainian forces that defended the

(Continued on page 6)

## Two Chicago brothers from Ternopil Oblast severely wounded in Russia's Kursk region

Crowdfunding effort launched to raise money for treatment and rehabilitation

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – Two natives of Ukraine's Ternopil region who immigrated to Chicago some 10 years ago were critically wounded in Russia's Kursk region in the second half of August while driving over an anti-tank land mine with their commander, who was killed in the incident.

Pasechko brothers Stepan, 29, and 28-year-old Petro were serving in the 80th Airborne Assault Brigade at the time after joining Ukraine's Armed Forces two days after Russia launched its full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, according to their aunt, Nataliya.

Both suffered severe burns during the



Stepan and Andriy Pasechko of Chicago, who are originally from the Ternopil region in Ukraine, hug in an undated picture. They were severely wounded in Russia's Kursk region in August while serving in the 80th Airborne Assault Brigade and are now undergoing treatment at a military hospital in Kyiv.

blast and younger brother Petro had one leg amputated afterward.

Both are currently being treated in a Kyiv military hospital, their aunt told a correspondent for The Ukrainian Weekly by phone.

A crowdfunding campaign for their treatment and subsequent rehabilitation is underway on the GoFundMe platform. Launched by family and friends, the initiative has raised \$24,000 in one day, with a goal of raising \$30,000.

The brothers "were visiting Ukraine when the all-out invasion started and remained to fight," their aunt said.

Having no combat experience, the brothers "went from one army recruitment center to another until the 80th brigade took them in and started to train them."

Their mother, a wife and fiancé have been in Kyiv for a week already to lend them support, their aunt Nataliya said.

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Modi's balancing act continues with Ukraine visit

by Dragan Stavljanin  
RFE/RL

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Ukraine on August 23 in a trip seen as a diplomatic balancing act following Mr. Modi's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow last month, which raised eyebrows in Kyiv and the West.

Mr. Modi's visit was the first trip by an Indian leader to Kyiv since the countries established bilateral relations more than 30 years ago.

The United States was particularly concerned with Mr. Modi's two-day visit to Russia as it sees New Delhi as an important pillar in its strategy to contain an ascendant China.

Indian analysts say a primary reason for Mr. Modi's visit was to offset the damage from the July 8-9 Moscow trip, which coincided with a deadly Russian missile attack on a children's hospital in Kyiv that elicited harsh international condemnation.

In a rebuke to the Kremlin, Mr. Modi said that the death of innocent children is "painful," reiterating India's stated stance that political problems cannot be resolved "on the battlefield."

More importantly, Mr. Modi's visit to Ukraine should be viewed as part of India's

multifaceted foreign policy of "strategic autonomy."

In pursuing that goal, New Delhi treads a fine line courting a closer security partnership with the West – such as its Quad security grouping with Australia, Japan and the United States – as a bulwark against leading foe China.

At the same time, India maintains historically warm relations with Russia, relying on weapons and oil from Moscow at a discounted price. For that reason, India has taken a neutral stance and neither condemned nor condoned Russia's war in Ukraine, stating that the conflict should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

New Delhi fears that, if it condemned Russia and joined Western sanctions against Moscow, it would alienate the Kremlin and push it closer to China and Pakistan, India's archrivals.

By the same token, India doesn't want to alienate Ukraine but rather position itself as an impartial stakeholder. In his carefully crafted balancing act, Mr. Modi has ruled out the role of India as a mediator aimed at ending the war, Bloomberg reported, citing an inside source. New Delhi has agreed to relay messages between Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy, it said.

(Continued on page 3)

## Overworked pilots with 'nothing to fly': How war in Ukraine is crippling Russia's Aeroflot

RFE/RL's Russian Service

The pilots and passengers were in their seats; the planes were ready for takeoff. But over 350 flights could not depart on schedule from Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport over two days in June. Aeroflot, Russia's state-owned flagship carrier, which claims to be one of the world's largest airlines, had run out of cabin crews.

This tale was shared on the Telegram channel Aviatorshchina, a Russian airline industry forum.

And it was not a one-time event.

In late July, a shortage of pilots led to the cancellation of 68 Aeroflot flights out of Sheremetyevo, according to Aviatorshchina. Several other flights were postponed.

RFE/RL confirmed these accounts of unprecedented shortages of pilots and crews with three Russian airline-industry sources, who, like other interviewed sources, requested anonymity to discuss a sensitive topic.

"At the peak of the season, when there's enormous demand and people are ready to spend money on tickets, we couldn't handle it," commented a Russian Airbus A320 copilot. "This is surprising and revealing," the copilot continued. "It's not the first summer [the peak travel season], and we always managed in the past."

But the situation changed on February 24, 2022, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Two and a half years later, hampered by sanctions that have increased costs and reduced revenues, Aeroflot cannot always find the planes, pilots and crew it needs to operate efficiently, an investigation by RFE/RL's Russian Service found.

**'We cannot and do not want to fly more'**

As of December 2023, the Russian gov-

ernment had spent 1.09 trillion rubles (\$12 billion) since March 2022 to bolster the Russian airline industry with subsidies, loans, domestic aircraft manufacturing and the buyback of leased Boeings and Airbuses, according to Russian government data analyzed by Reuters.

But these measures, focused on the short term, have not sufficed to ensure the supply of trained pilots and crews or well-serviced planes, experts say.

When the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine cut into air travel, one airline safety expert said, Russian airlines slashed pilot schedules, including for "expensive," experienced pilots, and reduced or eliminated training on foreign planes that, according to the latest government data from April 2022, accounted for over two-thirds of Russia's civilian passenger planes.

After Boeing and Airbus curtailed their business with Russian carriers, the government adopted a June 2022 program to supply Russian airlines with 1,036 domestically produced planes by 2030, prompting companies to switch to training on Russian-made Superjets.

But Aeroflot now says its passenger traffic has increased by 21.4 percent since the first half of 2023 to 25.4 million passengers over the first half of this year, according to the business daily Kommersant.

Yet scheduling cuts and safety limits placed on pilots' and crews' flying time – 90 hours per month is regulator Rosaviatsia's maximum – mean that qualified flight teams are in short supply.

"We cannot and do not want to fly more," commented one Aeroflot employee. "And no one will fly more. That's impossible and not acceptable."

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## NEWSBRIEFS

### Biden voices 'unwavering' support for Ukraine

U.S. President Joe Biden reiterated America's "unwavering support for the people of Ukraine" in a phone call with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on August 23, the eve of Ukraine's Independence Day. Mr. Biden made the comments in a statement that also announced a new package of military aid for Ukraine that includes air-defense missiles, equipment to counter drones, anti-armor missiles and ammunition. News reports quoting an unidentified U.S. official said the package is worth \$125 million, although the White House statement didn't provide a figure. Earlier on August 23, the United States announced new sanctions on nearly 400 entities and individuals who Washington says are enabling Russia's illegal war and supplying Russian military industries. "These actions build on a series of historic steps we have taken with our allies and partners over the last few months to support Ukraine – from transferring F-16 fighter jets, to committing to deliver hundreds of air defense interceptors over the next year, to quickly surging security assistance to the frontlines following the passing of our National Security Bill," Mr. Biden said in the statement. Mr. Zelenskyy said Ukraine is in critical need of the new U.S. military aid, especially air defense, the president's office said. Mr. Zelenskyy earlier on August 23 urged his country's Western partners to deliver promised military support, saying in his evening address that on the front lines "we fight with shells and equipment, not with words like 'tomorrow' or 'soon.'" Ukraine is waiting for packages with weapons or equipment "that have been announced and decided upon but not yet delivered," he said. Mr. Biden praised Ukraine for repelling "Russia's vicious onslaught" and remaining "unbowed in the face of Russia's heinous war crimes and atrocities." Day after day, he said, Ukrainians "have defended the values that unite people across both of our nations and around the world – including independence." Mr. Biden also reiterated that the United States and its allies and partners "will continue to stand with [Ukraine] every step of the way." He said that "when the war began, Ukraine was a free country. It still is today and will be when the war ends." (RFE/RL)

### Russia opens criminal case against journalists

Russia's secret service agency, the FSB, said it has opened a criminal case against CNN journalist Nick Paton Walsh and two Ukrainian correspondents saying that they illegally crossed into the country to film reports on Ukraine's incursion into Russian territory. The journalists – which include Mr. Paton Walsh, a British national, and Ukrainian journalists Diana Butsko and Olesya Borovik – reported from the Sudzha area of the Kursk region, where Ukraine has surprisingly taken a foothold inside of Russia in recent weeks. The incursion is the biggest into Russia by a foreign power since World War II. "In the near future, they will be put on the international wanted list," the FSB said in a statement on August 22, adding that all three face up to five years in prison. The journalists entered Russia embedded with a Ukrainian military convoy and travelled to the town of Sudzha in a reporting mission that CNN said was a legitimate reporting trip. "Our team was invited by the Ukrainian government, along with other international journalists, and escorted by the Ukrainian military to view territory it had recently occupied," CNN said in a statement. "This is protected activity in accordance with the rights afforded to journalists under the Geneva Convention and international law," it added. The FSB move comes on the heels of a similar case launched last weekend against two Italian journalists who reported on Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk region. Simone Traini and Stefania Battistini were also accused of illegally crossing the border. Moscow subsequently summoned Italy's ambassador to Moscow, Cecilia Piccioni, who informed Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry that Italian state broadcaster RAI, "and in particular the editorial teams, plan their activities in a totally free and independent way." The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry earlier this week also 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. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

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# Zelenskyy pleads with allies for 'decisive action' after massive Russian attack

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service and  
Current Time

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on Ukraine's global allies to take "decisive action" after Russia launched a massive drone and missile attack on Kyiv and other cities across the country that damaged vital utilities.

The Russian strikes targeted several Ukrainian cities early on August 26, killing at least seven people and wounding 47 others, according to Ukrainian officials.

Firefighters extinguished 22 fires as 740 rescuers and 176 pieces of equipment were deployed across the country to respond to the consequences of shelling, Ukraine's Emergency Service said on Telegram.

Late on August 26, another strike hit the city of Kryviy Rih in the Dnipropetrovsk region. A missile hit a hotel where many civilians were staying, according to Ukrainian media. Local politician Oleksandr Vilkul was quoted as saying "the news is bad."

Mr. Zelenskyy, in a video message posted on X, said the "vile" attacks, involving more than 100 missiles and around 100 drones, showed the West's restrictions keeping Ukraine from using long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russian territory must be lifted.

"Ukraine cannot be constrained in its

long-range capabilities when the terrorists face no such limitations," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

"Weakness and inadequate responses fuel terror. ... Every leader, every one of our partners, knows the decisive actions required to end this war justly," he added, while calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "sick creature."

The United States also voiced outrage over the major Russian assault.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's continued war against Ukraine and its efforts to plunge the Ukrainian people into darkness as the fall sets upon us," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters, calling the assault "outrageous."

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also strongly condemned attacks against Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure, noting that Poland said an "object," most likely a drone, entered its airspace and possibly landed on Polish territory.

"Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russian drone fragments and missiles have been found on allied territory on several occasions," NATO spokeswoman Farah Dakhallah said. "While we have no information indicating an intentional attack by Russia against allies, these

acts are irresponsible and potentially dangerous."

The aerial attack was the largest in weeks from Moscow and comes as Ukrainian forces are advancing as they mount a major offensive into the Kursk region of Russia.

Kyiv's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said water and power supplies in parts of the capital had been disrupted as Russia launched its large-scale attack during the morning rush hour.

Mr. Zelenskyy said there was "a lot of damage in the energy sector," and Ukraine's state-run energy authority Ukrenerho said that it was introducing emergency power outages.

One person was reportedly killed and a residential building was damaged in the northwestern city of Lutsk, according to the city's mayor, Ihor Polischuk.

Two people who were killed in the Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions were among the seven killed, according to local authorities.

In the Poltava region, five people were wounded after an industrial facility was struck. Three explosions were reported in the Vinnytsia region.

Ukraine's Air Force Command had warned citizens not to ignore air raid alerts after it had detected 11 Russian Tu-95MS bombers taking off.

The Air Force Command added that it had detected drone movements in Chernihiv, Sumy, Cherkasy, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv and Kyiv.

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Mykola Oleschuk said Ukraine shot down 201 "air targets" – 102 missiles and 99 attack drones – out of 236 missiles and drones fired. The assault included three Kinzhal

missiles, six Iskander missiles and 28 Kalibr cruise missiles launched from Russian ships in the Black Sea, Mr. Oleschuk said.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry claimed that 20 Ukrainian drones had been destroyed overnight.

The governor of Russia's Saratov region, Roman Busargin, said drones had targeted the cities of Saratov and Engels and damaged two residential buildings.

He said the damage was caused by falling debris after air defenses shot down the drones.

Russian news agencies said four women were injured in Saratov, with one woman hospitalized. No casualties were reported in Engels.

Engels and Saratov are located on the opposite banks of the Volga River, with a strategic bomber military base located around 7 miles from where the drones were intercepted. Saratov is around 560 miles from the Ukrainian border.

Quoting the airport's press office, news agencies said flights were restricted at the regional Saratov airport.

RFE/RL could not independently verify the reports.

Ukraine and Russia insist that they do not target civilians in their attacks but infrastructure critical to war efforts.

(With reporting by Reuters)

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## Modi's...

(Continued from page 2)

From Ukraine's vantage point, India has been instrumental in luring some states from the so-called Global South to either remain neutral toward the war or show support for Ukraine, according to Bloomberg.

### Expanding economic cooperation

Messrs. Modi and Zelenskyy last met in June on the sidelines of the Group of Seven (G-7) meeting in Italy. They have also spoken several times by phone since the start of the war.

Apart from talks on geopolitics, which are set against the backdrop of Ukraine's recent incursion into the Kursk region of Russia, the leaders focused on expanding economic cooperation.

Bilateral trade between India and Ukraine reached \$3.3 billion in the 2021-2022 financial year, according to the Indian Foreign Affairs Ministry, a fraction of the \$65 billion annual trade turnover between India and Russia.

Ukraine wants to strengthen economic ties with India, particularly in the agriculture, aviation, pharmaceutical and industri-

al spheres, Mr. Zelenskyy said earlier this year.

In turn, India needs defense products from Ukraine, especially aircraft and marine engines.

Mr. Modi's visit to Ukraine could evoke a negative reaction from Russia in a manner similar to how his visit to Moscow drew Washington's ire.

The challenge for Indian diplomacy is to calibrate its private messaging to assuage concerns from both countries, while also portraying the trip as a bold new initiative, wrote Shashi Tharoor, a former Indian minister and diplomat.

"Pulling this off would be a geopolitical triumph. But if the visit goes awry, it could cause incalculable damage to India's global standing," Mr. Tharoor said in an August 13 commentary for Project Syndicate.

Before Ukraine, Mr. Modi visited Poland, a strong ally of Kyiv, on August 22, the first trip by an Indian leader to Warsaw in more than 40 years.

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Among other things, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (right) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) focused on expanding economic cooperation during the latter's visit to Kyiv.

## Ukraine confirms report that F-16 crashed during mission, killing pilot

RFE/RL

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine confirmed that an F-16 fighter jet crashed while repelling a missile and drone strike by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine.

The General Staff said in a Facebook post on August 29 that Ukrainian F-16s engaged in an air battle against the Russian barrage and shot down four enemy cruise missiles.

"During the approach to the next target, contact was lost with one of the planes. As it turned out later, the plane crashed, the pilot died," the military said on August 29 on Facebook.

A special commission of the Defense Ministry has been appointed to determine the causes of the accident, the General Staff said.

Sabrina Singh, deputy spokeswoman for the Pentagon, said she had seen the reports about the crash of the F-16, adding that she was not aware of any request for assistance since the incident. She told a briefing that she had no further information, but added that pilots have been training in the United States and referred to the difficulties they face once in battle.

"I will say, broadly speaking, combat aviation is very complex," Ms. Singh said. "We are very proud to train pilots here in the United States, and our allies are also training pilots for Ukraine. Every day they fly these aircraft. There are brave men and women who defend the skies."

The Ukrainian Air Force reported that the pilot was Oleksiy Mes and said he died while repelling a massive Russian strike. During the air battle, three cruise missiles

and one drone were destroyed, the air force said.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that an F-16 was destroyed in a crash on August 26. An unidentified U.S. official quoted by the newspaper said that, although the incident occurred during a massive Russian missile barrage, initial reports indicated that the jet wasn't shot down by enemy fire, and it likely crashed as a result of pilot error.

CNN reported, however, that, according to sources, the Ukrainian military does not believe that pilot error was the cause of the incident. The investigation into the crash is ongoing, and international experts will be invited to participate in it.

Earlier in August, the Netherlands said it allowed the use of F-16s it donated to Ukraine to be used on Russian territory.

"We have not imposed any restrictions on the use and range of the F-16s, provided that the laws of war are observed," Gen. Onno Eichelsheim, the commander of the Dutch armed forces, told public broadcaster NOS.

Speaking from the United States, Mr. Eichelsheim said his American colleagues "partly" agreed with his position. The Netherlands has pledged 24 F-16s to Ukraine, with the first due to arrive soon. Mr. Eichelsheim declined to say if any are currently in operation.

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# Zelenskyy says Kyiv test-fired its first Ukraine-made ballistic missile

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

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv conducted its first test of a domestically produced ballistic missile as Russia unleashed a second day of deadly strikes across Ukraine.

Mr. Zelenskyy also said at a news conference following a forum in Kyiv on August 27 that the war with Russia would eventually end in dialogue, but that Kyiv had to be in a strong position.

Mr. Zelenskyy said he hoped to go to the United States in September to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York and meet U.S. President Joe Biden and present a plan to end the war. Kyiv's incursion into Russia's Kursk region is part of that plan, but it also includes other steps on

the economic and diplomatic fronts, he said.

"The main point of this plan is to force Russia to end the war," he said, adding that he wants it to be fair for Ukraine.

He did not elaborate on the next steps but said he would also discuss the plan with Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate running for president, and probably also with former U.S. President Donald Trump, the Republican candidate.

His announcements came as Ukraine has been pleading with its Western allies to remove their ban on Kyiv using weapons they supplied to attack military targets deep inside Russia in order to prevent Moscow's forces from destroying civilian and energy infrastructure.

Ukraine has also said it is working on developing the Hrim-2 short-range ballistic

missile system, which is designed to combine the features of a tactical missile system and a multiple rocket launcher.

Last weekend Mr. Zelenskyy also confirmed the existence of the domestically produced Paliytsia missile, which he called a "new class" of weapon for Ukraine.

Mr. Zelenskyy spoke hours after at least five people were killed and several more were wounded in a second massive drone and missile attack by Russia on Ukraine in as many days.

In Russia's Kursk, where fighting has been under way since August 6 when Ukrainian forces launched a shock incursion into Russian territory, Rafael Grossi, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N. nuclear agency, visited the Kurchatov nuclear plant amid fears about the atomic installation's

safety.

Mr. Grossi said after the visit that there was a risk of a "nuclear incident" at the plant, where the situation was serious.

The Kurchatov plant is situated some 37 miles from the Ukrainian border on the banks of the Seym River, where there has been heavy fighting for the past three weeks.

Separately, the Ukrainian military's top commander, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, said that his forces now control 500 square miles and 100 settlements in Kursk. He also said that Ukrainian troops have taken a total of 594 Russian prisoners during the ongoing operation in Kursk.

As Russia launched another wave of strikes, the Ukrainian Air Force said it had shot down a total of 60 drones and 5 mis-

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## India's Modi...

(Continued from page 1)

was started by Russia, traditionally India's ally.

India came under fire from some Western countries after Mr. Modi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow last month, which coincided with a deadly Russian missile attack on a children's hospital in Kyiv that elicited harsh international condemnation.

The United States was particularly concerned with Mr. Modi's two-day visit to Russia as it sees New Delhi as an important pillar in its strategy to contain an ascendant China.

Mr. Zelenskyy at the time had harsh words for Mr. Modi, too, saying it was a "huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day."

On August 23, Mr. Modi offered his country's humanitarian support for war-ravaged Ukraine.

"Whatever help is required from a

humanitarian standpoint, India will always stand with you and will go above and beyond to support you," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Zelenskyy did not make any remarks, but posted a message on X accompanied by a video of him and Mr. Modi visiting the exhibition commemorating children who have died in the war.

"Today in Kyiv, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I honored the memory of the children whose lives were taken by Russian aggression. Children in every country deserve to live in safety. We must make this possible," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his message.

Mr. Modi's trip is the first by an Indian leader to Kyiv since the countries established bilateral relations more than 30 years ago. He has said that he plans to also discuss "deepening the India-Ukraine friendship."

In comments to Reuters, Mr. Zelenskyy's presidential aide Mykhaylo Podolyak said Mr. Modi's visit to Kyiv was significant because New Delhi "really has a certain influence" over Moscow.

"It's extremely important for us to effectively build relations with such countries, to explain to them what the correct end to the war is – and that it is also in their interests," Mr. Podolyak said.

Meanwhile, the French news agency AFP reported that Mr. Modi spoke with U.S. President Joe Biden on August 26 about his visit to Ukraine.

The White House said it appreciated the participation in peace talks of all countries that listen to Ukraine's view on ending Russia's war on the country. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that the United States welcomed "any other country that wants to help" Mr. Zelenskyy work toward a just peace.

Briefing Mr. Biden by telephone on his trip, Mr. Modi "reiterated India's consistent position in favor of dialogue and diplomacy and expressed full support for [an] early return of peace and stability," an Indian Foreign Affairs Ministry statement said.

Meanwhile in Washington, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh at the Pentagon.

Mr. Austin noted the countries' increased defense cooperation, including efforts to strengthen critical supply chains and interoperability between their militaries.

"We share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, and our defense cooperation continues to grow stronger and stronger,"

Mr. Austin said in a news release. "We're expanding our defense industrial ties and working to coproduce more capabilities and strengthen supply chain resilience."

He highlighted India's participation in the recent Rim of the Pacific military exercise led by the U.S. Navy in Hawaii that brought together 29 partner nations.

"The Indian Navy remains an important security provider in the Indian Ocean," Mr. Austin said, adding that the U.S. is committed to deepening naval cooperation and "doing more together with unmanned technology, and to strengthening undersea domain awareness."

Mr. Singh said the growing U.S.-India cooperation covers "all areas of human endeavor." He noted robust ties between Indians and Americans and shared democratic values and interests on a range of issues.

(With additional reporting by AFP)

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	Sawchyn, Irene	Morristown	NJ		Bohdan, Michael	Cranford	NJ	Samotowka, Michael	Jacksonville	FL	
\$50	Krywolap, George	Coopersburg	PA		Germansky, Andrew	Pittsburgh	PA	\$10	Bellinger, Marian	Riverton	WY
\$45	Zetick, Edward	Huntingdon Vy	PA		Krawczuk-Wells, Natalya	Silver Spring	MD				
\$40	Krupa, Borys	Unionville	CT		Leskiw, Maria	Philadelphia	PA	<b>TOTAL: \$835</b>			

### The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund: June 2024

Amount	Name	City	State								
\$500	Werchniak, Andrew	Concord	NH	\$40	Procyk, Roman	Huntingdon Vy	PA		Panasenko, Alex	Salem	OR
\$200	Nowak, Luba	Chicago	IL	\$35	Hayda, Roma	Providence	RI		Sawchak, Patricia	Rydal	PA
\$120	Bilynsky, Roman	Delta	PA	\$30	Wyhinny, George	S Barrington	IL		Stawnychy, Yuri	Kinnelon	NJ
	Juzych, Mark S & Nadia	Bloomfield Hills	MI	\$25	Baranowskyj, George	Osprey	FL	\$15	Huk, George	Montville	NJ
\$115	Podryhula, Oleh	East Sandwich	MA		Holian, Michael & Dr Oksana	Elmwood Park	IL	\$10	Gevas, Nicholas	Granger	IN
\$110	Voyevodka, Martha & Ihor	Leeds	MA		Mizak, Bohdan	Philadelphia	PA		Kosowsky, N	River Grove	IL
\$100	Kulyk, Teofil	Plant City	FL		Nestor, Irene	Nanty Glo	PA		Kowalchyn, Ted	Scotch Plains	NJ
	Liteplo, Paul & Emilia	Somers	NY		Sikorskyj, Lesia	Union	NJ		Prociuk, Ulana	Leighton	PA
	Rak, Greg	Saskatoon	SK		Zobniw, Lubomyr	Binghampton	NY	\$5	Ermler, Michael	Grosse Pointe	MI
	Tomorrow, Maria	Clark	NJ								
\$65	Onufreiczuk, Boris	Gulfport	FL	\$20	Bilobron, Silvia	Clifton	NJ	TOTAL: \$2,370			
\$55	Sheremeta, Adrian	Northville	MI		Dach, Stephen	La Puente	CA	<i>Sincere thanks to all contributors</i>			
\$50	Czmola, Bohdan	Verona	PA		Hluszok, Myroslawa	Roebing	NJ	<i>to The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund.</i>			
	Newmerzhysky, Natalie	Englewood	FL		Horodyskyj, I	Culpeper	VA	<i>The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund is the only</i>			
	Skalsky, Zdanna	Gaithersburg	MD		Klufas, Adrian	Bridgeport	CT	<i>fund dedicated exclusively to supporting</i>			
					Kuropas, Bohdan	Hickory	NC	<i>the work of this publication.</i>			
					Ockerby, Renata	Troy	NY				
					Olijar, Stephanie	Parma	OH				



## U.S. Sens. Blumenthal and Graham return from sixth trip to Kyiv with plans to further help Ukraine

by Myron Melnyk

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – U.S. Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Linsey Graham (R-S.C.) recently returned from an August trip to Ukraine with renewed enthusiasm and creative initiatives to further help Kyiv in its fight against Russian aggression.

During an August 14 press conference in Connecticut's state capitol, Mr. Blumenthal shared his impressions following the visit and presented concrete next steps that he and Mr. Graham said they will take to further aid Ukraine.

"After our sixth visit to Kyiv, we are more hopeful than ever that the tide of war has turned against [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and his cronies. Ukraine's decision to go on the offensive in the Kursk region of Russia was bold and brilliant," the two senators said in a joint statement issued on August 12.

Describing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's noticeable renewed optimism since Ukraine launched an incursion into Russia, the senator referred also to meetings with other officials and citizens who expressed deep pride, even elation, that Ukraine's army was once more on the offensive, this time in the Kursk region of Russia. The situation in the east of the country, however, is more difficult for Ukraine, which has struggled to slow an advancing Russian army.



Courtesy of Sen. Richard Blumenthal's office

**U.S. Sens. Richard Blumenthal (center) and Linsey Graham (right) hold a press conference in Kyiv in August with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget A. Brink.**

In their joint statement, Messrs. Graham and Blumenthal outlined plans that they stressed must be bipartisan to aid Ukraine militarily and economically.

"We will do whatever we can in 2024 to build on Ukraine's recent successes and secure additional future military aid necessary to maintain the momentum," the senators said.

Having already drafted the wording for new legislation, Mr. Blumenthal said he will introduce the Stand With Ukraine Act when the Senate reconvenes in September.

The bipartisan piece of legislation will codify into law the bilateral security agreement already reached by the Biden administration and Mr. Zelenskyy's government in July. Such legislation, which will be

enforceable, will officially signal to the world that the United States continues to stand with Ukraine for the long term.

Both senators enthusiastically supported Mr. Zelenskyy's new proposal to supplement Ukraine's Air Force, which has suffered from a shortage of pilots, by establishing a program to enlist retired F-16 fighter pilots from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries who would be willing to fly the jets in Ukraine. Ukraine is already using fighters from different countries on the ground. The new proposal would create a parallel force of volunteer soldiers who would fly the Western-supplied fighter planes over Ukraine.

The senators also pledged to pressure NATO to invite Ukraine to join the alliance.

"We urge NATO to issue an invitation this year to Ukraine for membership, making real what has been described as inevitable," the joint statement said.

After meeting with Mr. President Zelenskyy in Kyiv, the two senators said they would again urge the Biden administration to lift restrictions on Ukraine using U.S. weapons to conduct defensive strikes against strategic military targets in Russia.

On the economic front, both senators agreed that the U.S. and its partners should do more to sustain and develop Ukraine.

Mr. Zelenskyy previously expressed

(Continued on page 9)

## Denmark's Ukraine House opens Heart of Earth exhibition on Kyiv's role in global food security

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – On the 33rd anniversary of the restoration of Ukraine's independence, Denmark's Ukraine House opened the exhibition Heart of Earth, which features a collection of works by 17 Ukrainian artists reflecting on their deeply rooted connection to the lands and territories of Ukraine.

The exhibition's opening was accompanied by the Ukrainian band Pyrih i Batih, which performed the musical score to Oleksandr Dovzhenko's classic silent film "The Earth," which was screened at Vor Frelsers Kirke, one of the most iconic churches in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Heart of the Earth exhibition was first presented in Kyiv at the Mystetskyi Arsenal, Ukraine's flagship cultural institution. It was the second project to open there since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. The Mystetskyi Arsenal's curatorial team developed the exhibition in response to the devastating consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In their works, the artists explore the themes of colonial exploitation, environ-

mental violence and the transformation of food into weapons. The exhibition aims to emphasize Ukraine's crucial role in global food security, which is becoming increasingly important amid Russian attacks on grain export infrastructure, the destruction of dams and an escalating environmental crisis.

"Back then we were talking about demonstrating the relationship between man and the land, as well as the importance of Ukraine for the world's food security. Since then, the exhibition has not lost its relevance but has only been filled with new meanings. Therefore, it was important for us to include the story of the inevitable change in the landscapes of the Kherson region as a result of the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station," says Natasha Chychasova, curator of the exhibition and head of the contemporary art department at Mystetskyi Arsenal.

Given the importance and resonance of the topic, the curators have updated the exhibition Heart of Earth for its international debut in Copenhagen, Denmark.

"We are grateful to our partners and all



Charlotte Quitzau, David Avakian

**Visitors view the Heart of Earth exhibition at Ukraine House in Copenhagen, Denmark, on August 23.**

the artists for the opportunity to show this exhibition in Denmark. Because war destroys not only Ukrainian cities and villages, it destroys the nature of our common home," Ms. Chychasova said.

The exhibition was held at Ukraine House in Denmark, an institution of cultural diplomacy whose mission is to deepen Ukrainian-Danish cooperation in the field of culture and creative industries for sustainable peace in Europe.

Based in Gammel Dok in the center of Copenhagen since February 2023, the venue's international volunteer team has organized five exhibitions of Ukrainian contemporary art, architecture, design, photography and more than 70 panel discussions.

"The Russo-Ukrainian war of 2014 and its full-scale invasion phase that started in 2022 has coincided with the profound cultural transformation of Ukrainian society. A nation that survived the 1932-1933 Holodomor – one of several Soviet man-induced famines, a killing by hunger that took away the lives of over four million Ukrainians – has not only started to recog-

nize the trauma that it endured but also formed the ambition to ensure that such crimes as famines never happen anywhere again, that food should never be weaponized," said Nataliia Popovych, head of Ukraine House in Denmark.

"Unfortunately, in 2022, as the Russian army started not only killing the Ukrainian people but also stealing and burning the Ukrainian grain, the world saw how an evil regime could easily blackmail millions of people in Africa with hunger in the 21st century. Ukrainians, as well as others, realized the crucial role that Ukraine plays in world food security as well as in protecting the foundations of international law that govern how we can protect the planet from further destruction. The exhibition Heart of Earth, which we have the honor to internationalize and premier in Denmark together with Mystetskyi Arsenal, informs about the future of humankind that is being decided today on the Ukrainian battlefield. Every visitor will have a chance to

(Continued on page 12)



Charlotte Quitzau, David Avakian

**The Ukrainian band Pyrih i Batih perform a composition for Oleksandr Dovzhenko's classic silent film "The Earth" after the opening of the exhibit Heart of Earth in the Vor Frelsers Kirke church in Copenhagen, Denmark.**



## THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

## Let Ukraine take the fight to Russia

Ukraine's relentless struggle against Russian aggression has been marked not only by fierce battles on the ground but also by a persistent and often frustrating diplomatic campaign to secure the weapons it needs from the West. Time and again, Ukrainian leaders have made urgent appeals for advanced military equipment, only to be met with hesitation, delays and outright refusals from their Western allies. Yet, despite initial setbacks, Ukraine eventually received much of what it had asked for – though often after costly delays that have tested the country's resilience and resolve.

From the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine's requests for advanced weaponry were met with caution. The West, fearful of escalating the conflict and provoking Russia into a broader confrontation, was reluctant to supply Ukraine with the sophisticated arms it sought. High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), main battle tanks like the Leopard 2 and M1 Abrams, advanced air defense weapons such as the Patriot system and Fourth Generation F-16 fighter jets were all initially withheld. Western leaders worried that these weapons might be used to strike deep into Russian territory, thereby widening the war and risking a direct confrontation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia.

For Ukraine, these refusals were a bitter pill to swallow. As Russian forces pressed their advantage with superior firepower and resources, Ukraine's military faced daunting odds. The lack of advanced weapons hampered Ukraine's ability to defend its territory and push back Russian advances, leading to significant human losses and prolonging the war. It has never been a fair fight. Ukraine has fought it with its hands tied behind its back.

Yet, as the conflict dragged on, the West began to reconsider its stance. The Ukrainian military, demonstrating remarkable ingenuity and determination, showed that it could effectively use advanced weapons systems to change the course of the war. The success of Ukrainian forces in countering Russian offensives, particularly with the limited supply of HIMARS and other advanced systems, gradually eroded Western hesitations.

Thus, after months of delays and intense diplomatic pressure, the West began to deliver on Ukraine's requests. HIMARS were followed by tanks, air defense systems and eventually even cluster munitions – controversial weapons banned by many countries due to their potential to harm civilians. The provision of these weapons, though late, significantly bolstered Ukraine's defense capabilities, allowing it to reclaim lost territory and mount more effective counteroffensives.

However, Ukraine's frustrations did not end there. As the war continues, Kyiv has turned its focus to striking deeper inside Russian territory. Ukrainian leaders argue that hitting military targets inside Russia is crucial for disrupting supply lines, degrading Russia's warfighting capabilities and forcing Moscow to reconsider its aggression. But this request, too, has been met with resistance from the West.

The hesitation to allow Ukraine to strike within Russia's borders stems from deep-seated fears of escalation. Western nations, particularly the United States, worry that such strikes could lead to a broader conflict, potentially dragging NATO into direct confrontation with Russia. Despite Ukraine's assurances that it would target only military infrastructure and avoid civilian areas, the West remains cautious. As a result, Ukraine has been denied the long-range missiles and other capabilities it needs to carry out such operations.

This ongoing refusal has been a source of deep frustration for Kyiv. Ukrainian officials argue that the West's reluctance to fully commit to its defense only emboldens Russia, allowing it to regroup and continue its assault on Ukraine. The war, they contend, could be shortened significantly if Ukraine were given the tools to strike decisively at the heart of Russian military power.

Thus, the urgent plea to Kyiv's Western allies is clear, concise and urgent: Level the fighting field, remove the restrictions and let Ukraine hit Russia hard. The time for half-measures and cautious calculations is over. To end this heinous war and restore peace to Europe, Ukraine needs the West's full support – without delay and without reservations.

Sept.  
3  
2015

### Turning the pages back...

Nine years ago, on September 3, 2015, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) approved a new military doctrine that declared Russia to be a military opponent and called for the country to pursue membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). No immediate reaction from Russia was issued as the Kremlin continued to deny claims

that it had sent troops and equipment to Ukraine's east, which had been occupied by Russian proxy forces.

The decision by the NSDC came amid strong political tensions over President Petro Poroshenko's effort to get approval for a constitutional change that would have given some powers to the regions, including the eastern regions occupied by Russia-backed forces.

Opponents said the change would effectively be a capitulation to Russia. It was unclear if the doctrinal change toward Russia could dilute opposition to the decentralization effort. The change in stance awaited President Poroshenko's signature.

At a meeting of the NSDC, Mr. Poroshenko said the doctrine "not only officially establishes the Russian Federation as Ukraine's military opponent, but states the task of relocating military units and creating the necessary military infrastructure in the eastern and southern regions."

(Continued on page 11)

## Kyiv, Moscow...

(Continued from page 1)

city of Mariupol and surrendered to Russia in May 2022.

According to a Ukrainian governmental body that oversees the treatment of prisoners of war, 82 of the freed Ukrainian soldiers had fought in Mariupol.

"They led us out of the prison cell at 5 a.m. There were no words, no explanation. They took us to the office and gave us our uniforms to put them on. Then they took us somewhere in cars," Ihor said. "No one told us whether that was a simple transfer to another prison or a prisoner swap. We arrived at an air base and were put on a plane. The plane arrived at another air base. More than 100 of us gathered there. Only then we understood that this was a prisoner swap."

Andriy, another freed soldier who gave only his first name, said he served in the same National Guard unit.

"I kept dreaming about it all the time in captivity – that I'll be back on August 24," said Andriy, who struggled to answer in Ukrainian because he had become accustomed to speaking Russian while in captivity. "It's a feeling beyond description."

Mr. Zelenskyy, referring to Russian troops who have been taken prisoner during Ukraine's ongoing incursion into Russia's Kursk region that started on August 6, said in his post on X that "I am grateful to each unit that replenishes our exchange fund."

Ukraine previously said that Russian soldiers taken prisoner in Kursk would be used as an "exchange fund" to release Ukrainian troops from Russian captivity.

Separately, Russia's Defense Ministry said it received 115 of its own troops, who had been captured in the Kursk region, in exchange for the same number of Ukrainian war prisoners.

It said the prisoner exchange was mediated by the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Zelenskyy also highlighted the heroic resistance of his people in the face of Russia's unprovoked invasion in remarks dedicated to Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24 – a day that also marked the somber milestone of 30 months of war.

"Independence is in every one of us. And united, we can win. ... We withstood, restrained and repulsed the enemy, and now we are pushing it in its swamps. We know what independence is, how difficult it is to revive it, how difficult it is to protect. But we also know that everything depends on us," he said.

No festivities or parades were scheduled in the country, with many Ukrainians preferring to mark 33 years of independence by honoring those killed in the war.

Ukraine says its incursion in Russia's border region of Kursk – which took Moscow by surprise, shocked Russia's ruling elites, and brought more than 500 square miles and 92 settlements under its control – is meant to establish a buffer zone that will put an end to Moscow's incessant shelling of Ukrainian civilian areas and infrastructure from across the border.

Ukraine's leadership has repeatedly clarified that the move is not aimed at gaining territory, unlike Russia's full-scale invasion that started on February 24, 2022, more than 2 1/2 years ago.

"There must be a strong border between us and the enemy, and no walls between Ukrainians, because Ukraine is in each and every one of us," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his message recorded symbolically in the northeastern border town of Sumy, close to where Ukrainian forces crossed into Russia on August 6.

"Those who sought to turn our lands into a buffer zone should now worry that their own country doesn't become a buffer federation," he said. "This is how independence responds."

Mr. Zelenskyy also indirectly warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that his war was doomed to fail, saying that "the sick grandfather from the Red Square ... will not dictate his red lines to us."

"How we live, what path we follow, and what choices we make – only Ukraine and Ukrainians will determine those for themselves. Because that's how independence works," he added.

As Ukraine's incursion into Kursk continues, Russia is pressing an offensive in Ukraine's eastern region of Donetsk aimed at capturing the regional hub of Pokrovsk.

Ukrainian soldiers fighting in the east celebrated Independence Day with guns in their hands. Some of them shared their thoughts about the meaning of independence with RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service.

Denys, an officer with the 93rd Mechanized Brigade, said his generation bears a responsibility to preserve Ukraine's independence for their children's future.

"The cowardice of parents leads to their children's slavery. We are fighting so our children do not turn into slaves," Denys said.

"Freedom is when you can breathe freely without a whip above you," Vitaliy, a soldier with the 93rd Mechanized Brigade, told RFE/RL.

"Right now, independence means freedom from [Russians], ending this war, peaceful skies above us, and saving children from dying," Vitaliy added.

"For me, independence is about saving our country and not letting the war pass on to our children," said Roman, an officer from the 100th Mechanized Brigade.

Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, who was promoted from colonel general to general on August 24, highlighted the sacrifices of Ukrainian soldiers in defending the country's independence in a post on Telegram.

"We defended our independence from the first days of war – when we burned enemy columns, defended Kyiv, liberated Kharkiv region and raised our flag over Kherson and Snake Island. The fight for our independence continues – in Pokrovsk, Toretsk, Kharkiv and other directions where our soldiers stop and destroy the enemy's overwhelming force," said Mr. Syrskiy.

Russian shelling killed five people and wounded five others on August 24 in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kostyantynivka, Ukraine's prosecutor general said.

"As a result of this enemy attack, five residents – three men and two women – suffered fatal injuries," the prosecutor said in a statement.

Ukraine, whose civilian and energy infrastructure has been battered by Russian drone strikes for years, has in turn been targeting in recent months oil and fuel facilities inside Russia that work for the military.

In the most recent strike, Ukrainian drones early on August 24 set an ammunition depot on fire in the Ostrogozhsk district of Russia's Voronezh region.

Regional Gov. Aleksandr Gusev said on Telegram that the fire was started by falling drone debris and caused ammunition to explode. He said there were no casualties.

Ostrogozhsk also houses a training center for armored vehicle operators.

The Belgorod region was also attacked by drones at night, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov reported, adding that two people were wounded.

Russia's Defense Ministry said five drones were downed over Voronezh and one each over the Belgorod and Bryansk regions.

(RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service correspondent Roman Pahulych contributed to this report.)

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## Two Chicago...

(Continued from page 1)

Ukraine invaded the Kursk region along three axes from the Sumy region on August 6. Kyiv has taken control over more than 100 population centers, military commander-in-chief Oleksandry Syrskyi said earlier in the week. Some 500 square miles of Russian territory are held by Kyiv forces, he said.

Yet, the hottest spot in Ukraine – the Donetsk regional town of Pokrovsk – is where “Russia is increasing its efforts,” he told *The Kyiv Independent*.

The surprising operation that was not shared with Western allies beforehand has led to some 30,000 Russian troops being redeployed from the eastern Ukrainian front, Gen. Syrskyi said, adding that nearly 600 mostly Russian conscripts have been taken prisoner.

“Ukraine has not only turned the tables on Russia, it has confounded its allies’ timidity and pessimism,” writer and consultant Edward Lucan wrote for the London-based *The Times*. “Americans and others were kept completely in the dark about the Kursk attack for fear they would leak it. Moreover, Ukraine is increasingly using its own armaments, under its own rules.”

Additionally, a first indigenous ballistic



Brothers from the Ternopil region in Ukraine, Stepan and Andriy Pasechko of Chicago smile in an undated picture while serving in the 80th Airborne Assault Brigade.

missile has been successfully tested, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on August 28.

### Russia targets Kyiv three times in four days

Ukraine used newly provided Western F-16 Fighting Falcon jets for the first time to intercept Russian projectiles during the most massive aerial attacks during the week that saw Russia strike critical energy

infrastructure in Ukraine again.

Mr. Zelenskyy announced the use of the U.S.-made jets on August 27 at a news conference and the General Staff of the Armed Forces said two days later that one F-16 aircraft was lost after intercepting a Russian projectile.

“The pilot didn’t survive [the incident] and the loss of the plane is being looked into,” the General Staff said in a statement posted on Facebook.

## Biden voices...

(Continued from page 2)

“But no one will go to management and tell them, ‘If you don’t want to cut flights, you need to hire more pilots,’” the employee added.

### ‘You can’t do it alone’

Another challenge is finding adequately serviced planes for any new pilots to fly.

Russia allotted 300 billion rubles (\$3.5 billion) from its Sovereign Wealth Fund in 2023 to transfer the leases of 169 aircraft from Western lessors to an agency run by Rosaviatsia, the Interfax news agency reported.

But sanctions that have complicated access to spare parts and skilled repairs mean that often foreign planes go without or rely on the “cannibalization” of parts for maintenance, RFE/RL reported in 2023.

The promised Russian substitutes for these jets have not yet arrived.

The state-controlled United Aircraft Corporation’s deliveries of Superjets and MS-21s have been postponed from 2024 until at least 2025.

Some experts doubt the planes will appear even then.

“The global production of airplanes is built on complex international chains of cooperation. You can’t do it on the spur of the moment and alone,” commented one Russian airline industry source.

That means that now not only are there not enough pilots overall, but “you have pilots for the promised Russian planes who have nothing to fly,” the expert said.

### ‘Pay competitive salaries’

Those pilots who do have something to fly have not seen their wages indexed for inflation, which is now at 9.13 percent, according to the Central Bank of Russia.

A Russian commercial pilot’s salary tops out at 350,000 rubles (\$3,800) per month, according to one Russian airline-security specialist. But that’s the pay for “the captain of a big Boeing with long work experience and who flies the limit of 90 hours a month,” the specialist said. “Everyone else, and they’re the majority, receives less.”

That maximum salary ranks beneath the lowest annual salary (\$50,000) included in a 2024 analysis of worldwide pilot salaries by Simple Flying, an aviation news site.

To find better pay – and better working conditions, with adequate time for rest and

vacation – both pilots and crews are leaving, industry employees said.

Airlines in the Persian Gulf offer pilots salaries over twice as much as they can earn in Russia, noted the airline security specialist.

An Aeroflot flight attendant mentioned acquaintances who left Aeroflot and its discount airline Pobeda for the United Arab Emirates’ budget carriers FlyDubai and Air Arabia.

“Guys I know are flying in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Vietnam and a lot of other places,” the flight attendant added.

One Aviatorshchina commentator observed that, to get pilots to return to Aeroflot, the company needs “to pay them competitive salaries, and that means pay other employees too.”

Failing to do so, another commentator added, could mean that Aeroflot could by December run out of pilots who have not used up their maximum yearly quota of 900 flight hours.

The Aeroflot employee cited above believes Russian carriers will hire new pilots to bolster the airline’s “efficiency” but whether Aeroflot can afford to do so is uncertain.

### Sky-high costs

In July, Aeroflot announced its first profit since Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine – 42.2 billion rubles (\$470 million) for the second quarter of the 2024 financial year, Kommersant reported.

In a July 30 press release, Aeroflot attributed that profit to an increase in demand but conceded its expenses have also increased.

Aeroflot’s expenses for fuel, maintenance, repairs and spare parts have more than tripled since the second quarter of 2023 to nearly 33 billion rubles (\$367 million), according to Kommersant.

Russian jet fuel prices have increased by 30 percent since March 2022, SPIDEX, the St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange, reported.

Over the long term, flights to so-called friendly countries – China, India and Turkey, for instance – cannot compensate for the revenues lost from more profitable long-haul routes to the United States or European Union that disappeared after February 2022, the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta Europe* reported in April.

And the flyover fees that, before the pandemic, supplied Aeroflot with one-third of its annual pre-tax earnings – some \$500 million to \$800 million, according to *Novaya Gazeta Europe* – have largely vanished.

Higher ticket prices that are up by 25 percent since 2023 to the equivalent of \$77 per 1,000 kilometers, according to the news site Vedomosti, cannot make up the difference.

Meanwhile, the government’s plans to boost domestic plane production may be reconsidered, Kommersant reported in early August. And the government has no plans to again purchase the leases of additional Western planes, Transportation Minister Roman Starovoyt said in late July, state-run RIA Novosti reported.

“In the current situation, it won’t be possible to maintain the flight readiness of Western airplanes for long,” commented another airline security specialist. Without enough flight-ready large airplanes and new aircraft, “even the mid-term outlook,” he said, is “bleak.”

## Zelenskyy says...

(Continued from page 4)

siles early on August 27.

The fresh wave of attacks prompted an all-out air-raid alert declared for the whole of Ukraine.

Ukrainian aviation expert Valeriy Romanenko told RFE/RL that the recent massive air strikes that Russia has launched are meant to exceed the capabilities of Ukraine’s antiaircraft missile systems.

Rockets fly in a “bunch” and appear to air-defense systems to be just one rocket, Mr. Romanenko said. The air-defense system launches a single rocket, but there is not one but five or six to shoot down.

Mr. Romanenko also pointed out that the Russians are using X-101 missiles, which have a range of almost 3,417 miles.

“The Russians take advantage of this and plan trajectories in such a way as to avoid the positions of antiaircraft missile systems as much as possible,” he told *Current Time*, the Russian-language network run by RFE/RL. They also use variations in the terrain where possible, programming the rockets to pass undetected behind hills and other topography and make many turns without losing the target.

In the latest wave of Russian missile strikes, a hotel in Kryviy Rih in the southern region of Dnipropetrovsk was hit. Gov. Serhiy Lysak said on Telegram that a man and a woman had been killed and five people were wounded.

Local officials also said that two people

The Ukrainian service of Voice of America, quoting an anonymous source in Ukraine’s Air Force, said a “pilot’s error” was to blame for the lost fighter jet.

Russia launched a successful strike on Kyiv’s hydroelectric station in the northern part of the capital. Part of the dam was damaged, but municipal officials said they did not expect any flooding due to the aerial strike.

Russia has since February 2022 struck every energy facility in Ukraine in one way or another and repairs are constantly needed to alleviate rolling power blackouts.

On the heaviest day of nationwide aerial attacks on August 26, Ukraine’s air defense systems downed 102 of 127 incoming Russian projectiles as well as 99 out of 109 so-called suicide drones, according to Ukraine’s Air Force.

As a result, more than a dozen regions, including the city of Kyiv, have lost power for up to 18 hours a day. Some regions were also without water and weaker than usual mobile phone connections.

“Some major supermarkets [are] without power in Kyiv,” Canadian journalist Michael Bociurkiw reported from Ukraine. “More hours of the day [are] without power than with. Here in Kyiv, it’s caused huge disruption – from traffic jams to darkened restaurants to drops in mobile data.”

Aeroflot claims it will use its profits to cover its growing expenses, but it did not include higher salaries for pilots and crews among these outlays.

Even if it opts for a major price hike – an option downplayed by Mr. Starovoyt in July – “there will be no money left for higher pilot salaries and improving work conditions,” the airline security specialist warned. “So, pilots will continue to flee.”

(Written by Elizabeth Owen based on reporting by RFE/RL’s Russian Service)

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had been killed in overnight Russian strikes in the southern region of Zaporizhia.

In the northeastern region of Kharkiv, a Russian missile killed one person and wounded another five, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram.

In the Khmelnytskyi region, eight Russian drones were shot down, but a person was wounded during the attack, regional Gov. Serhiy Tyurin said on Telegram.

Air defense systems shot down all 15 drones that attacked Kyiv, the administration of the Ukrainian capital said, adding that a fire broke out due to falling debris in a forest park in the city’s Dnipro district.

Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of Russia’s Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, claimed early on August 27 that the situation was challenging but manageable in the area amid an attempted incursion by Ukrainian troops.

“According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the situation on the border remains difficult, but under control. Our military is carrying out planned work. I ask you to remain calm and trust only official sources of information,” Mr. Gladkov wrote on Telegram. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on Mr. Gladkov’s claim.

(With reporting by Reuters)

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## Amid the Carpathian Mountains, Ukrainian children thrive at English language summer camps

by Nicholas Gordon

KOSIV, Ukraine – High was the energy and strong the bonding between 17 Ukrainian children who attended the third English Language Summer Camp facilitated by the Atlas Education company in the Carpathian Mountain region this month.



Camper Diana Tkach, from Oleksandrivka, Ukraine, visits with goats on the camp's excursion to the Hutsel farm in the Carpathian Mountains.

After the success of its first two 10-day camps held in July, with 32 students in the first session and 33 students in the second, Atlas launched a third session to meet the interest of parents who inquired about the camp through social media.

Children ages 7-16 from all across Ukraine attended each session. Several of



Yana Binci (right), co-founder and owner of Atlas Education, and Anna Cherkaziakova, team leader and language instructor for the third session of Atlas's English Language Summer Camp held this August in the Carpathian Mountains, are pictured in front of the organization's banner.



Nicholas Gordon

Team leaders and children from Atlas Education's third session of English Language Summer Camp, held in the Carpathian Mountains this August, gather for a group photograph.

the children from each session have parents who are soldiers currently fighting in Russia's war on Ukraine in the east of the country.

Featuring English language lessons, sports, arts workshops, cooking, games and activities and local cultural and nature excursions, Atlas Education's summer camps offer Ukrainian children bountiful opportunities for personal growth and dis-

covery during a harrowing time of war when the children's development and sense of normalcy is constantly at risk.

"The idea for these summer camps was to not only teach English but to provide the students with a calm atmosphere and emotional rest and stability through nature and animal and arts therapy," said Yana Binci,

(Continued on page 9)

## Chicago's Ukrainian community shows solidarity with homeland on Independence Day with all-day event

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – A human chain that stretched for more than one mile formed along the main artery of the Ukrainian community's base in the third most populous U.S. city to commemorate the war-ravaged country's Independence Day on August 24.

It followed a formal event at the Ukrainian Cultural Center's parking lot that was replete with a flag-raising ceremony, a solemn prayer, speeches by community leaders, live singing on stage by a choir and separate popular music performances.

Called the "chain of unity," a line extended from Oakley Boulevard eastward to



Mark Raczkiewicz

A human chain begins to form along Chicago Avenue following a formal commemoration of Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24 at the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Chicago.

Ashland Avenue along Chicago Avenue, which is considered to be the main street of Chicago's Ukrainian community within the city limits.

"Ukraine is defending democracy; ... Russia is the number one threat of the free world," said master-of-ceremonies, Ihor Diaczun, who is a vice president of the Illinois Division of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA-III).

Concerning Ukraine's request to strike military targets deep inside Russia with Western-provided munitions and its recent invasion of Russia's Kursk region, UCCA-III President Maria Dmytriv said that it "is no one's business how Ukraine prosecutes this war because we've paid the ultimate price."

Kyiv doesn't officially disclose its casualty figures. However, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in February – on the second anniversary of the start of Russia's full-scale invasion – that 31,000 soldiers had been killed. He would not say how many

have been wounded or how many more are missing in action.

Also, Ukraine and Russia held their 55th prisoner exchange since February 24 on Independence Day, swapping more than 100 captives.

As Ukraine entered its 918th day of the full-scale war on August 29, officials in Kyiv estimated that Russia has seen more than 600,000 military personnel die as it maintains a superior force in manpower and materiel.

Volodymyr, a sergeant in the elite 4th Assault Brigade of Ukraine's Defense Intelligence, known for carrying out special operations missions and drone attacks on critical Russian targets, also attended the celebration in Chicago.

"In 2014 [when Russia initially invaded Ukraine], I left everything behind in Switzerland where I owned a business and went to fight," he said. Not many who

(Continued on page 11)



Mark Raczkiewicz

Maria Dmytriv, the president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America – Illinois Division, is joined by Volodymyr, a sergeant in the 4th Assault Brigade of Ukraine's Defense Intelligence during a Ukrainian Independence Day celebration in Chicago on August 24.



Mark Raczkiewicz

Two rallygoers, one with a Ukrainian flag (left) and the other with a U.S. flag, display placards with messages during Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations on August 24.



## Amid...

(Continued from page 8)

Atlas's co-owner and director, in an interview at the camp. "Even for the children who do not live in regions with constant bombing, they live with this war every day, too, and they don't know when it will end."

On the first day of camp, the children take an English language placement test to help determine which learning group will be most effective for them. After being placed in groups of 8-12 students, the students then have two English language lessons per day, one with a Ukrainian teacher and one with a native speaker of English. In total, the students complete 30 hours of English language study and receive a certificate for successfully completing the program at the end of the camp. They also receive a teacher's report on their progress and recommendations for further areas of study.

"I like studying English because you can speak with many different people and English opens the door to other opportunities," said 14-year old camper Vera Kovalenko, who lives in Kharkiv and attended the camp with her 10-year-old brother, Vladislav. Ms. Kovalenko said she dreams of someday becoming a professional violin player and a film director.

Founded in 2012, Atlas Education focused for many years on providing support services for Ukrainian students who wanted to study abroad, and for Turkish students who wanted to study in Ukraine.

When the COVID-19 pandemic slowed international education opportunities in 2020, Atlas shifted its focus to providing English language summer camps for Ukrainian children. Since then, the organization has facilitated eight day camps and two overnight camps, increasing the variety and depth of their holistic activities

each time.

"Giving the students chances to communicate with native speakers both in the classroom and during activities and excursions helps our campers improve their English in a relaxed atmosphere during their time in our camp," Ms. Binci said.

The teachers and team leaders at the camp found the atmosphere and opportunity beneficial, too. For team leader Anna Cherkaziakova, 20, a recent graduate of Chernivtsi National University who finished with a degree in biology, the Atlas summer camp provided her with a chance to work with children on different levels while also spending time in the beautiful Carpathian region in the west of the country.

"I gained valuable experience here as a team leader, teaching English classes and leading different activities, and as a counselor helping the children gain confidence and make new friends," Ms. Cherkaziakova said, adding that she dreams of someday opening her own school.

The closing ceremony on the final night of the camp featured a certificate presentation, student-made videos of imaginative product advertisements, the exchange of 'secret friend' ('tiny droog') gifts, and a mock auction led by Ms. Cherkaziakova in which the campers bid for school supplies, treats, crafts and more with tickets they'd earned through their studies during the camp.

Ms. Binci described her team's mission for serving the youth of Ukraine as one of a forward-looking growth mindset.

"We're moving more toward Europe as a country and in the future English will be a necessity if you want to develop yourself and your career," Ms. Binci said.

For her own personal development, Ms. Binci said she is looking forward to taking child psychology courses to help her campers who may be dealing with various emotional issues. She also plans to delve deeper

into her studies of art therapy as a means of cultivating self-knowledge and providing emotional support.

On the final day of camp, tears and hugs abounded as the children packed their bags and said farewell to new friends they'd made. For many of them, it was now a return to life in a town far from their original homes.

Anastasia Kuzmina, a 12-year-old camper who is originally from Berdiansk but now lives in Zaporizhia because of the war, said that she is getting used to abrupt good-byes and adapting to her life changing quickly.

"When we moved because of the war it was very hard for me to leave everything behind, even my grandparents," Ms. Kuzmina said. "My mom and my sister and I thought we'd be leaving for a short time, but it's been over two years now. I was sad for a long time because it was hard to adapt to life in a new, big city, but I got used to it. I needed to grow up fast because there was

no time to be sad. The most important thing is that we're safe now."

Ms. Kuzmina, whose goal is to become a journalist and an artist, expressed both joy for her experience at the camp and sorrow about the reality that she may never see her new friends from the camp again, due to the uncertainty of the future.

All of the campers, however, said they hoped to return to Atlas Summer Camp next year, if possible.

"At this camp, I improved my English speaking skills and I learned how to talk with different people, which is important because everyone has their own character and you have to talk with people differently," said Ms. Kovalenko, before hopping into the van that would take her, her brother and her mother to the train station for their journey back to Kharkiv.

"I can say that it was an amazing experience at Atlas summer camp and I would love to return here next year," Ms. Kovalenko said.

## U.S. Sens...

(Continued from page 5)

interest in crafting a strategic agreement with the U.S. regarding the more than \$1 trillion-worth of rare earth minerals in Ukraine.

"Expanding economic cooperation with Ukraine makes America stronger and accelerates Ukraine's economic recovery," the two senators said. "Ukraine is blessed with significant lithium, titanium and other rare earth minerals that are needed by the American economy. An agreement with Ukraine in this area would make the U.S. less dependent on foreign adversaries for rare earth minerals."


A working group with the U.S. is needed

to develop such a joint program to mine and use these resources, the senators said.

Notably, Mr. Blumenthal agreed with Mr. Graham to push this fall for the passage of another supplemental aid package for Ukraine. Such a bill would replenish and add to the \$61 billion aid package passed earlier this year.

Mr. Blumenthal has emerged as a leading Congressional proponent of helping Ukraine as the country continues to beat back Russian aggression.

"Now is the time to form a strategic partnership with Ukraine that can have tremendous economic benefits to the United States and lead to stability in Europe," Mr. Blumenthal said. "We should accelerate the gains that have been achieved through dogged determination and courage."



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# Amid war in their homeland, Ukrainians around the world unite to celebrate Independence Day

by Roman Tymotsko

PARIS – As a result of Russia's brutal full-scale war on their country, Ukrainians have never been so scattered across the planet, but united at the same time.

In commemorating the 33rd year since the restoration of Ukraine's independence, diaspora members in hundreds of cities around the globe marked the day with events, marches, family celebrations and demonstrations to remind the world of the ongoing war being waged in Europe. A correspondent for The Ukrainian Weekly spoke with several participants of Ukrainian Independence Day events in Paris, Tokyo, Rome and Austin.

## PARIS

Roman Tyshchenko recently moved to Paris from Minnesota and he has already visited two Ukrainian marches in the French capital, which is now hosting the 2024 Summer Paralympic Games.

"The first time I joined the march was in July when we demanded that Russian athletes be banned from the Olympics and honored the memory of Ukrainian athletes killed by Russia," Mr. Tyshchenko said.

"Both marches were similar, and I was happy to see so many Ukrainians. After two years in Minnesota, where the Ukrainian community is very strongly represented with regular events and campaigns, I



Ukrainians gathered in Tokyo to celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day.

missed it a little bit in Paris, and I had the impression that there were very few Ukrainians here. But when I came to the Independence Day demonstration, I realized that there are a lot of active Ukrainian youth here," Mr. Tyshchenko said.

"I was most impressed by the number of police who guarded the event. I don't know how many of them were there, but it looked large. I am also pleased with the desire of the Parisian administration to

support Ukraine and their solidarity with us – at marches entire streets were allocated to us and car traffic was limited at that time – it seems that some passers-by even joined the column while walking. These two examples show that the French are not just creating comfortable conditions for Ukrainians, they are also interested in Ukraine's victory," Mr. Tyshchenko said.

## TOKYO

Daryna Kukhar, a student at Keio University in Tokyo, says there were rallies in Tokyo, Kyoto and Fukuoka. Most people at the events were Ukrainians who came with their Japanese or other foreign friends.

"We have an organization called Stand with Ukraine Japan, and I sometimes volunteer there. There are a few dedicated

Japanese people who have a hobby of engaging in civic activism. They are very helpful. So, this organization planned the rally, arranged with the police, and announced everything," Ms. Kukhar said.

"While everyone was gathering, Ukrainian music played, and then they started with greeting speeches. Mr. Paul from the Anglican Church in Tokyo came and read prayers in English, Japanese and Ukrainian. There was a minute of silence and everyone knelt, even the Japanese, which was surreal because it was Shibuya station in central Tokyo. Everything is screaming, burning, glowing, people are walking, tourists and the moment of silence at that moment looks very symbolic. Then we shouted slogans and sang songs like Petrynenko's 'Ukraine,' and of course, there was the national anthem," she said.

"Passers-by come and ask what you're doing. However, I did not see much interest. When we organize rallies every Sunday in Shinjuku, there are still more people interested and donating. Here, it was more of a gathering for Ukrainians. Compared to the rally on February 24, it was more fun for obvious reasons. There were Japanese journalists. There was a very nice Japanese woman who makes jewelry in the form of viburnum from glass and metal. She gave these brooches to Ukrainians and said she was very worried about Ukraine," Ms. Kukhar said.

## ROME

A rally and march through the center of the Italian capital took place on August 24 to mark Ukrainian Independence Day. The event was organized by the Christian

(Continued on page 11)

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Ukrainians in Paris marched and carried a long blue-and-yellow flag to mark their country's Independence Day.



Ukrainians in Austin, Texas, hold their country's flag during an event to celebrate the restoration of their country's independence.

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## Amid war...

(Continued from page 10)

Association of Ukrainians in Italy, the Embassy of Ukraine in Italy, the Embassy of Ukraine to the Holy See and the Italian Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Among those participating in the day's activities was Oles Horodetsky, chairman of the Christian Association of Ukrainians in Italy.

"The rally began with the singing of the national anthem by Yana Tsyolko, a nine-year-old Ukrainian girl, followed by a prayer. Two lawmakers expressed their support for Ukraine on behalf of the two chambers of the Italian Parliament. The Deputy Ambassador of Ukraine to Italy, Ms. Oksana Amjadin, spoke on behalf of the large diplomatic corps. About 30 representatives of different embassies attended the event, including the ambassador of Canada and the ambassador of the United Kingdom," Mr. Horodetsky said.

Mr. Horodetsky said that two active servicemen of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Andriy and Oleksiy, as well as Lyudmyla, the widow of a fallen Ukrainian soldier,



Evandro Inetti

Ukrainians gathered on the streets of Rome to celebrate Independence Day.

attended the rally. They led the march and were thanked by the gathered community with loud applause.

"The second important message of the event, in addition to the call to continue to help Ukraine, was to support the return of prisoners of war from Russian captivity. A

flash mob, Return of Prisoners of War Home, was organized on this topic. The mother of marine Volodymyr Orel from the 36th Marine Brigade, as well as relatives of Andriy Turas, a major from the 36th Marine Brigade who has been in Russian captivity for over two years, also addressed

the audience," Mr. Horodetsky said.

Speeches, chants and Ukrainian songs were heard during the march through the central streets of Rome. The action ended with the requiem for the fallen "Plyve Kacha" and the performance of the national anthem on the street of the Imperial Forums of Rome. The final chord of the action was the illumination of the Colosseum in blue and yellow colors, for which the organizers are grateful to the city administration and the mayor of Rome.

### AUSTIN, Texas

"The rally on August 24 did not feel like a typical protest with chants and demonstrations. This gathering was more about songs and just people who decided to celebrate Independence Day together. I was happy to see whole families wearing embroidered shirts," said Sophia Salo.

"Despite the joyful occasion, I still felt bitter from the realization that we still don't know what the future holds for Ukraine. There is also a lot of pain in this holiday – we started the official ceremony with the national anthem and a minute of silence for all those who died fighting for Ukraine," Ms. Salo said.

## Chicago's...

(Continued from page 8)

joined the armed forces in the beginning stages of the war after taking part in the Euro-Maidan Revolution are left to fight.

Ukraine "still has its independence because of brave men and women who have given their lives to" their country, said Ms. Dmytriv.

After the speeches, the Smart Minds Ensemble sang three songs: "Long Live Ukraine," "My Land" and "I am Ukraine."

A choir then emerged to sing "Red Viburnum," a patriotic song that was written when Ukraine briefly enjoyed independence in the wake of World War I before being partitioned by Russia under oppressive and brutal communist rule and Poland.

A multi-yard-long Ukrainian flag was unfurled along Chicago Avenue together with the human chain that spanned nearly a mile.

A fundraiser concert later ensued in the evening inside the same rally venue that featured live Ukrainian musical performances with hors d'oeuvres and beverages.

## Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

Ukraine's army, he added, must strive to achieve NATO standards to attain membership by 2020.

Ukraine's NSDC declaration marked a first in the country's recent history that clearly identified Russia as an enemy and aggressor against Ukraine. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk broke the news of the initiative on September 1 in Odesa during the launch ceremony of the Sea Breeze

2015 multinational military exercises.

Ukraine was also hopeful to upgrade its naval assets and capabilities with the construction of four new corvette boats. Representing the United States at the launching ceremony were Vice Admiral James Foggo, commander of the U.S. 6th Fleet, and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey R. Pyatt, who visited a Ukrainian vessel and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer U.S.S. Donald Cook.

Source: "Kyiv officially declares Russia the enemy," (RFE/RL), *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 13, 2024.

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## INTERVIEW

## Ukraine's bold strike into Russia is a tactical win with unclear strategic benefits

by Vazha Tavberidze  
RFE/RL

Emil Kastehehmi is an open source intelligence (OSINT) analyst and military history expert working at the Black Bird Group, which is headquartered in Finland and currently focused on following and analyzing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In a recent interview with RFE/RL's Georgian Service, Mr. Kastehehmi says Ukraine's incursion of Russia's Kursk region has caught Russian President Vladimir Putin off guard and proved that Ukraine is still capable of launching offensive actions, shifting attention from Kyiv's "problems to its achievements." But the operation is also fraught with risk, Mr. Kastehehmi argues, and its strategic value is still unclear.

**RFE/RL:** Let's start with a situational update of sorts, a brief summary of what has actually transpired, and how massive this incursion is in what has happened over the course of the war?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Well, first of all, the Kursk offensive [is] most likely the summer offensive of Ukraine in 2024. It's not just the border incursion anymore, in my opinion. We can think about it in many ways. If we look at the gained square miles, it's, of course, rather successful. It has succeeded better than last year's summer offensive of Ukraine. It's the biggest offensive into Russian soil since World War II. It's also historically really a significant event.

But then when we look at what has actually materialized there, Ukraine has got a lot of square miles, but mainly what it consists of is small Russian border villages in the countryside. They got [the Kursk town of] Sudzha, but then again that's something around 5,000 to 6,000 [residents], so it's a really small town, and, at the moment, the movement has slowed down. Ukraine is still making some progress. They are getting a village here or there, but there's no rapid expansion of the area of control anymore.

So, it's still maybe not the best-case scenario for Ukraine, as I think that they would have wanted to gain even more in their first days of the offensive. But then again, Russians managed to scramble their defenses so that they could defend Korenevo [another village in the Kursk region], for example, and they could block some of the important roads, even though the Ukrainians pushed rather deep in the beginning.

**RFE/RL:** How much strategic value does this offensive have, both from a military perspective – on the battlefield – but also geopolitically?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Geopolitically, of course, all wars are fought on the land, but nowadays they are also fought in the information space. And in the information space, this has been like a nuclear bomb almost. It has really shifted attention from

Ukrainian problems to Ukrainian achievements. It has also shown the world that Russia, even though it has an upper hand in Ukraine, still suffers from various kinds of problems, which will be hard to actually answer in full anytime soon – be it securing their own borders with enough manpower or the lack of capabilities in their military intelligence.

The intelligence side can't provide an early warning, an adequate warning, so they could at least somehow prepare for a scenario like this, or maybe the intelligence side can provide such, but the leadership just didn't react. That would not have been the first time in military history that, even though the intelligence side is working, the leadership side is not.

Going back to the strategic points: So, in the information space this has been a success, and it may convince, of course, Ukraine's allies that Ukraine is still capable. And it most definitely proves to Ukrainian citizens that Ukraine is still capable of offensive actions. But then again, I doubt that any Western country will be like, "OK, you successfully invaded Russia, now we believe in you, now you will receive a thousand more tanks." That's not really going to happen.

On the ground, there is a difficult point about the strategic side of things, because there is really not much at the strategic level to accomplish in the Kursk region. You can have operational opportunities, so there've been good achievements. But when we look at the big picture, the land that Ukraine has taken in Kursk, at some point Russians will be able to stabilize it. And it hasn't really changed the [big picture] of the war.

It's like a secondary area almost, because the main problems of Ukraine are still present in the east. Russia is still able to continue its offensive, at least in the main focus points in the east, especially Pokrovsk and [in] the Toretsk direction.

**RFE/RL:** Speaking of the front line in the east, I've seen criticism leveled against Ukraine that, by embarking on this operation, they've actually weakened the front line in the east. How valid is that criticism, do you think?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Well, we at Black Bird Group try to also observe the unit movements, and at the moment it seems that at least some [Ukrainian] units that have been fighting on the eastern front may have been transferred to Kursk. So, it seems that Ukraine is really putting a lot of resources into the Kursk offensive. And, of course, one of the main problems of the offensive is that Ukraine didn't really stop the Russian advance before starting the Kursk operation.

As we have seen in Kursk, Ukraine still has strategic reserves, but it decided not to actually use them in the east to stabilize the situation – maybe freeze the situation – but it instead went to Kursk. And it's very understandable that the soldiers on the



Courtesy of Emil Kastehehmi

**Emil Kastehehmi is an open source intelligence analyst and military history expert who says Ukraine's incursion of Russia's Kursk region has caught Russian President Vladimir Putin off guard and proved that Ukraine is still capable of launching successful offensive military operations.**

ground criticize [this]; it's very understandable that analysts criticize it, because Russia has been making relatively large gains [in the east]. There have been quicker than usual advances in [the] Pokrovsk direction. And Pokrovsk, Toretsk ... they have also larger meaning because they are the logistical hubs, the largest cities in that area.

So, after those, maybe Russia can go forward. For example, will Russia want to go to [Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region] after the fall, after the possible war for Kursk? So, there's a multitude of problematic scenarios. And it's understandable from political reasons that Ukraine really doesn't want Russia to advance into new oblasts, because you can never know, maybe they [would get the idea] that this is Russian soil, too, as they have proclaimed in other oblasts.

**RFE/RL:** Limited strategic value or otherwise, let's still discuss what Ukraine can actually achieve or make use of what it has achieved in the Kursk direction. And there are two kinds of more intriguing points that I've seen discussed. One is actually trying and creating a buffer zone. And the second is using this Kursk offensive as a distraction for Russia. Let's discuss both scenarios. How likely are those?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Well, the buffer zone idea is kind of understandable. Ukraine has been worried about the border villages in [the northeastern region of] Sumy. So, by moving the area of control to the Russian side, then they will of course ... also move at least some of the fighting to the Russian side and thus protect Ukraine's own infrastructure and villages.

**RFE/RL:** But that implies defending that territory, right? And that would probably require more manpower and more equipment, etc. Is it worth it?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Yes, that's a great question. In the current situation, it may not be worth it. At the moment, there has been more front line created, about 70 to 90 kilometers of new front line that Ukraine actually has to man to control. So, it will eat up more Ukrainian resources. It needs more brigades to control what they have got, so there's always a trade-off in order to protect some of your own [territory].

And we have to remember this offensive into Kursk, even though it has been operationally successful in some areas, it hasn't been cheap either for Ukraine. Ukraine has also taken casualties, Ukraine has lost equipment, and it will continue doing so. It doesn't seem like there's anything catastrophic and Russians are most likely taking more casualties, but then again the Russians can take casualties, they can sustain the casualties.

**RFE/RL:** And what about the argument that Ukraine's incursion will force Russia to divert troops there and therefore alleviate pressure on the eastern front or allow Ukraine to launch another operation somewhere else?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Yes, at the moment it seems that Russia has been forced to pull reserves to the Kursk area, but Russia should have enough troops to at least continue their main efforts, especially in Donetsk and still somehow control the situation in Kursk. One possible scenario could be that the Russians simply spend just enough manpower to stop Ukraine in Kursk and maybe freeze the situation. But then they could decide that it's not really worth it to begin bigger counterattacks in the [Kursk] area.

They can just leave Kursk as it is and focus on the east where Russian political goals lie at the moment, and that's also a difficult area. It has been a difficult area for them to advance and now that they are making gains there it would be surprising if they would give that up in order to start some counterattacks in the countryside of Kursk.

**RFE/RL:** So Sudzha is not worth the cost?

**Mr. Kastehehmi:** Yes, it might not be worth it really. It's, of course, a problem for the Russian government, but if Ukraine occupies a certain part of Kursk, when you look at all of Russia, it's still a small part. So, the Russians can be like, "OK, we can sustain this, and let's just continue full steam ahead in Ukraine." And, of course, Ukraine has committed a lot of force to Kursk, and it's beginning to be a pretty expensive and heavy distraction operation. Ukraine still does have some reserves. They should have, for example, some of the tank brigades in reserve, but it's really difficult to say if those can be bunched up into a group that could have enough force to actually effectively take on the Russians in some

(Continued on page 19)

## Denmark's...

(Continued from page 5)

make a better-informed decision about the personal role each of us plays in protecting our homelands and the world from the looming catastrophes," said Ms. Popovych.

The exhibition's opening was attended by Copenhagen's Mayor for Integration

Jens-Kristian Lütken, and its Mayor of Culture and Leisure Mia Nyegaard.

"The amazing work of 17 Ukrainian artists is a manifestation of their deep connection to their homeland, to Ukrainian soil, and Ukraine's vital role in global food security. In these times so burdened by death and destruction, it's important to remember how much Ukraine, in fact, is a source of life. I hope that this exhibition will serve as a beacon of hope. A reminder never to

lose faith in a better future, even in the most difficult of times," Mr. Lütken said.

After viewing the exhibition, visitors could hear the first live performance of the composition for the film "The Earth" by a Ukrainian band, Pyrih i Batih. The concert occurred in one of the most iconic churches in Copenhagen, Vor Frelsers Kirke, known for its spiral staircase around the church spire, offering a panoramic view of the entire city center.

During the exhibition, a series of panel discussions will be held with Danish, Ukrainian and international experts. The sessions will focus on sustainable reconstruction efforts and post-war economic models for Ukraine. The program will provide a platform for academics, policymakers and business representatives to exchange views and strategies.

The exhibition will run until November 24.



## Amid ongoing war, Ukrainian teams compete at European Little League Regional Championships in Poland

by Basil Tarasko

KUTNO, Poland – The Ukrainian Little League (LL) Baseball “Peaceful Skies and Sweet Dreams” program is in its second year and the goal this year was to send four Ukraine LL baseball and softball teams to the European Little League Regional Championships on June 28-July 2 for LL softball, July 7-11 for the qualifiers, and July 14-21 for the regionals in Kutno, Poland.

At the same time, the program also aims to give Ukrainian boys and girls a week of peaceful skies, sweet dreams and the opportunity to play baseball and softball as representatives of Ukraine.

But the program also faces many challenges ahead. There is a need to raise money for team travel costs, and form teams and find qualified coaches who can leave Ukraine amid the ongoing war.

Once again, the Self Reliance (N.Y.) Federal Credit Union became the effort’s lead sponsor and covered the travel costs of participating teams. Program organizers expressed thanks to the credit union for its continued support over many years.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the leagues could not play many meaningful games during the spring season due to safety concerns. Little League International gave teams in Ukraine permission to combine leagues in 2024.

The softball team of players aged 10-12 brought together girls from Rivne, Kyiv and Kropyvnytskyi. It marked the very first time that Ukraine LL has ever sent a softball team to the European Regionals.

The young Ukrainian squad lost to the Czech team. They scored 12 runs against the German girls, but it wasn’t enough. Victory came for Ukraine as the team rolled over Poland 22-3. Nastia, the team’s manager from Rivne, Ukraine, said the girls truly had a great time in Kutno, Poland, and the entire team cried when they left for home. The team now has hope that their softball teams can make the LL Regionals every year.

Organizers also formed a junior baseball team for players aged 13-14, though they did encounter several hurdles. The challenge was to keep all the players on the roster. Initially, organizers started with 14 players, then 12 and finally the squad was down to 10 players. Some suffered injuries, while parents pulled their sons from the team at the last moment. Regrettably, the team’s participation at the regionals on July 7-15 in Chocen, the Czech Republic, had to be cancelled.

In June, the final two baseball teams for



Basil Tarasko

Little League teams from Ukraine and Israel (age 13-14), both countries fighting wars, are pictured after their game at the European Little League Regional Championships held in July in Kutno, Poland.

players aged 10 -12 were formed and LL once again allowed Ukraine to have two LL teams compete in Kutno, Poland.

The team that qualified included six boys and four girls from Ukraine’s Sumy and Mykolayiv oblasts. There were seven countries at the tournament, with the top two teams moving on to the Regional Tournament on July 13. The winner of the regionals would represent the Europe and Africa region in Williamsport, Pa., at the Little League World Series in August.

Ukraine’s team played four games to the best of its ability, but the team lost to Croatia, Lithuania, Poland and Israel. The team did score eight runs against Poland and were shut out in the other games. The game versus Israel was historic because it was between two countries at war. The team from Ukraine never gave up and the players gave their best effort.

This correspondent arrived in Poland on July 4 with three huge bags of souvenirs for Ukraine’s baseball teams. One of the bags was filled with over 40 baseball gloves, bats and balls for children in Kostuvate, Ukraine. Being a new LL program, players needed equipment. Thankfully, Killian Knowles, who was born in Cherkasy, Ukraine, and his friends in Denver came to the team’s aid by supplying needed equipment.

It was a pleasure being with the players as they represent the future of Ukraine. With the help of many individuals and groups in the U.S., this correspondent was able to plan many activities with the children.

First, there was a lottery where every child chose up to six souvenirs, including caps, shirts, baseballs, bats, etc. Next, players were treated daily to ice cream, chocolates and afternoon swimming at a local aquatic park. Every player and coach also received an envelope containing spending money that was provided by Daniel Simon.

Before the trip to Poland, this correspondent met with Jason Birchard, owner of the Veselka Restaurant in New York City, and asked whether he would contribute to a Veselka varenyky lunch for the teams in Kutno, Poland. Mr. Birchard quickly agreed and a Ukrainian style lunch was arranged for two LL teams at Hotel Rondo in the city. The varenyky were filled with potato, cheese and onions and the children were happy and felt right at home. Officials expressed their deep thanks to Mr. Birchard and Veselka for putting a smile on the young players’ faces.

Before each lunch, the teams were taken to a local mini market that sold products from Ukraine. Lena and Ivanka, two Ukrainian refugees who worked at the market, met with our players and provided Ukrainian chocolates and drinks for all.

On July 11, this correspondent said goodbye to one team as they safely drove back to Rivne, Ukraine, before taking a train home. A similar meeting was held on July 14 with the regional team. The 13 children, from Kyiv and Rivne, arrived in Kutno, Poland, after 9 p.m. the previous evening after waiting 11 hours at the Polish border. They were tired and, to make mat-

ters worse, their first game was at 10 a.m. the next morning after opening ceremonies. Ukraine was no match for the Netherlands team, as the team lost by a score of 12-1.

Mykola Hranovsky, first secretary to Ukraine’s ambassador to Poland, took part in the opening ceremonies on July 14. He spoke to all the teams and threw out the first pitch, which was a strike. Mr. Hranovsky spoke to the young players and coaches and presented them with souvenirs.

The team had to overcome another challenge. Coaches from Kyiv and Rivne, who worked with these players during the regular season, did not have permission to leave Ukraine. But again LL officials helped out.

The team got permission to use a parent as the manager. Maryna, who was a mother of two sons on the team, was always upbeat and smiling. Her coach, Dima, did not know any of the players, yet had coaching experience. The team’s other coach was Victor, who also drove the team’s small van. Despite their willingness to help, the coaches did not know what their players knew or could do on the field.

Not having coaches who know the players is one small example of how war disrupts everyday life and the impact it has on the performance of Ukraine’s young athletes. Yet, the team’s play improved with each game. They first lost to Spain and then to England, but victory was near. On July 18, Ukraine finally eked out a 5-4 win over the Swiss. Everyone was jubilant about the victory.

“I am not here alone, there are many kind people and organizations in the U.S. who help me help you. So, as you grow older and wiser, please remember how others helped you. In turn, please help others as you were helped here in Poland,” Basil Tarasko, who has been the district administrator for Ukrainian Little League baseball and softball since 1995, told players from both teams.

He also expressed deep thanks to the Self Reliance (N.Y.) Federal Credit Union, Daniel Simon, the California Association to Aid Ukraine (CAAU), Veselka Restaurant and Jason Birchard, Stan Silverman and friends, George Minjack, St. Albans School in Washington, Alexandria LL (Virginia), Layla and Billy Edelstein, the Ukrainian Homestead in Lehigh, Pa., and Adrienne Edelstein for helping this correspondent help children in Ukraine.

Individuals who would like to support Ukraine’s LL teams can contact Mr. Tarasko via e-mail at [bt4ukraine@aol.com](mailto:bt4ukraine@aol.com), or by phone, 718-415-7821.



The Ukrainian Little League (LL) baseball team is pictured with Basil Tarasko (left), who has been the district administrator for Ukrainian Little League baseball and softball since 1995, as several players hold a sign thanking the team’s lead sponsor, the Self Reliance (N.Y.) Federal Credit Union.



The Ukrainian Little League team (age 10-12) displays a sign thanking Veselka restaurant in New York for supporting the team.





# UNA ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS FOR 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR

## UNA awards scholarships for 2024-2025 academic year

### UNA Scholarship Committee

PARSIPPANY, N.J. – After thoroughly reviewing student applications for the 2024-2025 scholarships of the Ukrainian National Association (UNA), the UNA Scholarship Committee met on August 6 here at the Home Office to make its final determinations.

The credentials of the applicants were excellent and some students applied for more than one scholarship for which they were eligible. Thus, the decisions of the Scholarship Committee were challenging. The criteria used by the committee included academic achievement; community and college activity; awards and honors; and content of essays submitted with the application.

This year, there were 34 applicants – hailing from 20 UNA branches throughout the United States and Canada – for the scholarships and awards.

Special scholarships awarded by the UNA include the following for undergraduate students funded by generous benefactors: the Joseph and Dora Galandiuk Scholarship (\$2,000) for a student excelling in accounting or the sciences; the Orest and Lidia Bilous Family Foundation Scholarship

(\$2,000) for a student who is studying political science; the newly established Dr. Oleksandr "Drot" Tysovskiy Scholarship (\$2,000) for a student of Ukrainian heritage excelling in his or her studies who is an active member of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization; the Dmytro and Slava Jarosewycz Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000) for a student of Ukrainian heritage excelling in his or her studies; the Maria and Taras Slevinsky Scholarship (\$1,000) for a student studying nursing; the Philadelphia UNA District Committee's Stefan Hawrysz Scholarship (\$1,000) for a student from one of the district's nine branches; and the Danylo Andrii Demidenko Scholarship (\$500) for a student studying in the medical field.

The UNA also sponsors six UNA Heritage Scholarships of \$1,000 each for undergraduate or graduate students enrolled on either a full- or part-time basis. These scholarships – which focus special attention on community involvement – were established in 2019 to coincide with the UNA's 125th anniversary.

In addition, all student members of the UNA can receive monetary awards for their college studies. These awards are granted upon completion of an applicant's senior

year of high school and during the students' college and post-graduate years. This year's awards once again ranged from \$125 for incoming freshmen to \$250 for graduate students.

The following students are recipients of special scholarships for the 2024-2025 academic year:

Galandiuk Scholarship – Natalia Skyba, UNA Branch 399, who is entering her senior year at Dominican University;

Bilous Scholarship – Liliana Tomko, UNA Branch 37, who is entering her junior year at the University of Texas at Austin;

Tysovskiy Scholarship – Sophia Kowal, UNA Branch 27, who is entering her junior year at Northeastern University;

Jarosewycz Scholarship – Mark Rokycy, UNA Branch 277, who is entering his junior year at the University of Connecticut;

Slevinsky Scholarship – Alexandra Soltys, UNA Branch 88, who is entering her sophomore year at Stockton University;

Hawrysz Scholarship – Natalie Conway, UNA Branch 162, who is entering her junior year at Thomas Jefferson University; and

Demidenko Scholarship – Sofia Krytsun, UNA Branch 125, who is entering her junior year at Dominican University.

UNA Heritage Scholarship recipients for 2024-2025 are:

Anna Kosachevich, UNA Branch 269, a graduate student at Manhattan School of Music;

Maria Kulchychyk, UNA Branch 83, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Sloan School of Management;

Adrian Kurylko, UNA Branch 171, a sophomore at Boston College;

Josef Ruzicka, UNA Branch 171, a freshman at Rutgers School of Engineering;

Joseph Stefurak, UNA Branch 501, a junior at Pennsylvania State University; and

Matthew Stefurak, UNA Branch 501, a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh School of Rehabilitation Science.

The UNA is grateful for the continued support of all benefactors who fund scholarships for our community's students. The UNA processes, evaluates and handles administration of the scholarships they fund based on criteria they establish. Individuals or organizations interested in sponsoring a scholarship are advised to contact UNA President and CEO Roman B. Hirniak at the UNA Home Office, 800-253-9862, extension 3016.

In order to apply for a UNA scholarship or award, a student must have an active, premium-paying UNA insurance policy during the previous two years with a minimum value of \$5,000 (term life policies excluded). The UNA offers a variety of qualifying policies at competitive rates.

For more information about UNA insurance and endowment policies, as well as annuities, IRAs and Coverdell Education Savings Accounts, readers are advised to contact their branch secretary or the UNA directly at 800-253-9862.

To learn more about the UNA's scholarship program, readers may visit the website <https://unainc.org/benefits/scholarships/>.

In the more than 130 years of its existence, the Ukrainian National Association has always supported young people in their pursuit of higher education. In fact, the first UNA scholarships were small stipends awarded to promising students to help them attain a better future. The formal scholarship program, established in 1964, has awarded scholarships to thousands of young men and women, a legacy of which the UNA is justifiably proud.

### \$2,000 SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP



**Natalia Skyba**  
**GALANDIUK Scholarship**  
UNA Branch 399  
Dominican University

### \$2,000 SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP



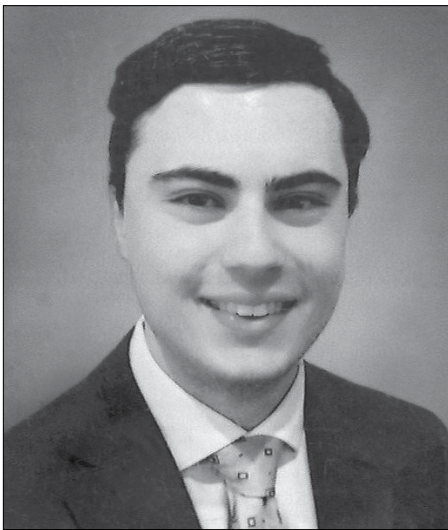
**Liliana Tomko**  
**BILOUS Scholarship**  
UNA Branch 37  
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### \$2,000 SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP



**Sophia Kowal**  
**TYSOVSKYI Scholarship**  
UNA Branch 27  
Northeastern University

### \$1,000 SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP



**Mark Rokycy**  
**JAROSEWYCZ Scholarship**  
UNA Branch 277  
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UNA Branch 162  
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**DEMIDENKO Scholarship**  
UNA Branch 125  
Dominican University



\$1,000    **UNA HERITAGE SCHOLARSHIPS**



**Anna Kosachevich**  
UNA Branch 269  
Manhattan School of Music

**Maria Kulchyckyj**  
UNA Branch 83  
MIT – Sloan School of Management

**Adrian Kurylko**  
UNA Branch 171  
Boston College

**Josef Ruzicka**  
UNA Branch 171  
Rutgers School of Engineering

**Joseph Stefurak**  
UNA Branch 501  
Pennsylvania State University

**Matthew Stefurak**  
UNA Branch 501  
University of Pittsburgh

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UNA Branch 42  
Northeastern University



**Michael Kulycky**  
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**Chrystyna Mykhaylyshyn**  
UNA Branch 42  
Rider University



**Olena Mykhaylyshyn**  
UNA Branch 42  
Rider University



**Taras Mykhaylyshyn**  
UNA Branch 42  
Rider University

\$200    **JUNIORS**



**Steven Schiavone**  
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Pace University



**Kalyna Woloszyn**  
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CUNY, Queens College

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UNA Branch 42  
The College Of New Jersey



**Isadora Lee**  
UNA Branch 13  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute



**Markian Nychka**  
UNA Branch 269  
SUNY, Purchase College



**Amara Platz**  
UNA Branch 161  
Duquesne University

\$175    **SOPHOMORES**



**Amanda Schrieber**  
UNA Branch 42  
University of Arizona



**Alexis Schrieber**  
UNA Branch 42  
Northern Arizona University

\$150    **FRESHMEN**



**Alexander Deputat**  
UNA Branch 360  
Colorado State University



**Andrew Lee**  
UNA Branch 13  
Hudson Valley Comm. College



**Kirilo Pereklita**  
UNA Branch 292  
University of Colorado Boulder

\$125    **HS SENIORS**



**Blaise Kane**  
UNA Branch 82  
Wayne State University

\$125    **HS SENIORS**



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**Tara Manasterski**  
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## NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

### Ukraine attempting incursion in Belgorod

Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, said the situation is "difficult but under control" in the area amid an attempted incursion by Ukrainian troops. "According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the situation on the border remains difficult, but under control. Our military is carrying out planned work. I ask you to remain calm and trust only official sources of information," Mr. Gladkov wrote on Telegram. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on Mr. Gladkov's claim. An incursion by Ukrainian forces in Russia's Kursk region has been underway since August 6. (RFE/RL)

### Pope condemns ban on ROC in Ukraine

Pope Francis on August 25 condemned the latest action by Kyiv to ban religious organizations with ties to the Russian

Orthodox Church from operating in Ukraine. "No Christian church may be abolished directly or indirectly. The churches must not be touched," the pope said during his weekly prayer a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed legislation prohibiting the activities of the Russian-linked Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. "In thinking of the law recently adopted in Ukraine, I fear for the liberty of those who pray," Francis said on St. Peter's Square. He told the gathered crowd that "one does not commit evil by praying. If someone does something evil to his people, he is guilty. But he can't have done anything bad by praying." In signing the legislation on August 24, Mr. Zelenskyy underscored what he called the spiritual independence of the Ukrainian people, saying that the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) "today is taking a step toward liberation from Moscow devils." The OCU, which is aligned with Kyiv, was granted independence from the Moscow Patriarchate by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2019, the leading voice in the Orthodox world. The Russian-linked Ukrainian

Orthodox Church declared it severed all ties with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2023 due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. However, the Ukrainian authorities accuse it of maintaining ties. Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, is a vocal supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin and of the war against Ukraine. The adoption of the law, which was passed by parliament earlier this month, is considered a watershed moment in Ukraine where Orthodox Christianity has been riven for decades in large part over the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The law is to go into effect 30 days after its publication. Ukrainian authorities have sought to curtail activities of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine since Russian-linked forces seized parts of the country in 2014, claiming the church has supported Moscow's war of aggression. The pope also said he continues to follow "with sorrow" the fighting in Ukraine. (RFE/RL, with reporting by RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, AFP and dpa)

### Sanctions on companies trading with Russia

A list of 400 individuals and companies added to the U.S. Commerce Department's sanctions list last week as a result of the help they provided Moscow in obtaining electronic components despite sanctions includes four Russian and two European companies that had been implicated in an investigative report by Schemes, the investigative unit of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service. The list includes the Russian-registered Display Component and Aspectrium, as well as two companies with the same name - Eksiton. It also includes Hungary's Matrix Metal Group and Cyprus's Noratec Holdings. In May, Schemes said in its report that the six companies had been involved in supplying Russia with electronic components used in military planes. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

### Several killed, missing after Russian strike

At least 4 people were killed while several others were either wounded or missing on August 27 in a second massive drone and missile Russian attack on Ukraine in as many days that included a strike on a hotel in Kryviy Rih, in the southern region of Dnipropetrovsk. The fresh wave of attacks came as Rafael Grossi, the chief of the United Nations nuclear agency, was expected to visit the Russian nuclear plant in Kursk, where fighting has been under way since August 6 when Ukrainian forces launched a shock incursion into Russian territory. Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Serhiy Lysak

said on Telegram on August 27 that a man and a woman had been killed in the overnight missile attack on the Kryviy Rih hotel. "5 were wounded, a 43-year-old woman is in a severe state," Mr. Lysak said, adding that the fate of two more people was unknown, and they could still be under the rubble. Mr. Lysak said that four high-rise buildings and several shops were also damaged in the attack. He said that Nikopol has also come under attack. Local officials also said that two people had been killed in overnight Russian strikes in the southern region of Zaporizhia. Air defense systems shot down all 15 drones that attacked Kyiv, the administration of the Ukrainian capital said, adding that a fire broke out due to falling debris in a forest park in the city's Dnipro district. The August 27 attack prompted an all-out air-raid alert declared for the whole of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Air Force said it had shot down a total of 60 drones and 5 missiles early on August 27. Reports of drone and missile attacks have also come from Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi and other regions. In the Khmelnytskyi region, eight Russian drones were shot down, but a person was wounded during the attack, regional Gov. Serhiy Tyurin said on Telegram. Mr. Grossi, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said on Twitter that he was going to the Kursk nuclear plant to assess the situation there. "Given the serious situation, I'm personally leading tomorrow's IAEA mission to the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant in Russia," Mr. Grossi said on X. The plant is situated some 37 miles from the Ukrainian border on the banks of the Seym River, where heavy fighting has been underway for the past three weeks. On August 26, Russian forces launched more than 200 drones and missiles at Ukraine's territory, killing at least seven people and damaging energy infrastructure. The August 26 attack was condemned by U.S. President Joe Biden as "outrageous." Following the August 26 attacks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on Ukraine's global allies to take "decisive action" and allow Ukraine to strike military targets deeper inside Russia with Western-provided weapons. "Ukraine cannot be constrained in its long-range capabilities when the terrorists face no such limitations," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "Weakness and inadequate responses fuel terror. ... Every leader, every one of our partners, knows the decisive actions required to end this war justly," he added, while calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "sick creature." (RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Russian services and Current Time)

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## Ukraine at the 2024 Paralympics: A preview

by Ihor Stelmach

Ukraine is sending 140 Para athletes to the 2024 Summer Paralympic Games taking place from August 28 to September 8 in Paris. Ironically, there were also 140 Ukrainian athletes competing in Paris at the Olympic Games earlier in August. Ukraine's 44 women and 96 men will compete in 17 out of 22 Paralympic sports, the most Ukrainians have ever participated in at the Para Games. Ukraine will not compete in equestrian, football 5-a-side, wheelchair basketball, rugby and tennis.

Almost 25 percent of Ukraine's Para athletes are competing at the Paralympics for the first time. The athletes are representing 20 regions of Ukraine.

In 2021 at the Tokyo Paralympics, Ukraine fielded a team of 138 Para athletes competing in 11 sports, and the team won a total of 98 medals (24 gold, 47 silver and 27 bronze medals), good for sixth in the medal standings and fifth in overall medals.

In 2016 at the Rio de Janeiro Games, Ukraine had 172 participants in 15 sports and won 117 medals (41 gold, 37 silver and 39 bronze medals), placing them third in the medal table and third in total medals.

Swimming and athletics are far and away the strongest para sports for Ukraine's Para athletes. In Tokyo, Ukrainian Paralympians won 43 medals in swimming and 24 medals in athletics, including 20 of their 24 gold medals.

Ukrainian athletes have won a total of 472 Paralympic medals at the Summer Games (149 gold, 213 silver and 213 bronze medals), placing the country 14th on the all-time Paralympic Games medal table.

### Oksana Masters receives message from David Schwimmer

Ukrainian Oksana Masters was already excited at the thought of adding to her 17 medals ahead of the 2024 Paralympic Games. More excitement was added when the Team U.S.A. Paralympian received a special surprise message from "Friends" star David Schwimmer on behalf of the non-profit Gold Meets Golden and partner Samsung. In his farewell greeting, Schwimmer revealed that he follows Masters' athletic exploits and wished her



**Roman Polianskyi, seen at the 2022 European Championships near Munich where he won a silver medal in men's PR1 single sculls, will represent Ukraine at the 2024 Paris Paralympics.**

the best of luck in the upcoming Paris competitions.

The 57-year-old actor called Masters "unbelievably inspiring and a little intimidating," saying he was sure she was "gonna kick some major butt." Schwimmer added that he would be thinking of her and was honored to send Masters a good luck wish.

The Paralympian admitted that she is obsessed with the show "Friends," as it is her all-time favorite show and she could not believe Schwimmer sent her "that incredibly kind message."

Masters was born in Ukraine and she was adopted when she was a little girl by her American mother who was a speech therapist visiting her orphanage. She was born with several radiation-induced birth defects that resulted in her having both legs amputated above the knee.

She had hoped that her aunt and uncle could travel to Paris and witness her participation in the Paralympics, but the two could not make the journey. Gold Meets Golden partnered with Samsung to gift a 98-inch television to her aunt and uncle so they could cheer on their niece from home as she competes in the Games.

Gold Meets Golden is a non-profit dedi-

cated to raising awareness and support for sports-related causes. The organization orchestrated several surprises to uplift and celebrate a few of the athletes heading to Paris to represent Team U.S.A.

### Up close and personal with rower Roman Polianskyi

Roman Polianskyi was diagnosed with hereditary spastic paraplegia as a 10-year-old. Two years after taking up the sport of Para rowing, he won a gold medal in the men's single sculls at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games. He followed that up with a successful defense at Tokyo 2020. He hopes for a third consecutive gold medal – a three-peat – at the 2024 Paris Paralympics.

Preparing for Paris 2024 obviously changed with the Russian invasion making it more challenging and less stable for athletes to train in Ukraine. In May, Polianskyi was searching for new programs for basic exercises to get into elite condition for Para Games.

His rowing teammates comprising Ukraine's Paralympic rowing team were almost always together when in Ukraine, with air-warning sirens going off daily.

Some of his training was done in Turkey

and Croatia in addition to workouts in Ukraine. Full-fledged complete workouts at home did not exist because of air raids and thoughts of home, family and friends distracting him from always 'being in the moment' in his training and practices.

Polianskyi considers laziness his strongest opponent and therefore training and proper preparation to be in peak form for his single sculls event are of utmost importance. The concept of self-improvement, always striving to be better from competition to competition, is the key to continued success.

Polianskyi works diligently, studies and tries to correct his mistakes and shortcomings. His workouts are intense because of the intensity of his sport. He analyzes his performances and capabilities regularly.

Having won a gold medal at his first Paralympics only two years after taking up the sport, he had already realized his goal. It was important for him to acknowledge the help he received from family, loved ones and friends who provided support and care at the right moment for him to achieve his dream.

Polianskyi started rowing because he was looking for his path in sports. Defeating defending champion Cheng Huang and world champion Erik Horrie at Rio 2016 was a major achievement for the then 29-year-old who was still learning the nuance of the sport.

He experienced a different set of emotions five years later in Tokyo. His path differed from Rio because as a gold medalist there was extra work required in defending his gold medal.

After the Rio Paralympics, the race length increased from 1,000 to 2,000 meters at Tokyo. Polianskyi lacked experience in the longer distance and needed to make adjustments to his boat. He had to fight off uncertainty and nerves. It came down to knowing himself and understanding what to do with his opportunity.

(Based on reporting by NBC Sports and the International Paralympic Committee.)

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## Romanchuk focused on more than winning in Paris

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Consecutive second place finishes at the Boston and London marathons had Daniel Romanchuk hitting peak condition on the way to his third Paralympic Games in Paris. The 26-year-old Ukrainian American from Mount Airy, Md., hopes to add to his bronze medal from Tokyo 2021 when he lines up for the Paris 2024 Paralympic marathon on the final day of the Games on September 8. The course begins in Saint-Denis, France, and concludes at the Esplanade des Invalides in the center of Paris.

Romanchuk described the course as a very technical one with many turns and some loops at the start, keeping the competitors very close and not permitting much time for racers to break away. Romanchuk said there will be more accelerating and decelerating than a straight-away course.

Romanchuk's long and strong arms (6-foot-10 wingspan) have allowed him to thrive in the sport. He conceded that winning in Paris would be challenging due to the presence of Swiss rival Marcel Hug.

Romanchuk has been Team U.S.A.'s most prolific wheelchair marathoner in the T54



**Daniel Romanchuk, seen at the 2022 Boston Marathon, is a Ukrainian American from Mount Airy, Md., who will represent Team U.S.A. at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.**

class over the past six years (The T54 category is a disability sport classification for wheelchair athletes with spinal cord injuries who have paraplegia, but normal arm

and hand function). His achievements include two Boston Marathon wins, a record-setting victory as the youngest New York City Marathon champion at age 19 in

2018, defending his title in 2019 and earning a bronze medal at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021.

This spring and summer have seen Romanchuk test out some new equipment and he has been trying to work out the kinks, getting the new gear to respond properly to his needs. Since 2018, he has partnered with high-tech, Florida-based wheelchair manufacturer Top End, trying to develop affordable high performance equipment.

Romanchuk is concerned with more than just winning races. He is very aware of the rising cost of new equipment, and, knowing what the sport has meant to him, he wants to help keep access to those who want or need it affordable.

The Ukrainian American was looking forward to racing along the scenic roads of Paris and making his mark on the track, which will have a new purple-colored surface made by Mondo. He hopes to replicate his performance from three years ago in Tokyo when he won gold in the 400 meter T54 class by 0.01 second over Thailand's Athiwat Paeng-Nuea.

He competed in five events in Tokyo, fin-

(Continued on page 19)



## Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

# Zelenskyy honors and presents awards to Ukrainian Olympians

The commemoration of Ukrainian Independence Day on August 24 took on added significance in Kyiv when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met and congratulated Ukrainian Olympic medalists and their coaches from the recently concluded 2024 Paris Summer Olympic Games.

President Zelenskyy thanked the Olympians for glorifying independence, demonstrating the country's strength and presented them with state awards.

"You certainly felt the support of millions of Ukrainians. We were not just cheering for you – for every one of you – our entire country, with all our hearts and minds, stood by you, and felt as if we were competing alongside you, as one nation," Zelenskyy said.

The president bestowed the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, fourth degree, on Olympic boxing gold medalist Oleksandr Khyzhniak and the Order of Princess Olha, first degree, to high jump gold medalist Yaroslava Mahuchikh.

Zelenskyy also honored silver and bronze medalists with Orders of Merit, second and third degrees, Orders of Princess Olha, second and third degrees, and Ukrainian coaches with awards and honorary titles.

"Together, we are showing the world what our state is. Ukraine that fights. Ukraine that can endure pain and hardship, but that rises and continues to pursue its main goal. Ukraine that can take a punch. Ukraine that is capable of winning," President Zelenskyy said.

After the meeting, the Olympians presented their president with a Paris 2024 poster created by French illustrator Ugo Gattoni signed by the Ukrainian medal-winning athletes.

Boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk presented Zelenskyy with the World Boxing Council (WBC) World Championship belt that he won in 2018 and regained last May when he defeated Tyson Fury and unified all four heavyweight titles.

During earlier Independence Day celebrations on Sophia Square in Kyiv, President Zelenskyy honored Usyk and two-time Olympic medalist Olha Kharlan



High-jumper Yaroslava Mahuchikh was awarded the Order of Princess Olha, first degree, for her medal-winning performances at the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris.

with the Orders of Freedom. The two received National Legend of Ukraine awards on August 22 along with nine other outstanding Ukrainians in Kyiv.

### Mahuchikh generous with Olympic prize money

Ukrainian high-jump gold medalist Yaroslava Mahuchikh donated one million hryvnia (\$24,000) of her Olympic prize money to Ukrainian animal rights activists. The money was sent to the animal rescue and environmental organization UAnimals and four animal shelters: Shelter Pegasus Dnipro, Helping Animals in Sumy, Homeless World and Dnipro Animals.

She has also promised to donate part of her prize money to a psychological support fund and to the Ukrainian Armed Forces for support and rehabilitation of Ukrainian military families.

Mahuchikh received 5.1 million hryvnia (\$125,000) for winning her gold medal at the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris.

### Svitolina creates controversy at Monterrey Open

Ukrainian tennis star Elina Svitolina has once again come under scrutiny after refusing to shake hands with Russian-born player Elina Avanesyan at the Monterrey Open in Monterrey, Mexico. Svitolina defeated Avanesyan 6-4, 6-3 in the round of 16 on August 22.

After her victory, Svitolina only shook the hand of the umpire before returning to her seat, ignoring her opponent and the traditional post-match handshake at the net. The 29-year-old Ukrainian has refused to shake hands with Russian and Belarusian players since the Ukraine-Russia war began in February 2022.

The backlash surrounding the handshake rejection stems from the fact that Avanesyan now represents Armenia instead of her country's birthplace. Svitolina's action did not sit well with some tennis fans who expressed their opinions on social media. Some stated that Russian tennis players are

not responsible for Vladimir Putin's actions while others pointed out that Avanesyan was not representing Russia.

In response to the controversy, Svitolina explained that she is standing up for her country and doing anything possible to support the Ukrainian men and women fighting for their country's freedom on the war's frontlines.

### EPL clubs interested in goalkeeping prospect

English Premier League clubs Sunderland, Chelsea and Southampton are reportedly chasing Ukrainian goalkeeper prospect Vladyslav Krapivtsov. The 19-year-old is currently a free agent after leaving SC Dnipro in July. Krapivtsov played for Dnipro's youth teams, but never consistently broke into their first-team plans. He has impressed when given the opportunity, notably playing on Ukraine's U-19 national team.

While the youngster searches for a new home with a fresh start, he is being eyed by several top clubs in England, although in all likelihood he would be a candidate for academy teams at the outset.

### Michelle Pasiecznyk voted college goalie of the year

Clarkson University senior Michelle Pasiecznyk was selected as the 2023-2024 recipient of the Women's College Hockey Goalie of the Year as voted by a panel of coaches, administrators and media members from across the United States. The Ottawa, Ontario, native of Ukrainian descent was a pillar in goal for the Golden Knights in 2023-2024, starting 32 games for Clarkson and compiling a record of 25-5-1 with a sparkling 1.34 goals against average and a 0.945 save percentage.

Pasiecznyk was Clarkson's 2022-2023 most valuable player, posting a 24-win season. She also enjoys playing football and badminton and her favorite athlete is ex-New York Rangers Hall of Fame goaltender Henrik Lundqvist who she always looked up to and who played a similar goaltending style to hers.

(Continued on page 19)

## Ukrainian athletes welcomed in France

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine's Olympians and Paralympians had two goals in Paris: win medals and bring glory to the soldiers on the frontlines of their homeland. While their armed forces have spent the last two-and-a-half years fighting Russian invaders, Ukrainian athletes have been going to extreme lengths to prepare for Olympic and Paralympic competitions, aware that their sports victories publicize their country's plight.

At the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, Ukraine enjoyed glory in boxing, fencing, athletics, shooting, gymnastics, wrestling and canoeing. Given the hundreds of athletes who lost their lives and the training centers destroyed in the fighting back home, there is more reason for celebration.

Although Ukrainian athletes were not the only ones competing at the Olympics while their country is at war, in their case the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic host

country of France have forsaken any claim of sporting neutrality. Russian and Belarusian athletes were mostly banned from the Games while Ukraine's Olympians were supported and cheered on the world stage.

This was very much evident in Nancy, a city in northeastern France where a group of Ukraine's Paralympic rowers closely monitored the exploits of their Olympic counterparts at a French high-performance training center. The compound where they eat, sleep and train under the guidance of head coach Viacheslav Zagreba has become their home away from home amid the war.

Following their four medal victories at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, the team was at a winter training camp in Turkey when Russia first invaded Ukraine in February 2022. They could not return to their national training facility in Dnipro, Ukraine, because of its proximity to the war's frontlines.

The group extended their stay in Turkey

and then accepted an offer of temporary refuge from French sports officials in Nancy where they could use a kayak and canoe club. It became a safe haven for the athletes and their fleeing families for seven months.

The following year of 2023 was not much better. The team returned to Dnipro, but their focus was divided between remaining competitive on the rowing circuit and staying alive. The team trained during missile attacks, faced power outages and ate pre-made supermarket food instead of specially prepared nutrient-rich meals for elite athletes.

These sacrifices and shortages do not exist in France, where they have returned regularly, most recently in July to train for the 2024 Paralympic Games. The team works out twice daily and enjoys a catered lunch and a nap in between training sessions. Their sole focus is on the upcoming competitions.

Returning Paralympians like Stanislav

Samoliuk, Maryna Mazhula and Roman Polianskyi, the latter two previous medalists, will be out to compete for their country and represent it proudly. They realize that any medals they may win are medal victories for their country.

The way the Ukrainian athletes see it, every living breath is a political act of defiance when your country is under siege – when your family, friends and fellow citizens have been killed or injured, when the sovereignty of your nation is under attack by invading Russians.

The team realizes that it has a lot of soldiers fighting in bad conditions and defending their country. The athletes know that, when soldiers hear of friends or acquaintances from the same city competing at the Olympics or Paralympics and raising the Ukrainian flag, it means a lot to the people defending their homeland.

The soldiers understand that among the people whom they fight to defend are Ukraine's Olympic and Paralympic athletes, while the athletes understand the importance of performing at their best and winning medals for Ukraine's heroic soldiers.

(Based on reporting by the Toronto Star.)



# OUT & ABOUT

September 4-8 New York	Contemporary art fair, VOLTA New York, Ukrainian Pavilion, Razom for Ukraine, Chelsea Industrial, <a href="http://www.voltaartfairs.com">www.voltaartfairs.com</a>	September 13-15 Toronto	Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival, <a href="https://ukrainianfestival.com">https://ukrainianfestival.com</a>
September 5 New York	Book presentation with Oleh Sentsov, "Diary of a Hunger Striker" and "Four and a Half Steps," Ukrainian Institute of America, <a href="http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org">www.ukrainianinstitute.org</a>	September 14 Jenkintown, PA	Ukrainian Flea Market, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, <a href="http://www.ueccphila.org">www.ueccphila.org</a>
September 7 New York	Film screening, "Glyadyelov," in conjunction with the photography exhibit "Fragments" by Oleksandr Glyadyelov, The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.theukrainianmuseum.org">www.theukrainianmuseum.org</a>	September 15 New York	Concert, "A Tribute to Virko Baley, 85th Anniversary Celebration," Shevchenko Scientific Society, Ukrainian Institute of America, <a href="http://www.ukraininainstitute.org">www.ukraininainstitute.org</a>
September 7 Toronto	Ukrainian Heritage Day, Ukrainian Museum of Canada (Ontario Branch), <a href="mailto:museum@umcontario.com">museum@umcontario.com</a> or 416-923-9861	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, <a href="http://www.ukrainianinstitute.org">www.ukrainianinstitute.org</a>
September 8 Stamford, CT	55th Connecticut State Ukrainian Day Festival, St. Basil Seminary, 203-269-5909	September 18 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "The Voices of Babyn Yar" with Marianna Klyanovska, Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky, Harvard University, <a href="https://huri.harvard.edu">https://huri.harvard.edu</a>
September 12 New York	Networking evening with KOLO (young professionals group), The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.theukrainianmuseum.org">www.theukrainianmuseum.org</a>	September 18-28 Ottawa	Performance, "First Metis Man of Odesa," National Arts Center English Theater, <a href="https://nac-cna.ca/en/tickets/under30">https://nac-cna.ca/en/tickets/under30</a>
September 13-14 Parsippany, NJ	Ukrainian themed market, Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Sheraton Parsippany Hotel, <a href="https://unwla.org">https://unwla.org</a> or <a href="mailto:region-nj@unwla.org">region-nj@unwla.org</a>	September 22 Ottawa	Lanark County Ukrainian Fest, Carleton Place, <a href="http://www.uflc.ca">www.uflc.ca</a>
September 13-14 Parsippany, NJ	Convention, Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Sheraton Parsippany Hotel, <a href="https://unwla.org">https://unwla.org</a> or <a href="mailto:region-nj@unwla.org">region-nj@unwla.org</a>	September 22-25 Washington	Ukraine Action Summit, American Coalition for Ukraine, Capitol Hill, <a href="https://americancoalitionforukraine.org">https://americancoalitionforukraine.org</a>
		September 26-28 Ottawa	18th annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine, University of Ottawa, <a href="http://www.danyliwseminar.com">www.danyliwseminar.com</a>
		September 29 Chicago	Film screening, "Bucha," followed by discussion with producer Oleksandr Shchur, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, <a href="http://www.uima-chicago.org">www.uima-chicago.org</a>

## Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 18)

### Danielle Serdachny second overall pick in PWHL draft

Ukrainian Danielle Serdachny signed a three-year contract with the Ottawa franchise of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) on August 20. The No. 2 overall selection in the 2024 PWHL Draft is expected to be a core of the organization starting in the 2024-2025 season. She is known for a strong 200-foot game with elite skill and superior goal-scoring talent.

The 23-year-old Edmonton, Alberta, native spent five seasons playing college hockey at Colgate University where she tallied 81 goals and 157 assists for 238 points in 180 games. In 2022-2023, she led the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) with 71 points on 25 goals and 46 assists.

### Marathoner tests positive for banned substance

Marathoner Nataliya Lehonkova has

been provisionally suspended after testing positive for a banned performance-enhancing drug. Lehonkova won the Dublin Marathon in both 2015 and 2017. She was included in the latest pending cases by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) that manages the sport's anti-doping system.

Synthetic erythropoietin is a banned drug that increases the body's production of red blood cells, thus improving its oxygen-carrying capacity. The drug was found in her blood test, though Lehonkova can contest the charge and request to have her B samples tested to confirm the finding.

She had no doping history before running in Dublin, but faces a four-year ban if her positive test is confirmed. Because of the time frame involved, the results of the Dublin marathon should not be affected. The first prize was worth 12,000 euros (\$13,425).

(Based on reporting by the Office of the President of Ukraine, United 24 Media, Express, 72-Football League News, The Hockey News, PWHL and Irish Independent.)

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## Romanchuk...

(Continued from page 17)

ishing fourth in both the 800-meter and 5,000-meter events, and fifth in the 1,500-meter race in addition to winning gold in the 400-meter and bronze in the marathon. He and his coach, Adam Bleakney, were considering a lighter load in Paris, perhaps eliminating an event or two.

Romanchuk was born with spina bifida, a birth defect in which there is incomplete closing of the backbone and membranes around the spinal cord. His mother, Kim, encouraged him to wheelchair race, and he entered his first competition at age 6. Before long, he was setting records in his age group and competing in national races.

Competition aside, Romanchuk plans to dedicate more time to mentoring young Para athletes with the Bennett Blazers, a Baltimore-based adaptive program that was paramount in his early athletic devel-

opment. It is his way of paying it forward after receiving valuable mentorship from people in the program in his youth.

He has also been involved with developing a new non-profit organization called Wheels for Change to provide more access to equipment and training in wheelchair racing domestically and internationally. Domestic work includes supporting camps and clinics with his expertise and by providing resources. Internationally he has worked with a program to send needed equipment to countries like Ghana.

Either racing on streets or tracks or helping and enabling others to grow in the sport, Romanchuk is building an impressive legacy. Winning a few more medals in Paris will only make his numerous hours of training and resolute dedication all the more worthwhile.

(Based on reporting by Team U.S.A.)

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## Ukraine's bold...

(Continued from page 12)

other areas.

For example, in the [southeastern Ukrainian] Zaporizhia area, the same problems are still there. For example, in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions, there are a lot of Russian fortifications. [The Ukrainian military] didn't really succeed last year, and I doubt that it would succeed now, especially when Ukraine has spent a lot of its force in Kursk. So, it may be a distraction, but, at the moment, I think it's less likely that they will begin another large-scale operation somewhere else. I wouldn't say it's impossible, but I find it unlikely.

**RFE/RL:** How humiliating would it be for Russia to leave this territory in Ukrainian hands even until negotiations? What's the cost?

**Mr. Kastehelmi:** If they leave that in Ukrainian hands until the negotiations, we shouldn't overestimate the humiliation factor. It is, of course, humiliating, but most likely it doesn't really affect the power dynamics that much. The Kremlin will not fall because Ukraine has these areas, and I think that politically they may prioritize success in Ukraine over the political nuisance of Kursk.

Of course, some civilians will be angry; there'll be a sentiment of civilians in Russia who most likely will criticize: "How can a foreign power continue invading Mother Russia?" But then again, when has the Kremlin really cared about [the nagging] of ordinary civilians? It's a dictatorship, it doesn't have to [care].

**RFE/RL:** Finally, if you're sitting in the West, in the camp of Ukraine, if your country supports Ukraine, what conclusions do you draw seeing this unfold, seeing Russia

being invaded and it basically struggling to mount an effective comeback?

**Mr. Kastehelmi:** It's interesting that this is something that Ukraine decided to do. This has also surprised Western allies at a high level. So, it still shows that Ukraine is capable of surprises, and Ukraine is maybe thinking outside the conventional frames of operations. It may not always be a logical thing or a good thing. It [still remains] to be seen if it ends badly for Ukraine, because there are risks.

So, it's possible that thinking outside the box is not really a good thing always, but at least it shows that Ukraine is ready to take action, it's ready to do what it wants, and it can also outplay Russia, at least locally, which is an important thing to also show. I've been pretty critical and [doomful]; that's also partly because I'm Finnish and we cannot find joy in anything. But there's so many dimensions in this situation.

**RFE/RL:** It's better to err on the side of realism?

**Mr. Kastehelmi:** Yeah, it is. But the operation is still ongoing. There can be more surprises. I would say it's possible. There can be new directions, there can be new developments. And, of course, there's still the possibility that Russia will switch even more heavily to Kursk for political reasons if Ukraine is able to bait them by taking even more land from Russia, because we know that the Russians may not always be logical either. So, there are still a lot of possibilities in the developing situation.

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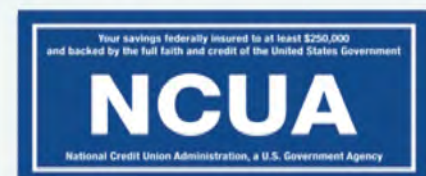
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