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Kyiv targets Russia with precision missile strikes after restrictions on some Western weapons lifted

by Mark Raczkiewycz

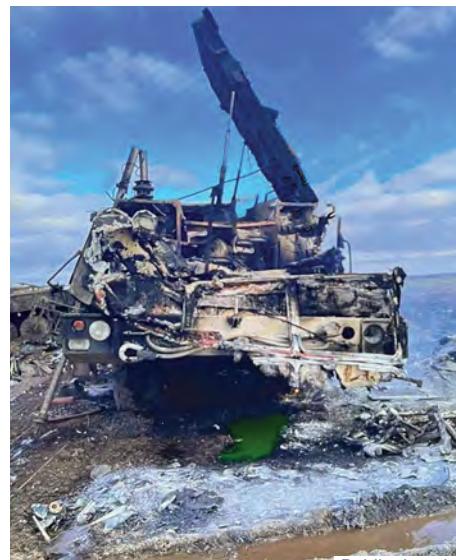
SARASOTA, Fla. – Ukraine has spared no time in firing Western-provided, longer-range missiles deeper into Russian territory after certain restrictions on their use were eased more than 1,000 days into Moscow's full-blown invasion.

Four military targets in the Russian regions of Bryansk and Kursk, the latter of which Ukraine invaded in August, were struck using U.S. Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missiles and British Storm Shadow projectiles.

The strikes on November 23, reported on by open-source intelligence sources that geolocated their positions, caused damage to an airfield in the Kursk region where Sukhoi-25 Frogfoot close air support combat aircraft and military helicopters are parked. An S-400 air-defense battery stationed near the airfield in Kursk Oblast was also destroyed the same day with the use of ATACMS.

Specifically, Russian military bloggers said a radar and two launchers were destroyed at the air defense site, killing five Russian divisional officers: a major, a captain, two senior lieutenants and one lieutenant.

In the same region, a Storm Shadow missile struck a command-and-control bunker on November 21, and a sizable munitions depot was hit by ATACAMS on November 19, the first such recorded incident since Washington, Paris and London lifted



A video screenshot shows the aftermath of a cluster munition strike from a U.S.-provided precision-guided missile on an S-400 battery in the Kursk region of Russia on November 23.

restrictions on their use.

The Ukrainian Weekly could not independently verify the data, but the Russian Defense Ministry admitted on November 26 that its Kursk Khalino airfield was targeted by ATACMS missiles over the past three days.

Russian military officials claimed to have intercepted all of the other longer-range

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Ukraine attacked with 'record' 192 drones, missiles as NATO gauges Russia's new weapon

As Zelenskyy says Putin aiming to retake Kursk territory before Trump takes office

RFE/RL and RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Russia over the night between November 25-26 launched 188 drones and four cruise missiles at targets in Ukraine – a record number of projectiles in a single attack, Kyiv's air force said, as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Ukrainian envoys prepared to gather in Brussels to assess Moscow's launching last week of an experimental missile at a Ukrainian city.

Ukrainian air-defense systems "tracked 192 air targets – four Iskander ballistic missiles and 188 enemy drones," the air force said in a message on Telegram.

It added that 76 Russian drones were shot down over 17 Ukrainian regions, while another 95 drones "were lost in location" after their navigation systems had been jammed by Ukrainian electronic warfare systems. Five more drones changed course and flew toward Belarus, it said.

No casualties were immediately reported in any of the 17 regions targeted, but critical infrastructure facilities such as the country's power grid and high-rise apartment buildings were damaged in several regions, officials said.

During the attack, the western Ukrainian city of Ternopil was temporarily left without electricity.

For the past several months, Russia has been battering Ukrainian cities with increasingly heavy drone, missile and glide bomb strikes, causing casualties and damaging energy infrastructure as the cold season settles in.

In Brussels, a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) on November 26 discussed Russia's launching of an experimental hypersonic intermediate-range missile at Ukraine last week.

The NUC was established at a NATO summit in Vilnius last year to step up the alliance's collaboration with Kyiv and support Ukraine's aspirations for NATO membership.

The NUC meeting of envoys from Ukraine and the 32 member states of the alliance was called by Kyiv after Russia on November 21 struck the Ukrainian city of Dnipro with what President Vladimir Putin said was a new missile called Oreshnik.

Putin said the move was part of Moscow's response to Ukrainian attacks on Russian soil with U.S.-supplied ATACMS and British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles.

Putin said the Oreshnik is new and not an upgrade of previous Soviet-designed weaponry. The United States said the new missile is "experimental" and based on

(Continued on page 7)

Lighting candles of resistance: Ukrainians around the world commemorate Holodomor victims

by Roman Tymotsko

KYIV – On November 23, Ukraine and the world marked the 91st anniversary of the Holodomor, a genocide that claimed the lives of an estimated 7 to 10 million people in 1932-1933. The man-made famine, orchestrated by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, devastated rural areas of Ukraine and the Kuban, a region predominantly inhabited by Ukrainians, as part of an attempt to destroy Ukrainian national identity.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Lady Olena Zelenska led the nation in commemorating the victims of the Holodomor as well as the Holodomors of 1921-1923 and 1946-1947.

The day began with a prayer service at the Dormition Cathedral of the 11th century Monastery of the Caves, or Pecherska Lavra, followed by a solemn procession to the National Museum of the Holodomor Genocide. There, the president and first lady laid symbolic sheaves of wheat at the



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Lady Olena Zelenska are among a group of officials who gathered to commemorate Holodomor victims at the Bitter Memory of Childhood memorial in Kyiv on November 23.

Bitter Memory of Childhood monument to honor the victims.

Holodomor Remembrance Day is observed annually on the fourth Saturday of November. This year, as Ukrainians lit candles in homes and public squares worldwide, the global diaspora joined diplomats and allies in organizing events to honor the victims. The tragic history of the Holodomor continues to resonate far beyond Ukraine, serving as a stark reminder of the atrocities inflicted by the Soviet regime.

To date, more than 30 countries, including nations like Germany, France, the U.K., and most recently Switzerland, have officially recognized the Holodomor as a genocide. Many of these acknowledgments came after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and as the world increasingly recognizes the historical and ongoing struggle of Ukrainians to preserve their identity.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Putin's 'three escalations' affect prospect of peace in Ukraine

by Pavel K. Baev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Russia's strategy in executing its aggressive war against Ukraine, passing the 1,000-day mark last week, puts the country's economy, society and armed forces under enormous pressure that Moscow's militaristic propaganda cannot quite cover. Relentless attacks, necessary for proving Russia's control of the strategic initiative, produce casualties so heavy that recruitment based on outlandish payments cannot compensate for the number of losses (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 7; Mediazona, November 22). Public support for the war cannot be measured with any accuracy, but opinion polls show a steady increase in preferences for immediate peace talks (Levada.ru, November 6; The Moscow Times, November 22). Escalation is the only way to alter the pattern of fast-progressing attrition. In November, Russian President Vladimir Putin opted to take three demonstrative escalatory steps aimed at both undermining Ukraine's will to resist and weakening Western resolve to confront Russian aggression.

The first step was upgrading Russia's nuclear doctrine, with Putin seeking to put the maximum possible spin on this declaratory measure. First, he delivered a series of heavy hints on the revisions, then announced some changes at a special session of the Security Council in September, and finally signed the decree with the full text on November 19 (Izvestiya, November 19). Mainstream experts trumpeted the symbolic significance of lowering the threshold for nuclear weapons use. However, the revisions amounted merely to vague wording and had been debated at great length (RIAC, November 22). More assertive formulations had been suggested and expected, but Putin had to consider China's reservations against resorting to nuclear brink-

manship. He did not dare to take a firmly negative stance against Beijing's hostile position toward the first use of nuclear weapons (Carnegie Politika, November 21).

Putin's second step was the deployment of some 12,000 North Korean troops into the zone of combat operations in Kursk Oblast. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, former commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, described this as the escalation to a third World War (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 30; RBC; Forbes.ua, November 21). The Kremlin's official position was neither denial nor confirmation, but the media was instructed to ignore this development, so only some elliptic references have been made by commentators and "patriotic" bloggers (TopWar.ru, November 10; Kommersant, November 21). There was hardly any space for doubt in Moscow that transforming the strategic partnership with Pyongyang to "brotherhood-in-arms" would invite a strong response from the Biden administration (Carnegie Politika, November 5). The long-delayed permission for Ukraine to use Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to strike Russian territory was certainly anticipated in Moscow, and the revision of the nuclear doctrine was only a part of the prepared answer (Riddle, November 22).

The Ukrainian strikes were delivered without delay, but neither the hit on an arsenal in Bryansk Oblast nor the annihilation of a command center in Kursk Oblast amounted to escalation due to similar strikes having already been made earlier with Ukrainian weapons systems (Republic.ru, November 22). Putin, nevertheless, found it opportune to make a third escalatory step – the strike on the Yuzhmash plant in Dnipro with a new intermediate-range ballistic missile called "Oreshnik" (see Eurasia Daily Monitor; Nezavisimaya

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Russian IRBM attack on Ukraine becomes another attempt at intimidation

by Pavel Luzin
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On November 21, Russia launched a new experimental hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) against Ukraine for the first time. This attack was launched from Russia's Astrakhan Oblast, which is 740 kilometers (460 miles) away from the target of Dnipro. The Ukrainian Air Force claims that Russia's attack consisted of a conventional intercontinental ballistic missile, a Kh-47M2 Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile, and seven Kh-101 cruise missiles, while Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the Russian Armed Forces fired the new IRBM called "Oreshnik" ("Hazelnut") (Kyiv Independent; T.me/kpszsu, November 21). Russia launched this attack just days after signing an updated version of its nuclear doctrine, a probable intimidation tactic from the Kremlin (Kremlin.ru, November 19). Russian President Vladimir Putin released a statement condemning the Ukrainian strikes against Russia using U.S.-provided ATACMS and HIMARS and the U.K.-provided Storm Shadow against an artillery munition depot in Bryansk Oblast

and the joint force command center in the Kursk region. He declared that the strike was a response to Ukraine's missile strikes and intended to target "one of the largest industrial complexes since the Soviet Union" in Dnipro (Kremlin.ru, November 21). Russia's IRBM attack on Ukraine signals an alarming shift in strategy, escalating the conflict and aiming to reassert its nuclear intimidation tactics.

Since at least 2023, Russia has been very concerned that its nuclear blackmail has stopped working (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, September 26, 2022, June 17, September 16, 30, November 20). For example, the mock-up nuclear warhead onboard the Russian cruise missile in November 2022 did not create a lasting impression of Russia's nuclear threat (Defence-ua.com, November 17, 2022). Today, Moscow is trying to replace the concept of nuclear deterrence with the concept of "nuclear intimidation" and convince the international community and domestic audience that the updated nuclear doctrine will hold more weight in practice than the paper it is printed on. This intimidation seems to be all talk,

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NEWSBRIEFS

G-7 renews support for Ukraine

The foreign affairs ministers of the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized countries expressed their support for Ukraine on November 26 in the final statement following their summit in Italy. They also condemned what they described as Russia's "irresponsible and threatening nuclear rhetoric." The G-7 ministers' statement also warned that North Korean support for Russia marked a dangerous expansion of the war, condemning the development and saying Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles and munitions was a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. "We stand firm against Russia's war of aggression. We vehemently condemn the brutal attacks against Ukraine's cities and critical civilian infrastructure and its unacceptable toll on the civilian population," the ministers said in a joint statement at the conclusion of their two-day meeting. The foreign affairs ministers of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States noted Russia's use of an intermediate range ballistic missile on November 21, saying it is "further evidence of its reckless and escalatory behavior." They also said their support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence "will remain unwavering." The ministers, who were joined by Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Andriy Sybiha and the European Union's foreign policy chief at their meeting in Fiuggi, a spa town southeast of Rome, added that they hoped to start distributing a \$50 billion loan package using frozen Russian assets by the end of the year. They also pledged to act against groups helping Russia to evade sanctions and called on China, a long-standing ally of North Korea, to act against the deployment of North Korean troops to the battlefield. (RFE/RL, with reporting by Reuters)

Zelenskyy calls for more air-defense systems

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on November 24 that his country "needs more air-defense systems" to protect its people as Russia continues to target Ukraine with aerial bombs, combat drones and missiles. "Strengthening the protection

of our skies is absolutely critical," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on social media, adding that Kyiv was "actively working" with its partners on improving the country's air defenses. Russia has launched more than 800 guided aerial bombs, around 460 strike drones and over 20 missiles of various types against Ukraine over the past week, according to Mr. Zelenskyy. Both Ukraine and Russia on November 24 reported repelling dozens of drones from the other side overnight. The Ukrainian military said early in the morning that its air defenses shot down 50 of 73 Russian drones, with more than 10 of the intercepted drones targeting the capital, Kyiv. The Ukrainian Air Force added that it lost track of 19 drones and four more were still in the air. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. Serhiy Popko, head of Kyiv's military administration, said the air-raid alert lasted for more than three hours as the drones "were flying from different directions" toward the city. Russia's Defense Ministry reported that its air-defense systems destroyed 34 drones overnight, including 27 over the Kursk region bordering Ukraine. The ministry did not provide information about any damage or casualties caused by the strikes. Ukrainian forces swept into the Kursk region in a surprise offensive in August, seizing some 540 square miles of Russian territory. But Kyiv has since lost about 40 percent of the territory it captured in Kursk, according to a source in Ukraine's General Staff. "At most, we controlled about 1,376 square kilometers [about 540 square miles], now of course this territory is smaller. The enemy is increasing its counterattacks," the source was quoted by news agencies as saying. The source said Kyiv now controls approximately 310 square miles in Kursk and "will hold this territory for as long as is militarily appropriate." The United States and the United Kingdom reportedly gave Ukraine permission recently to strike inside Russia with ATACMS and Storm Shadow missiles, respectively. The missiles are precision tactical weapons designed to hit command-and-control centers, logistics and arms depots near the front. Ukraine has already

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ADMINISTRATION OF THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY AND SVOBODA

Walter Honcharyk, administrator
and advertising manager

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

Subscription Department

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



Andriy demonstrates an ML-8 "anti-lift" device designed to detonate a mine as it is being removed.



Serhii Nuzhnenko, RadioSvoboda.org via RFE/RL

Sappers work to remove a mine in eastern Ukraine.

The life, and nail-biting work, of a Ukrainian sapper

by Maryan Kushnir and
Serhiy Nuzhnenko
RFE/RL

"If you're not an experienced sapper, you can go on a mission, but you may not come back," jokes Andriy, the commander of a platoon of Ukrainian sappers.

We are meeting with Andriy, who was given the call sign "Porthos" after one of the Three Musketeers, at a recreation center in the Donetsk region. It's already getting dark outside. We meet late because the fighters had combat tasks around the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut during the day.

There's no shortage of work for sappers here. Virtually every meter of the front line is mined.

Andriy joined the army in March 2022, just after the full-scale Russian invasion was launched. He had no military experience.

"I was living in Portugal from 2009 to 2013," he recalls. "I returned to Ukraine after my daughter was born. My wife and I decided that we want her educated here in Ukraine so that she thinks the way we do," Andriy says.

In Portugal, Andriy worked as a mason. He was surprised that in the Western European country many workers had no education, and some were illiterate.

"When a person received their salary and had to sign for it, some of them would just mark it with a cross," he says.

Soon after he arrived back in Ukraine, Russia forcibly annexed Crimea and unleashed the first phase of the war in eastern Ukraine. Then came the 2022 invasion.

"I didn't get to the front lines right away," Andriy recalls.

First, he passed basic military training, then later specialized in being a sapper tasked with various military engineering tasks, most importantly working with mines.

"I got to the front lines in July 2022. That was when my military career started," Andriy says.

Andriy and his unit endured some of the toughest battles in Ukraine's east, defending Bakhmut and Soledar for as long as they could before both cities were captured by the Russian advance. Today, he works to the south of Bakhmut.

"What you see in war movies is all fairy tales. It is completely different in reality," Andriy says. "Conflict is something that changes every minute, every second. It's not possible to be ready for everything."

During his first experience of battle, the veteran recalls, "there was no fear, but perhaps if I'd known what was coming there would have been."



Andriy demonstrates how to disarm a weaponized kamikaze drone.

"I felt fear after the first combat missions," Andriy says. "Sometimes, the pick up for a mission was scheduled for 11 p.m., so the car arrives in the middle of the night. As they say, waiting for death is worse than death itself."

It was when returning from a combat mission, he says, that fear crept in.

"You arrive back at the evacuation point where it's calmer and you start to think about where you just were and what you were doing," he says. "Yes, that's when the fear comes."

Andriy recalls an operation to mine an area near Bakhmut that was one of his team's most dangerous missions.

"A position was stormed by Russian troops and we were assigned with getting in and mining it. We completed our mission

[of installing mines] and returned to our positions. The next day, the battalion commander arrived and said that this work should be done by a special operations team. That is, we were not trained for such tasks," Andriy says.

After this operation, he says, he and his team "considered ourselves good soldiers."

The hardest part of fighting, the sapper says, "is seeing your wounded brother next to you when you can't help him."

After living alongside his brothers-in-arms, Andriy says, "you become attached, you become like family. Then, when you start to lose that person, and you can't help, it's very scary. You don't know what you can say to his family afterwards. This is the greatest fear – to feel helpless and unable to save a close friend."



The hands of veteran Ukrainian sapper Andriy, also known as "Porthos."

In the evening of the next day, we go with Andriy and his team to a training area behind the front lines where several small groups are shooting at targets and simulating assault missions. Andriy pulls out charges for grenade launchers, various types of mines, and a bomb-carrying FPV drone that had failed to reach its target. He lays out everything to demonstrate how dangerous "toys" are neutralized.

"If you see that there are no beeps or flashing lights, then you can approach the drone at your own risk and inspect it," Andriy explains.

According to official rules, it's best not to approach any weaponized drone. Ideally, it should be destroyed remotely. But with enough experience, it can be worth attempting to salvage a drone.

"The first thing to do is disconnect its main battery. The second is to examine the explosive payload and find its detonator. Then you carefully disconnect the detonator from the ammunition," Andriy explains.

"If you see an additional battery, you try to deactivate that. Only then, we remove the ammunition, which will be destroyed. If it's possible to demine the drone, it will go to our drone pilot friends for spare parts," says Andriy.

Next, the fighters put a TNT charge on top of some ammunition and remote-controlled detonators are installed.

We take cover, then hear, "Fire in the hole!" Stones rain down and a cloud of dust rises. The explosion was at least 30 meters away, but you can feel the blast wave thump in your chest. The stink of explosives lingers in the air.

An equally difficult situation is how to neutralize an anti-tank mine. Often, Russian forces hide "anti-lift" explosives that set off the larger mine when a sapper attempts to remove it.

If there is any danger of such a device lurking below an anti-tank mine, a special technique is used to remotely move the mine, which Andriy demonstrates. We return to the shelter again. A rope runs from our position in the trench to the mine. A soldier jerks the mine from its place with a sharp pull of the rope and an explosion rings out across the training ground.

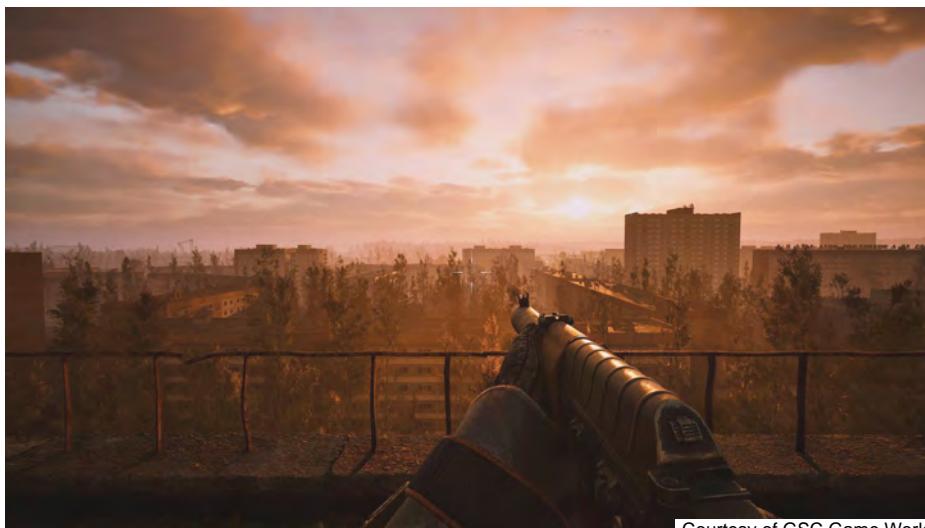
Using this method, a Ukrainian sapper would be unharmed, but there are many tricks Russian troops resort to in order to inflict maximum damage on sappers.

Some of Andriy's stories illustrate the dangers of the battlefield itself.

"One of our soldiers had rigged a doorbell to be a detonator. I don't know what he was thinking, but he decided to hang this

(Continued on page 14)

Ukrainian video game developer issues new release, takes gaming world by storm



Courtesy of GSC Game World

The videogame STALKER 2, made by the Ukrainian video game developer GSC Game World, has sold more than 1 million copies in two days, making it the most downloaded Ukrainian title ever and an iconic symbol of Ukrainian gaming.

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – On November 20, the Ukrainian video game developer GSC Game World, temporarily based in Prague because of Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine, released the game "STALKER 2: Heart of Chornobyl," the largest project in the company's history. With more than 1 million copies sold in just two days, the game has become the most downloaded Ukrainian title ever and an iconic symbol of Ukrainian gaming.

STALKER 2 is a first-person shooter and role-playing game that blends survival horror with immersive simulation elements. The fourth installment in the critically acclaimed STALKER series is the first to be available on game consoles.

The game takes place in the post-apocalyptic Chornobyl Exclusion Zone, reimagined following a fictional second disaster in 2006. The catastrophe altered the zone physically, chemically and biologically, leading to various physical anomalies and mutant creatures.

Players assume the role of a stalker known as "Scythian," and they navigate one of the largest gaming open worlds in a post-apocalyptic setting. The game features a sprawling non-linear plot, where player choices influence the fate of characters, events and the world itself.

For the company behind the project, the journey to its release was long and turbulent. Initially announced in 2010, STALKER 2 was scheduled for release in 2012 but

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FOR THE RECORD

G-7 issues statement condemning Russian 'escalation,' renewing support for Ukraine

On November 26, the Group of Seven (G-7) foreign affairs ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union issued a seven-part statement. Below are sections one and two, which address Russia's war on Ukraine.

Section I: Introduction

We, the G-7 foreign [affairs] ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, reiterate our commitment to foster respect for international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to protect human rights and dignity for all individuals and to promote gender equality.

As the international community is facing a growing number of challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss, disaster risks, the eradication of hunger and poverty, emerging and disruptive technologies, we renew our determination to foster collective action in the pursuit of common solutions.

Following the adoption of the Pact for the Future and its Annexes last September, we will work towards its implementation with all U.N. [United Nations] member states and relevant stakeholders, through dialogue and mutual understanding. We reaffirm our commitment to work with all U.N. member states to strengthen the roles

of the UNSG [United Nations Secretary-General] as well as the UNGA [United Nations General Assembly]. We also recommit to the reform of the UNSC [United Nations Security Council].

Today, we reiterate our determination to further strengthen G-7 unity and sense of common purpose, building on commitments taken by leaders at the Apulia G-7 Summit and at our previous foreign [affairs] ministers' meetings.

Section II: Steadfast support for Ukraine

On the 19th of November 2024, 1,000 days have passed since Russia started its illegal, unjustifiable and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, causing immense human suffering and destruction. We stand firm against Russia's war of aggression. We vehemently condemn the brutal attacks against Ukraine's cities and critical civilian infrastructure and its unacceptable toll on the civilian population. Russia's use of an intermediate range ballistic missile on November 21 is further evidence of its reckless and escalatory behavior. Our support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence will remain unwavering.

In the G-7+ Ministerial Meeting on Ukraine Energy Sector Support on the margins of the 79th Session of the U.N. General

(Continued on page 9)

Nordic-Baltic states, Poland to increase military aid to Ukraine

RFE/RL

Nordic-Baltic countries and Poland have pledged to step up support for Ukraine, including making more ammunition available to strengthen deterrence and defense against hybrid attacks.

The leaders of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway, Poland and Sweden, who met near Stockholm on November 27, also said they were ready to step up sanctions against Russia and backers of its Ukraine invasion and discussed an investigation into the severing of undersea communication cables earlier this month in the Baltic Sea.

"Together with our allies, we are committed to strengthening our deterrence and defense, including resilience, against conventional as well as hybrid attacks, and to expanding sanctions against Russia as well as against those who enable Russia's aggression," the leaders said in a statement.

The leaders met for talks covering transatlantic relations, regional security cooperation, and a common policy on the war in Ukraine. The meeting was the first of the Nordic-Baltic heads of government since 2017. Poland attended for the first time.

Ahead of the meeting, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk proposed joint monitoring of the Baltic Sea by the navies of the Baltic states following damage to two undersea communication cables, which is being investigated as a hybrid attack.

"Baltic air policing already exists for the airspace over the Baltic Sea," Mr. Tusk said. "I will convince our partners of the necessity to immediately create an analogous formula for the control and security of the Baltic Sea waters, a naval surveillance," he added.

The underwater cables – one linking Finland and Germany and the other connecting Sweden to Lithuania – were damaged on November 17-18, prompting suspicions of sabotage.

Sweden, Germany and Lithuania have all launched investigations, but the cause of the damage is still unknown.

Finnish police have said they believe the incident was caused by a Chinese ship dragging its anchor, and Swedish investigators have focused on the Chinese cargo ship Yi Peng 3, which is thought to have passed both locations at the time of the cable breaks.

The ship now sits idle in international waters but inside Denmark's exclusive economic zone.

Sweden has asked the vessel to return to Swedish waters to help facilitate the investigation, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on November 26, but he stressed he was not making any accusations.

Mr. Kristersson told a press conference that he was hopeful China would respond positively to the request to move the ship to Swedish waters.

"From the Swedish side we have had contact with the ship and contact with China and said that we want the ship to move towards Swedish waters," Mr. Kristersson said.

A Chinese foreign affairs ministry spokeswoman said communications with Sweden and other relevant parties had been "unobstructed."

Mao Ning said at a regular news briefing on November 27 that China has shown "consistent support" in working with other countries to maintain the security of international undersea cables and other infrastructure.

Yi Peng 3 left the Russian port of Ust-Luga on November 15. Russia last week said suggestions it had anything to do with

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Trump nominates defense adviser Keith Kellogg as special envoy for Ukraine, Russia

RFE/RL

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on November 27 tapped Keith Kellogg, a retired army lieutenant general who has long served as a top adviser to Mr. Trump on defense issues, as his nominee to be special envoy for Ukraine and Russia.

"Keith has led a distinguished military and business career, including serving in highly sensitive national security roles in my first administration," Mr. Trump said on social media.

Mr. Kellogg "was with me right from the beginning," Mr. Trump said on Truth Social. "Together, we will secure PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH, and Make America, and the World, SAFE AGAIN!"

Mr. Kellogg's nomination comes after Mr. Trump's criticism during the 2024 presidential campaign of the billions of dollars that the United States has poured into Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Mr. Trump also said he could end the war within 24 hours of retaking the White House, a statement that has been interpreted as meaning that Ukraine would have to surrender territory that Russia now occupies.

Mr. Kellogg has already put forth a plan for ending the war that involves freezing the battle lines where they are and forcing Kyiv and Moscow to the negotiating table, Reuters reported in June.

According to Reuters, Mr. Kellogg has advocated telling the Ukrainians that, if they don't come to the negotiating table, U.S. support would dry up, while telling Russian President Vladimir Putin that if he doesn't come to the table, the United States would give the Ukrainians "everything they need to kill you in the field."

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership for Ukraine would be off the table as part of the incentive for Russia to come along, while putting it back on would be punishment for holding back.

Mr. Kellogg, 80, earlier this year wrote that "bringing the Russia-Ukraine war to a close will require strong America first leadership to deliver a peace deal and immediately end the hostilities between the two warring parties."

He made the statements in a research paper written for the America First Policy Institute, a think tank formed after Mr. Trump left office in 2021.

"The United States would continue to arm Ukraine and strengthen its defenses to ensure Russia will make no further advances and will not attack again after a ceasefire or peace agreement," the document said.

"Future American military aid, however, will require Ukraine to participate in peace talks with Russia."

Mr. Kellogg served in several positions

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Chicago and New York charity events raise funds for Ukrainian Catholic University

Donors and speakers stress importance of investing in Ukraine's future

by Alex Kuzma

NEW YORK/CHICAGO – On October 27 and November 3, the Ukrainian Catholic University Foundation held its annual gala events in Chicago and New York City, respectively, to mobilize support for a leading Ukrainian institution of higher education.

Both events highlighted the expanding partnership between the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) and the University of Notre Dame, and they laid out a vision for UCU's critical role in training a new generation of leaders to defend and rebuild the nation for the foreseeable future.

Among the featured speakers were Father John Jenkins, president emeritus of Notre Dame, and Sophia Opatska, UCU's vice-rector for strategic development.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, opened the gala dinner at the University Club in Manhattan with a moving invocation.

"We are gathered here for an incredibly noble cause – the preservation of a rich Ukrainian culture, a culture based on faith and reason, service and martyrdom. It is the cause of a just peace for a beleaguered nation viciously under attack – a nation whose fortitude and perseverance have sparked this planet's imagination. ... We ask your blessings for our beloved Ukraine, for its people," Cardinal Dolan said.

Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Philadelphia Archeparchy of the Ukrainian Catholic Church expressed his heartfelt thanks to UCU's faithful supporters, many of whom have been attending UCU's fundraisers for more than 20 years.



Archbishop Borys Gudziak addresses the audience at the November 3 charity gala at the University Club in Manhattan.



Petro Kovtun

UCU Foundation staff and volunteers gather after the Chicago gala on October 27.

"You have become like family to us," said Archbishop Gudziak who continues to serve as president of UCU after leading the campaign to re-establish the university, which opened as the Lviv Theological Academy in 1994 and then became a full-fledged university in 2002.

"You worked with us and stood with us when almost nobody believed in this project," Archbishop Gudziak said.

Father Jenkins, who served as president of Notre Dame and who bestowed an honorary doctorate on Archbishop Gudziak in 2022, shared his perspective as a descendant of Irish immigrants who fled Ireland in 1847 after a brutal famine took the lives of over one million Irish farmers (out of a population of 8 million).

He drew striking parallels with the Holodomor in Ukraine and expressed soli-

darity with Ukrainians who had suffered under an imperial, colonial regime that tried for centuries to suppress the Ukrainian language, culture and religion.

Father Jenkins visited UCU in August at the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. He shared his experiences attending Liturgy with the incoming class of students in the university's Church of Holy Wisdom. He recalled taking shelter in the basement of the Collegium during an hourlong air raid alert as Russian missiles attacked the city. He marveled at the resolve of the students and faculty on campus.

Both events in Chicago and New York were heavily tinged with sadness as the UCU community continues to mourn the loss of 18-year-old Daryna Bazylevych, an

(Continued on page 10)



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THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

NHL's Columbus Blue Jackets and Russian heritage

The National Hockey League's Columbus Blue Jackets have made a grave misstep by announcing they will host a Russian Heritage Night on December 12 when the team takes on the Washington Capitals. The move comes at a time when Russia remains entrenched in its decade-long, brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. This decision is not merely a lapse in judgment; it is an affront to the millions of Ukrainians whose lives have been upended by Russian violence, as well as to the global community united in its support for Ukraine.

Russia's war against Ukraine began in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea and escalated into a full-scale invasion in February 2022. Over the past decade, this war has claimed tens of thousands of lives, displaced millions and wrought devastation on Ukrainian cities, infrastructure, and cultural heritage. Russian forces have committed war crimes, including the indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, the torture and execution of prisoners, and the kidnapping of Ukrainian children to erase their national identity. Every day, Ukrainians face unimaginable suffering, fighting not only for their survival but for the very principles of sovereignty and freedom.

In this context, the Blue Jackets' decision to celebrate Russian heritage is both deeply insensitive and morally indefensible. While cultural appreciation is a valuable endeavor, this event cannot be divorced from the broader political and humanitarian reality of Russia's actions. Hosting such a celebration at this moment signals a troubling disregard for the pain and suffering inflicted by the Russian regime, as well as for the values of justice and accountability.

By proceeding with Russian Heritage Night, the Blue Jackets not only undermine solidarity with Ukraine but also risk normalizing or trivializing Russia's ongoing aggression. It sends a confusing message to fans and the wider public, suggesting that cultural promotion can be separated from the actions of the state that claims to represent that culture. Such a separation may be theoretically possible, but in practice, it becomes a glaring contradiction when the culture in question is actively weaponized by a regime to justify and perpetuate war.

Critics might argue that Russian Heritage Night is intended to celebrate the contributions of ordinary Russians and their culture, not to endorse the Kremlin's actions. While this distinction might hold in other contexts, it is deeply problematic in the current climate. Russia's government has used cultural diplomacy and sport as tools to whitewash its atrocities and foster goodwill abroad, even as it wages a genocidal war against Ukraine. Events like this, no matter how well-intentioned, risk playing into that propaganda effort by painting a picture of normalcy and acceptance that obscures the ongoing horrors of Russian aggression.

Furthermore, this decision alienates and disrespects the Ukrainian community, including fans, players and their families, who have been directly impacted by Russia's actions. Ukrainians are not asking for special treatment – they are simply asking for respect and solidarity in the face of an existential threat to their very existence. To host an event celebrating Russian heritage while Ukrainian lives are being destroyed by Russian bombs is a slap in the face to those who are fighting for their survival and freedom.

The Columbus Blue Jackets have an opportunity to right this wrong. Canceling Russian Heritage Night would send a clear message that they stand with Ukraine and against the war crimes and atrocities being committed by the Russian state. If the Blue Jackets wish to celebrate cultural diversity, they could redirect their efforts to honor Ukrainian culture, resilience and contributions to the hockey world – a gesture that would be far more meaningful and appropriate under the circumstances.

Sports have always had the power to unite and inspire, transcending borders and bringing people together. But with that power comes responsibility. The NHL and its teams must recognize that their actions carry weight, especially during times of crisis. Hosting a Russian Heritage Night while the war in Ukraine rages on is not a celebration of diversity—it is a failure of empathy and moral clarity.

The Columbus Blue Jackets must understand the gravity of their decision. In the face of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, they have chosen to celebrate the very culture weaponized by an aggressor state to justify its actions. This is not a time for neutrality or tone-deaf gestures. It is a time to stand firmly on the side of justice, freedom and humanity. Cancel Russian Heritage Night. Stand with Ukraine.

Dec.
1
1991

Turning the pages back...

Thirty-three years ago, on December 1, 1991, Ukraine's citizens by an overwhelming majority – more than 90 percent – voted yes in a national referendum that Ukraine should be an independent country.

Bohdan Shandor, a former two-term president of the Ukrainian American Bar Association (UABA), served at the invitation of the Verkhovna Rada as one of 57 official international observers of the referendum. His recollections of the events were presented in a three-part series carried by The Ukrainian Weekly on the 30th anniversary of the event in 2021.

Mr. Shandor and Leonard Mazur arrived in Kyiv from New York on Thanksgiving Day on November 28, 1991, and Mark Helmke came from Washington, D.C. The three men were among a group of international election observers (the trio represented the UABA), and, ironically, they were booked to stay in the October (Zhotnevyy) Hotel, which was named after the October Revolution.

Mr. Shandor discussed his initial reaction to walking the streets of Kyiv, saying that a notable change was palpable from the Soviet days of "drudgery, grayness and frustration," which was replaced by "a great sense of optimism in the capital, albeit combined with a

(Continued on page 7)

Lighting candles...

(Continued from page 1)

International institutions, such as the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, have also passed resolutions acknowledging the Holodomor as genocide.

The widespread recognition and remembrance of the Holodomor underscore the importance of global solidarity in commemorating the tragedy. As the anniversary is marked worldwide, efforts to preserve the memory of the victims and to counter efforts that seek to erase that history remain critical, supported by Ukraine's allies and partners.

Despite the brutal pressure and attempts to intimidate Ukrainians, candles in memory of millions of Holodomor victims were lit in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, according to the Center for National Resistance.

Ukraine's Special Operations Forces created the Center for National Resistance to train, coordinate and scale up resistance movements inside the occupied areas of Ukraine.

"Our anonymous chatbot has received dozens of photos from different cities under occupation, which testify to the resilience, courage and readiness to resist the Kremlin's executioner of our compatriots. More than 90 years after Ukrainians became victims of mass extermination by starvation, the descendants of those who caused that terrible tragedy are killing us again – this time with missiles," the Center for National Resistance said in a statement.

The center noted that the parallel between the past and the present highlights the depth of the efforts to destroy Ukraine and the spirit of the Ukrainian people, which they said was indomitable.

"Despite the fear of death, despite terror and repression by the occupiers, Ukrainians continue to resist. They refuse to forget their history, their dignity and their struggle. The candles of remembrance lit in the darkness of the occupation are not only an act of honoring the dead but also a symbol of living resistance. Those who light the candles of remembrance show that, even under the yoke of occupation, even in the darkest times, we will not break. Ukraine lives and fights," the Center for National Resistance said.

The United States and several European countries have expressed their support for Ukraine, honoring the memory of the victims of the Holodomor Genocide of 1932-1933, as well as the genocides of 1921-1923 and 1946-1947.

In particular, U.S. President Joe Biden said that, by commemorating the victims of the Holodomor, the United States reaffirms its commitment to stand with the Ukrainian people as Russia tries to wipe Ukraine off the map.

"Today, as we mark the solemn anniversary of the Holodomor, we also renew our commitment to stand with the Ukrainian people in their time of need. For nearly three years, Russia has been waging a brutal war against the Ukrainian people in an attempt to wipe Ukraine off the map. In this

effort, Russia has failed. Kyiv stands free, thanks in part to the United States and the more than 50 other countries that are committed to providing Ukraine with the assistance it needs to defend itself," Mr. Biden said in a statement.

"My message to the Ukrainian people on this day is clear: the United States honors your past and stands with you in the present. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting Ukraine's ongoing defense of its freedom, its pursuit of justice, and its path to the Euro-Atlantic future it has chosen for itself. The courage and strength of the Ukrainian people will prevail," Mr. Biden said in a statement posted on the White House website.

U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink noted that the Holodomor will remain a "dark chapter in human history."

"The Holodomor is a tragedy not only because of the famine but also because it was a planned event aimed at breaking the spirit of the Ukrainian people. Today, Russia is once again using food as a weapon and an instrument of power and coercion," Ms. Brink said in a video message posted on the social network X.

President of the European Parliament Roberta Mecola said in a post on X that "today Europe joins the people of Ukraine to remember and honor the millions of victims of the Holodomor."

In turn, Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Antonio Tajani in a post on X emphasized that, on the day of remembrance of the Holodomor victims, "his thoughts are about the genocide and the war that continues in this country."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania noted that the famine was a punishment for the resistance of Ukrainians and their desire to preserve their national identity during the Soviet occupation.

"The Kremlin's war crimes continue, but this time, we must help Ukraine win," the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry said in a post on X.

Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) President Paul Grod called on Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide of the Ukrainian people, according to a post on the UWC website.

"This is not only a tragedy of the Ukrainian people. It is genocide. It is important for the world to understand that the genocide that was directed against Ukrainians 90 years ago continues to this day," the UWC president said.

In general, societies and members of parliament in northern Europe support the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide, Mr. Grod said. However, the global Ukrainian community must work to find mechanisms to ensure the governments of those countries officially endorse that position.

"Last year in Finland, 164 deputies expressed their support for the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide. However, the parliament and the government of the country did not adopt an official declaration," Mr. Grod said.

On November 23, the UWC president also joined a ceremony commemorating the victims of the Holodomor organized by the Association of Ukrainians in Finland.

Nordic-Baltic...

(Continued from page 4)

the breaches were "absurd."

The Wall Street Journal reported on November 27 that the ship has been surrounded by European warships in international waters for a week. Investigators suspect the crew of the Yi Peng 3, which is loaded with Russian fertilizer, deliberately severed the cables by dragging its anchor for more than 100 miles, the newspaper reported.

The probe centers on whether the captain of the ship was induced by Russian intelligence to carry out the sabotage, the report said.

(With reporting by Reuters, dpa and The Wall Street Journal)

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Ukraine attacked...

(Continued from page 1)

Russia's RS-26 Rubezh intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

Ukraine initially accused Russia of having used an ICBM in the Dnipro attack. An ICBM has never been used in a war.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia is seeking to drive his forces out of the Kursk region before U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office next year but added that the military situation in the Donetsk region is the most critical for his country.

"I am certain that [Putin] wants to push us out before January 20," Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters, referring to the day of Mr. Trump's inauguration. "It is very important for him to show that he controls the situation" in Kursk.

Ukraine stunned the Kremlin by sweeping into the Kursk region in August, seizing nearly 540 square miles of Russian territory. With Mr. Trump promising to end the war upon entering office, Moscow could be forced to exchange land it seized in Ukraine for Kursk territory should it fail to push Ukrainian forces out in time.

Putin has sent tens of thousands of Russian troops to Kursk who are mounting wave after wave of counterattacks, a source on Ukraine's General Staff said. Russia has regained about 309 square miles in Kursk or about 40 percent of the territory Ukraine seized, the source said.

Mr. Zelenskyy said that Ukrainian troops are inflicting large-scale losses on Russian forces in Kursk. Russia has recently been losing as many as 1,500 troops a day to injury and death across the entire theater of the war, the most since the invasion began in February 2022, Ukrainian and Western officials said.

"Russia hasn't suffered such losses as it is now suffering in Kursk," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

Russia has recruited more than 11,000 North Korean troops to help it take back Kursk territory. The North Korean troops reportedly arrived last month.

The United States and the United Kingdom reportedly gave permission this week to Ukraine to strike inside Russia with ATACMS and Storm Shadow missiles, respectively. The missiles are precision, tactical weapons designed to hit command-and-control centers, logistics and arms depots near the front.

Ukraine has already used the missiles to strike targets in Kursk and the neighboring region of Belgorod.

Russian advances

Meanwhile, Russian ground forces continue to make incremental advances in eastern Ukraine, including near the town of Velyka Novosilka, according to Deep State, an open-source organization with ties to the Ukrainian Army, and confirmed by other analysts.

Ukraine has been struggling to hold back the Russian advances due to a lack of manpower, raising concern about a possible breakthrough. While Russia is losing forces at a greater rate, the Kremlin is able to quickly replace them thanks to lucrative wages and incentives.

Putin on November 23 widened those incentives, signing a law permitting the cancellation of debt for new army recruits volunteering to fight in Ukraine.

The new law allows the state to forgive up to 10 million rubles (\$95,835) of debt for those signing contracts with the Defense Ministry to fight in Ukraine for at least a year, beginning on December 1.

The law applies to all potential recruits who have had debt collection proceedings

opened against them before December 1. The maximum debt forgiveness is several times the average annual salary in Russia's provinces.

Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, the former commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, said in an interview published on November 23 that new technological advances will prevent a "serious breakthrough" at the front.

Ukraine and Russia have been rapidly developing reconnaissance and strike drones as well as electronic warfare weapons. The technology advancements have helped Ukraine partially compensate for its lack of manpower.

In the interview, Mr. Zaluzhnyi said that Russia will struggle to expand the front line and break through because it would require huge resources, "which the Russians no longer have."

Trump presidency

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met his counterparts from the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized nations outside Rome on November 25-26 to discuss the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

It will be the last G-7 meeting for the Biden administration, which is seeking to ensure that support for Ukraine is sustained when Mr. Trump enters office in January.

Mr. Trump has criticized aid to Ukraine, raising questions about whether he will continue to support Kyiv should a peace

deal not be reached.

The president-elect met with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte in Florida on November 22 to discuss Ukraine and other issues facing the alliance.

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump is reportedly considering Richard Grenell, his former intelligence chief, for the new post of special envoy for the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters that the war could end next year if Ukraine continues to get strong Western support. Mr. Zelenskyy spoke with media following the Grain from Ukraine Summit in Kyiv. Ukraine is one of the largest exporters of grains to world markets.

Prior to the conference, Mr. Zelenskyy visited a memorial to the victims of the Holodomor, the man-made famine orchestrated by the Soviet government in the 1930s that led to the deaths of millions of Ukrainians.

In a clear reference to Putin's war against Ukraine, Mr. Zelenskyy said: "There is something we know for certain. They wanted to destroy us. To kill us. To subjugate us. They failed."

(With reporting by Reuters)

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Putin's...

(Continued from page 2)

Gazeta, November 21). It was the first launch of this mobile missile, combining elements of various designs and carrying multiple warheads, unlike the Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile or Iskander-M short-range ballistic missile (Meduza, November 22; The Moscow Times, November 23). Putin was visibly elated, announcing the success of this "combat test," particularly as the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile test in September, which he announced as ready for deployment back in May 2018, resulted in an explosion in the silo (Kommersant, November 22).

The illusion of gaining escalation control may expire quickly as Ukrainian long-distance strikes continue, while Putin's promise of more "tests" and the mass production of the Oreshnik is curtailed by the Votkinsk plant's limited industrial capacity (Kommersant, November 23). He has no more "safe" options for escalation and will be compelled to assess the consequences of resuming nuclear testing or executing a non-strategic nuclear strike, as some audacious experts in Moscow continue to recommend (RIAC, November 21). Although the theme of nuclear war may be "normalized" in jingoist propaganda, Putin is perfectly aware of the extreme risks, and public opinion remains deeply worried and resolutely opposed to propelling the so-called "special military operation" to the brink of nuclear catastrophe (The Moscow Times, November 22).

Moscow is not particularly concerned about the upcoming North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Ukraine Council meeting, which was called to discuss the joint response to the Oreshnik missile strike. Instead, the Kremlin is paying close attention to the reactions of two key leaders of the coalition, both undergoing political transitions: the United States and Germany (NV.ua, November 22). In the latter case, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's words about "terrible escalation" are interpreted

as a sign of paralyzing worries, potentially impacting the outcome of the forthcoming elections (RBC, November 22). The primary attention is undoubtedly focused on the changes in risk assessments of the United States, and Moscow experts venture opinions on U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to grant Ukraine permission for strikes as an attempt to limit the choices available for President-elect Donald Trump (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 18; Rossiiskaya Gazeta, November 19). These speculations tend to ignore that the decision to allow strikes was announced after the meeting of the two leaders in the White House, as well as following Mr. Biden's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Group of 20 (G-20) summit in Brazil (Novaya Gazeta Europe, November 22).

The Kremlin anticipates that the Trump administration will attempt to bring its war against Ukraine to an end and is preparing positions for neutralizing U.S. pressure for compromises and working to ensure that any concessions that might be granted come primarily from Kyiv. These efforts, however, do not reflect the real effect of Putin's reckless climb on the ladder of escalation. Any possible deal that presumes to secure moderate gains and restore stability is now undercut by Russia's demonstrated desire to subjugate a defiant Ukraine and split the Western coalition. A ceasefire that would depend upon the goodwill of the domination-desiring Russian autocrat involves severe security risks for Europe, as they would fail to deter his next aggressive move driven by the Kremlin's illusions of superior military might. Ukraine cannot hope to restore its territorial integrity by inflicting a crushing military defeat on Russia, but a sequence of successful defensive and offensive operations, empowered by sustained Western military support, could deny Putin the strategic initiative and disillusion him in his perceived escalation dominance.

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Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

feeling of uncertainty and even trepidation" in the days leading up to the referendum.

Protocols and international standards for the referendum adhered to the "Guidelines for International Election Observing" prepared by the International Human Rights Law Group. Although the United States did not send a formal delegation of observers, delegations from Canada and the European Union were among the 57 official international observers.

Mr. Shandor noted how television advertising explained to citizens the voting procedure, detailing how the referendum differed from typical elections held during the Soviet period. Another television ad described the event. "You are not slaves. Throw off your chains. Vote for independence," it said.

The UABA delegation and other observers decided that their first visit would be to the polling station in Pereiaslav, approximately a 75-minute drive southeast of Kyiv.

"Each of us had assigned tasks. Some in our group were assigned to review the voting registry and determine how recently they were updated," Mr. Shandor said. Absentee voting was still allowed for causes such as sickness or disability. The delegation also reported on unusual activities that could constitute duress or intimidation.

"My task was to examine and report on the integrity of the ballot boxes," Mr. Shandor said. "My job was to confirm the authenticity and integrity of the [metal] seal compared to a master list, to check the structural integrity of the box itself [some were made of wood, while others were made of wood and glass] and check for false bottoms and any removable panels."

The UABA delegation visited an additional three polling stations closer to Kyiv, and at one of the stations, the observers "encountered a gentleman who was apparently in charge and objected vigorously and loudly to our entering the polling place." Even after presenting their credentials, the man stated in Russian that "he did not recognize the authority of anyone in Kyiv, but instead he recognized only authorities in Moscow."

Serhiy Holovaty, a Ukrainian lawyer and politician, noted, "I see you have your usual observer of elections here," referring to a bust of Lenin that was prominently displayed at the polling station. The bust was removed, which Mr. Holovaty said was a political statement in favor of the Soviet Union. After the bust was removed, the observers were told to leave. Authorities from the Central Election Commission spoke with the gentleman objector, then the delegation was allowed to return to the polling place. Mr. Shandor said this was the only incident they observed of an individual being deprived access during visits to seven polling places.

When the observers returned to Kyiv, they compared notes and did not report any irregularities or deficiencies in the voting process. Although official results would not be reported until December 2, the election results indicated Leonid Kravchuk would be Ukraine's first post-Soviet president. There was no widespread celebration of the referendum results, as people were dissuaded from celebrating publicly because of the lingering fear of violent Soviet reprisals.

Source: "Recalling the national referendum on Ukrainian independence of December 1, 1991," by Bohdan Shandor, *The Ukrainian Weekly*, December 5, 2021.

Ukraine's Holy Mountains may take generations to recover from impact of war

by Sashko Shevchenko, Serhiy Horbatenko and Riin Aljas
RFE/RL

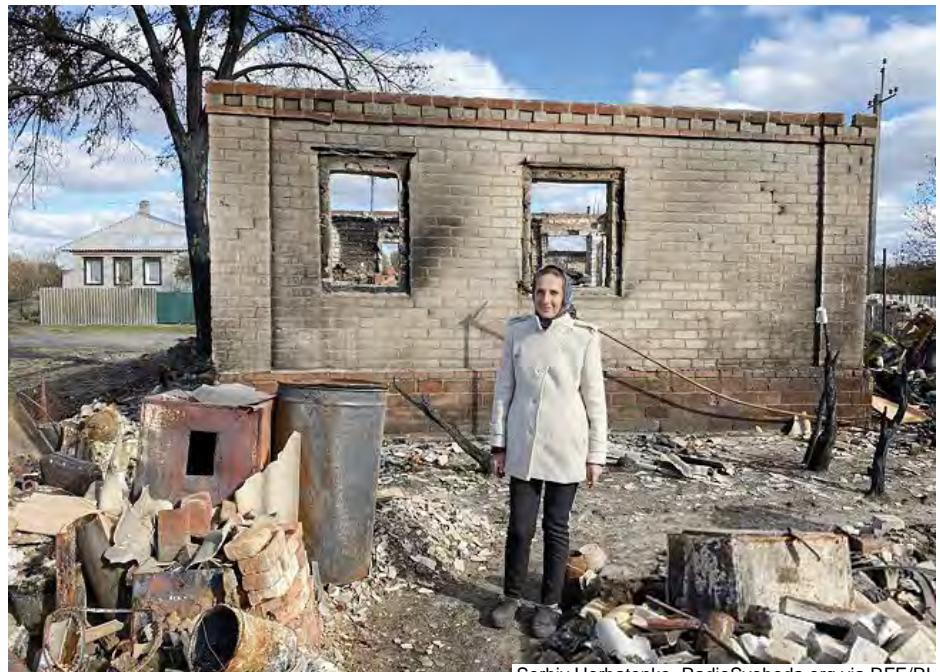
KYIV – In 2022, for the first time in her 34 years as a teacher, Lydia Prokopenko didn't get to see her first-graders graduate. Instead, her elementary school in eastern Ukraine was shut down, and she was forced into early retirement by a full-scale Russian military invasion.

Her home village, Studenok, was just miles from intense fighting in the nearby Holy Mountains National Nature Park, where Russian troops soon wrested control of the park's wooded cliffs. By the time Ukrainian forces recaptured the park in

September 2022, it was heavily charred, pocked with blast craters, and crisscrossed with foxholes.

It was also strewn with land mines and unexploded ordnance that would fuel the largest wildfire in the Holy Mountains' history two years later, after a Russian air strike in September. Fire crews couldn't get a handle on the blaze for eight days as it scorched 7,000 hectares of the park and, eventually, took Ms. Prokopenko's home and much of her village with it.

"The fire spread so quickly. Such huge balls of fire were flying through the air ... that our house couldn't be saved," she said. Now she lives with neighbors, and it's getting increasingly unlikely that the 64-year-



Serhiy Horbatenko, RadioSvoboda.org via RFE/RL

Lydia Prokopenko stands in front of the remains of her house that was destroyed by a forest fire.



The aftermath of a forest fire that ravaged the national park.

old former teacher will live long enough to see the Holy Mountains Park or its wildlife recover.

Park director Serhiy Priymachuk and other Ukrainian officials say it is difficult to seriously consider restoring the Holy Mountains or any other ecosystem before the end of hostilities – and even then, it will probably take decades. The park is located in a northern section of the Donetsk region that's been partially occupied by Russian-backed forces since 2014, and remains a theater of heavy fighting.

Ukrainian ecologist Volodymyr Yarotskiy offers a twist on the "butterfly effect" and unforeseen consequences, saying, "This is no longer a 'flap of wings,' this is really a

fairly significant impact on the environment."

Accusations of ecocide

Since the start of the Russian invasion, the amount of Ukrainian forest destroyed by fire has shot up by a factor of 30, according to the All-Ukrainian Ecology League, a non-governmental organization.

The Environment Ministry says 800,000 hectares of forest have been consumed by war, including 2,400 hectares that are currently under Russian occupation. In those places, experts say, in addition to the trenches that Russian forces have dug, the

(Continued on page 12)

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STAND WITH UKRAINE

G-7 issues...

(Continued from page 4)

Assembly we committed to continue to give immediate priority to Ukraine's early recovery and energy resilience for this winter season, protecting and restoring the grid and bolstering generation capacity to protect the livelihoods of millions of Ukrainians and avoid a further, catastrophic deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

We condemn Russia's seizure and continued control and militarization of Ukraine's Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant, which poses severe risks for nuclear safety and security, with implications for the broader international community. We support the International Atomic Energy Agency's [IAEA] efforts directed at mitigating such risks, including through the continuous presence of IAEA experts and its focus on ensuring nuclear safety and security at the site.

We condemn the recent increase in Russian attacks on commercial shipping and civilian port infrastructure in the Black Sea, which undermines international law, including UNCLOS [the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea], puts maritime safety and security at risk and impacts global food security.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's irresponsible and threatening nuclear rhetoric as well as its posture of strategic intimidation. We will never tolerate threats to use nuclear weapons, let alone any use of nuclear weapons, by Russia in the context of its war of aggression against Ukraine. We also express our deepest concern about the use of chemical weapons as well as riot control agents as a method of warfare by Russia in Ukraine. As the findings of the report issued recently by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have confirmed the presence of riot control agents in samples collected from the frontlines in [the] Dnipro Petrovsk region in Ukraine, we emphasize that the use of such weapons as a method of warfare is a flagrant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We call on OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] to shed

full light on the use of these grenades and on other relevant incidents in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

We also condemn in the strongest terms Russia's widespread and systematic torture and ill treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war, and civilian detainees including the use of sexual violence, as reported by the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

We welcome the approval by finance ministers of the principles and technical features of the Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loan initiative for the benefit of Ukraine, which was announced by G-7 leaders at the Apulia Summit in June. The ERA Loan initiative will disburse approximately \$50 billion (EUR 45 billion) for the benefit of Ukraine. These loans will be serviced and repaid by future flows of extraordinary revenues stemming from the immobilization of Russian sovereign assets, in line with G-7 respective legal systems and international law. This historic G-7 leaders' decision and its timely implementation confirm that the G-7 remains steadfast in its solidarity to support Ukraine's fight for freedom and its recovery and reconstruction. Russian illegal and unprovoked aggression has caused untold harm to the people of Ukraine and to global peace and security. We will not tire in our resolve to give Ukraine the support it needs to prevail. With the large amount of financing from the ERA loans directed at Ukraine's pressing budgetary, military and reconstruction need, we have once again made clear our unwavering commitment to stand by Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. Our aim is to begin disbursing the funds by the end of the year.

We will build on our comprehensive sanctions and economic measures to further restrict the revenues, goods and technology Russia uses to fund and conduct its war.

We will take appropriate measures, consistent with our legal systems, against actors in China and in other third countries that materially support Russia's war machine, including financial institutions and other entities that facilitate Russia's acquisition of equipment and items for its defense industrial base. We will continue to

apply significant pressure on Russian revenues from energy, metals and other commodities, including through the effective implementation of existing measures and further actions against the "shadow fleet." We will take robust action against actors who aid Russia in circumventing our sanctions.

We are seriously concerned about the deployment of the DPRK's [the Democratic People's Republic of Korea] troops to Russia and their use on the battlefield against Ukraine. The DPRK's direct support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, besides signaling Russia's desperate efforts to compensate its losses, marks a dangerous expansion of the conflict, with serious consequences for European and Indo-Pacific security. We are working with our international partners for a coordinated response to this development. We are also deeply concerned about the potential for any transfer of nuclear or ballistic missile-related technology to the DPRK in violation of the relevant UNSC resolutions. We urge countries with ties to Russia and the DPRK, including China, to uphold international law by opposing this dangerous expansion of the conflict and implementing all relevant UNSC resolutions.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the increasing military cooperation between DPRK and Russia, including DPRK's export and Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles and munitions in direct violation of relevant UNSC resolutions, as well as Russia's use of these missiles and munitions against Ukraine.

We condemn the use of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) by the Russian government and its proxies to support its war against Ukraine and fuel global tensions. Collectively responding to FIMI remains central to the G-7. Developing a collective response framework by the end of the year via the G-7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) is a crucial step in that direction, as tasked by the G-7 leaders.

We remain fully committed to contributing to Ukraine's future reconstruction as a driver for inclusive growth, green transition and prosperity, while also closely linked to the reform agenda and the related E.U.

[European Union] accession path. We look forward to the next Ukraine Recovery Conference, to be hosted in Rome next July 10-11, 2025. We commend Ukraine's progress so far and will continue to provide all the necessary support as it advances on its path towards E.U. and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Our ultimate goal remains to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, capable of restoring full respect for the fundamental principles of international law, blatantly breached by Russia. We welcome the Summit on Peace in Ukraine that took place in Switzerland on June 15-16 and its focus on the key priorities needed to achieve a framework for peace based on international law, including the U.N. Charter and its principles, and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stress that no initiative about Ukraine can be taken without Ukraine. To that end, we will continue engaging also with global partners and actors to achieve the widest possible international support for the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula, in line with international law, including the U.N. Charter principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We condemn Russia's unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children. We welcome the Montreal Pledge as the outcome of the Ministerial Conference on the Human Dimension of Ukraine's 10-Point Peace Formula, co-hosted by Canada, Ukraine and Norway, as well as the offers by Qatar, South Africa and the Holy See to serve as intermediaries to support and negotiate the return of children; the continuing role of the United Arab Emirates on mediating the exchanges of prisoners of war; and the offers by Norway, Lithuania and Qatar to provide a supportive environment for Ukrainians returning home.

We reiterate our condemnation of the Belarusian regime's complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine. We express our continued concern over the regime's continuing repression of independent media, civil society, political opposition and citizens peacefully expressing their views. We also condemn the ill treatment of political prisoners and ask for their immediate and unconditional release.

Trump nominates...

(Continued from page 4)

during Mr. Trump's first term, including as chief of staff on Mr. Trump's National Security Council and national security adviser to then-Vice President Mike Pence.

Russian Deputy Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy told a United Nations Security Council meeting that any decision by Mr. Trump's incoming administration to cut support for Ukraine would be a "death sentence" for the Ukrainian Army.

"Even if we're to lay to one side the prediction that Donald Trump will cut assistance to Ukraine, which for the Ukrainian Army would essentially be a death sentence, it is becoming clearer that he and his team will, in any case, conduct an audit of the assistance provided to Kyiv," Mr. Polyanskiy said.

Mr. Polyanskiy said Russia had repeatedly offered to negotiate, but Ukraine and its Western backers have favored escalation. Ukraine has consistently rejected Russian offers to negotiate because Moscow's conditions, including accepting Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory, have been unacceptable to Kyiv.

The Russian diplomat also accused the Biden administration of trying through its increased support to Ukraine to create a "mess, both in Russia and with the new team in the White House."

He warned the decision by the Biden administration and its European allies to authorize the Ukrainian military to use long-range missiles against targets inside Russia had "placed the world on the brink of a global nuclear conflict" and said Russia would respond decisively.

"I will be frank, we believe that it is our right to use our weapons against the military facilities of those countries who allow the use of weapons against our facilities," he said.

Speaking earlier at the same Security Council session, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenca highlighted recent Russian long-range missile strikes against Ukraine and called the use of ballistic missiles and related threats against Ukraine "a very dangerous, escalatory development."

U.S. Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood told the session that Washington would "continue to surge security assistance to Ukraine to strengthen its capabilities, including air defense, and put Ukraine in the best possible position on the battlefield."

(With reporting by Reuters)

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UNWLA to celebrate 140 years of Ukrainian women's movement with virtual conference

UNWLA

The Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA) announced it will host an international virtual conference celebrating the 140th anniversary of the Ukrainian women's movement. The event will take place on December 7.

The conference will mark a significant milestone in the history of the Ukrainian women's movement, tracing its roots back to December 8, 1884, when Ukrainian writer Natalia Kobrynska founded the Society of Ruthenian Women in Stanislaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk), Ukraine. The groundbreaking organization laid the foundation for women's rights advocacy in Ukraine.

The event aims to honor this legacy by celebrating pioneering figures who advanced the women's movement within Ukraine and beyond.

Discussions will focus on the movement's 140-year history, the key achievements that have shaped women's roles in Ukrainian society, and how these milestones continue to influence modern initiatives for equality, peacebuilding, self-realization, civic visibility, agency and professionalism.

The conference will also explore visions for the future of the Ukrainian women's movement across various sectors and seek to develop collaborative strategies to support the progress of women's rights globally.

Interested individuals are encouraged to register by December 6 online at www.unwla.org webpage or via the organization's Facebook page. Registered participants will receive the full conference program via email. The language of the conference will be Ukrainian. English translation will be provided in text format.

More information is available by contacting Anna Petelina, education chair at UNWLA, via email at education@unwla.org, or Anna Bereznyak, communications manager at UNWLA, via email at communications@unwla.org.

The organizing committee for the event includes the UNWLA, the Ukrainian National Women's League, the UNWLA Center for Women's Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University, the Scientific Society of History of Diplomacy and International Relationships and the Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism.

Chicago...

(Continued from page 5)

UCU student who was killed on September 3 during a Russian missile attack on Lviv. She died alongside her mother, Yevhenia, and two sisters, Emilia and Yaryna, leaving her father, Yaroslav, as the lone survivor.

In a particularly touching moment during the Chicago banquet, the great grandfather of the three sisters, Zorian Bazylevych, who lives in Chicago, delivered a donation from the Bazylevych-Kozbur family for an endowed scholarship fund established in their memory.

For the second year in a row, the Chicago gala was held in the elegant and historic banquet hall at Chicago's oldest Catholic high school, St. Ignatius College Prep.

Among the sponsors were representatives of the Selfreliance Federal Credit Union, the Ukrainian Heritage Foundation, and clergy from the parishes of Sts. Volodymyr and Olha, St. Nicholas Cathedral, St. Joseph the Betrothed and Immaculate Conception Church in Palatine, Ill.

Father Mykola Buryadnyk, whose parish St. Joseph the Betrothed donated \$10,000 to the Bazylevych endowment, delivered a deeply moving benediction at the close of the program.

Also in attendance was a visiting group of Ukrainian philanthropists and business leaders, mostly from the Lviv region. Despite suffering losses and many challenges since the beginning of the 2022 invasion, these businesspersons have become generous donors to UCU, recognizing the university's critical role in rebuilding the country and providing essential services to wounded veterans, refugees and others adversely affected by the war.

As vice-rector of strategic development of UCU, Sophia Opatska presented key elements of the university's "Strategy 2030," which places a heavy emphasis on "healing the wounds of war" and raising the profile of Ukraine in the international arena.

"Just as our soldiers confront our ene-



UCU supporters raise their bidding paddles during the October 27 charity gala at St. Ignatius College Preparatory School in Chicago. ■ Petro Kovtun

mies with unwavering courage, we too must do everything in our power to bring victory closer," Ms. Opatska said. She also shared her personal experience as the wife of a soldier on active duty in the nation's Air Defense Forces.

Each morning, the spouses of soldiers on the front lines check their mobile phones for discrete or secret signals that their loved one is safe. Each day of classes at UCU begins with a moment of silence and prayer honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, including the 32 members of the UCU community (students, alumni and staff) who have given their lives since February of 2022.

Despite frequent challenges, air raids and other disruptions of daily life, "the essence of education perseveres," the vice-rector said. "UCU is alive with the energy and vibrancy of our students, even in the surreal and unimaginable context of war."

Several new endowment gifts were announced at the New York banquet. Longtime UCU supporters Dr. Yuri and Roma Temnycky of Syracuse, N.Y., along with other members of their family created an endowed professorship.

Oleh and Virginia Krup of Stamford, Conn., created an endowed scholarship fund for students at the UCU School of Law in memory of their beloved son Petro Maksym.

Ms. Opatska announced the creation of a new endowment, the Metropolitan Gudziak Faculty Fund to support the work of UCU's gifted professors.

In his concluding remarks in New York, Archbishop Gudziak reflected on some of the remarkable impacts the university has had since its re-inauguration in 2022.

"UCU has educated 600 Ukrainian Catholic priests and has captured the attention of the world with its deep commitment to ethics and public service," Archbishop Gudziak said.

Working with an operating budget of \$10 million per year, roughly the cost of one laboratory at a comparable American university, said the archbishop, UCU has proven again to be a very wise and cost-effective investment in the future of Ukraine.

The archbishop emphasized UCU's deep commitment to Catholic social teaching: First, its emphasis on God-given human dignity; second, its solidarity with those in greatest need and those marginalized in society; third, its commitment to "subsidiarity," bringing empowerment and decision-making authority to those at the lowest possible level of society; and fourth, its striving for the common good, not excluding or discriminating against anyone.

These four ethical pillars, said the archbishop, have enabled Ukraine's fighting forces and civil society to achieve dramatic successes in their resistance to Russian aggression.

The New York gala concluded with a beautiful rendering of Mykola Lysenko's "Prayer for Ukraine" sung by Kyiv baritone Andriy Kushman, a visiting fellow at the Metropolitan Opera.

UCU Foundation CEO Annetta Hewko thanked all the volunteers and staff who were instrumental in organizing both events, the speakers and musical performers and the generous donors and sponsors who made each event a resounding financial success.

The New York Friends of UCU Committee and the Chicago Friends of UCU Committee expressed deep satisfaction with the results of both events, which drew hundreds of UCU supporters and yielded revenues of \$376,000 and \$282,000, respectively.

Despite harsh winter conditions and frequent power outages in Ukraine, UCU perseveres, and the UCU Foundation will persevere in its fundraising efforts to support the University in its educational mission and its wide range of public service programs.

Individuals interested in making tax deductible donations may do so by mailing them to UCU Foundation, 2247 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Ill., 60622, or online at UCUFoundation.org.

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Guests from Philadelphia who attended the New York banquet included (from left to right) Andrew Fylypovych, Askold Sandursky, Christina Fylypovych, Lana Sandursky, Ihor Sydoryak, Adriana Sydoryak, Dr. Oleh Tretiak and Roman Petyk. ■ Alex Kuzma

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Kyiv targets...

(Continued from page 1)

missiles that targeted its territory starting on November 19.

A U.S. National Security Council spokesperson on November 25 said the White House "did change the guidance" over the use of the missiles. ... Right now, they [Kyiv] are able to use ATACMS to defend themselves on an immediate-need basis ... that has taken place around Kursk Oblast."

Russian-occupied Crimea was targeted overnight on November 26-27 with a combination of missiles and drones, said Russian military bloggers who provided geographic data and videos recorded by local residents.

Drones and Ukrainian Neptune ship missiles converted for air attacks, as well as Storm Shadow missiles, reportedly targeted the Belbek airbase and Saky airfield near Sevastopol, which is the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea fleet.

Explosions were heard and seen in numerous videos from the geolocated areas that bloggers posted on X (formerly Twitter) and their Telegram channels.

Footage of smoke and explosions were also posted of the Nakhimov Naval School in Striletska Bay on the peninsula on the same day of the aerial attacks.

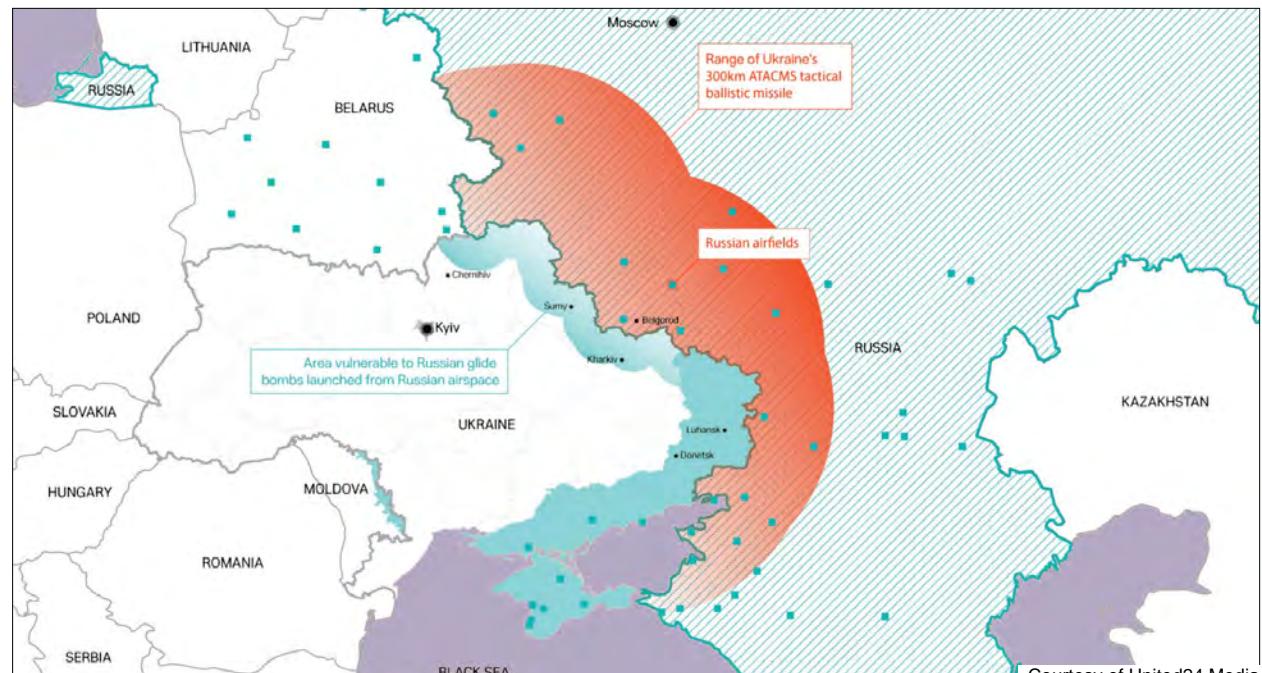
Drones were used to cause serious damage to an oil depot in Russia's Kaluga region as well this week, according to reliable geolocated reports and footage.

Still, it is not known how many ATACMS, Storm Shadows and French-provided SCALP missiles Ukraine has in its possession to conduct precision strikes on valuable Russian military targets.

Britain did "secretly deliver dozens" of Storm Shadow rockets recently to Ukraine, Bloomberg News reported this week.

The delivery was made, according to Bloomberg's anonymous sources, before the U.S. and Britain permitted Kyiv to use them on Russian territory. The decision was supposedly made after there was confirmation that North Korean troops were fighting on Russia's side against Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a resolution by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) this week called on Ukraine's allies to supply even longer-range missiles. For example, the U.S.'s Tomahawk cruise missile has a range of approximately 1,500 miles whereas the maximum range of ATACMS -



A map shows the potential target areas within Russia that Ukraine can strike using longer-range missiles provided by the U.S., France and Britain.

depending on their type - is 186 miles.

NATO should "sustain and increase military, financial and humanitarian support for Ukraine, ensuring the timely delivery of munitions and advanced weapon systems, including air-defense systems, long-range precision weapons and multi-role fighter aircraft," the NATO resolution said.

The same document said that, in the coming months, the alliance must develop a "common strategic approach toward Russia, focusing on fully preparing the alliance to contain and counter Russia's hostile actions across the board, whether conventional, hybrid or nuclear."

Russian drone attacks increase

Moscow is currently sending on average almost 200 drones a day toward Ukrainian targets, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week.

"Nearly 200 Russian drones against Ukraine in one day - that is nearly two hundred proofs that Russian ambitions are utterly detached from any ideas of real peace," the

embattled country's second war-time president said in a daily address to the nation on November 26.

His remarks referred to a blitz of 188 drones that targeted 17 Ukrainian regions overnight on November 25-26.

Regarding the use of Western projectiles to prevent the daily bombardment, Mr. Zelenskyy said "the only way to defend against such attacks is by destroying Russian weapons and launch systems on Russian territory."

Russian missile stockpiles

As winter settles in across Ukraine, Kyiv fears that Russia's rare use of various missile types means the Kremlin is stockpiling them for a winter barrage to further cripple Ukraine's energy infrastructure, which would explain the heavy deployment of drones.

As of November 20, Russia has 220 cruise missiles, 390 caliber projectiles, 350 Iskander-type missiles and 70 Kinzhal rockets, the deputy head of Ukraine's Defense Intelligence Vadym Skibetsky said on a 24-hour news broadcast.



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Ukrainian video...

(Continued from page 4)

was canceled a year earlier. The project was revived in 2018, with a planned release date of September 5, but was ultimately delayed to November 20. The game is now available exclusively on Microsoft's Xbox Series X/S consoles and Windows.

Upon release, STALKER 2 temporarily crashed parts of Ukraine's internet due to the sheer volume of simultaneous downloads. The game's release at 6 p.m. (local time) on November 20 caused unprecedented internet traffic in Ukraine.

Marian Ivasyuk, director of the Lanet internet provider, reported that the game generated over 500 terabytes of additional traffic in just six hours, temporarily overwhelming parts of the network. Other providers, such as the Odesa-based Tenet and the Kharkiv-based Triolan, experienced similar overloads, though Kyivstar reported no disruptions to its home internet services.

The game also broke records on Steam, the most popular digital gaming platform, with 121,335 players exploring the virtual Chernobyl Zone simultaneously on November 23, setting a new peak for Ukrainian-developed games.

According to Steam, for the week of November 19-26 the game claimed the top spot as the company's most profitable product, overtaking Counter-Strike 2, EA Sports FC 25, and Call of Duty: Black Ops 6. Early reviews have been overwhelmingly positive, with a 78 percent approval rating from over 30,000 reviews on Steam.

The game's success extends beyond initial sales, with over 1 million copies sold within two days, excluding downloads via Xbox Game Pass. The actual number of



Courtesy of GSC Game World

The videogame STALKER 2, made by the Ukrainian video game developer GSC Game World, has sold more than 1 million copies in two days, making it the most downloaded Ukrainian title ever and an iconic symbol of Ukrainian gaming.

players is significantly higher, cementing STALKER 2 as a groundbreaking achievement for GSC Game World and Ukrainian game development.

Dozens of Ukrainian musicians provided tracks for use in the game. The playlist covers various musical styles and eras, from modern rock by The Hardkiss to acapella songs performed by Pikkardyska Tertiya.

The soundtrack includes songs by Jerry Heil, Khrystyna Solovy, TNMK and Ukrainian composer and performer Mykola Mozhovy, as well as the underground bands Hatespeech and Ziferblat.

"Promoting artists to a global audience through games is a unique case," said Dmytro Odnorozhenko, frontman of the band Hatespeech.

After Russia's launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the concept behind the game changed. Cooperation with foreign

artists had to be abandoned due to financial constraints. The developers focused on recreating the atmosphere of the 1980s and 1990s through Ukrainian underground, post-punk and folk music.

"Expensive production wouldn't have worked here – the idea of the song was important," said Andriy Zaitsev, co-founder of Geisha Ninja Samurai company, which created the game's musical playlist.

The low recording quality of some tracks was an advantage. Such compositions best convey the mood of the time and organically fit into the game's atmosphere, he said.

Folk music provided by the GM Digital music label helped create a gaming radio station that, according to Mr. Zaitsev, "could be listened to by an ordinary person riding in a Lviv to Kolomyia bus."

PC Gamer media gave STALKER 2 a score of 83 out of 100. Reviewer Joshua

Wolens said he was worried the new game would be too polished and not "the STALKER he played and loved."

"The game is great and undoubtedly my personal game of the year, but it has its moments. I say what I said: STALKER 2 is STALKER to the core, including the downsides. There were bugs, crashes, bugs that halted progress, sometimes ridiculous lags in animations and AI, and minor lags that I accepted as the price of early admission. And while the substantial day one patch helped a lot, the game still feels shaky: a bit stammer, with AI still sometimes unable to distinguish between friend and foe, etc.," the PC Gamer reviewer said.

Mr. Wolens also drew attention to the extremely large map where players can get lost and the complexity of the game.

"STALKER 2 doesn't hold your hand, and the Chernobyl Zone doesn't care about you. In this game, the first mutant you fight is completely invisible, and it will not hesitate to throw its strongest enemies at you if you suddenly make a wrong turn. Even if you escape, you've spent precious resources to stay alive, and your gear has probably been chewed up in the fight; they'll get you next time," he said.

At the same time, he praised the game's atmosphere and said that playing the game gives him a feeling of "a pleasant return."

The game's release is a landmark for the Ukrainian gaming industry. Overcoming delays and challenges, the game blends immersive storytelling with Ukrainian culture, showcasing resilience and creativity.

For players, it's a gripping journey through the Chernobyl Zone. For Ukraine, it's a symbol of national pride and growing global influence, cementing STALKER 2 as both a record-breaking game and a cultural phenomenon.

Ukraine's Holy...

(Continued from page 8)

occupiers have used the Ukrainian forests as a source for logging.

"From a total area of Ukrainian forest of 10.4 million hectares, almost 3 million hectares of forest have been affected by hostilities," Deputy Environment Minister Olena Kramarenko told RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service recently. "Just imagine that [an area] three-quarters the size of Switzerland was burned or destroyed by trenches."

Ukraine is working to hold Russia accountable for such destruction from the invasion, including for actions that Kyiv argues constitute ecocide – unlawful or reckless acts committed knowing that there is a substantial likelihood of severe, widespread or long-term damage to the environment.

The Ukrainian Prosecutor-General's Office is already investigating 14 cases under the ecocide article of its Criminal Code, including the high-profile destruction in an explosion of the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine in June 2023.

Officials say that, with each passing day of an invasion that recently hit the 1,000-day mark, Ukraine's ecological crisis worsens.

The Environment Ministry estimates damage to the Holy Mountains park so far

at more than 16 billion hryvnia (\$385 million), with a clearer picture to emerge only once the war is over and explosives are cleared.

"Standing on the right bank of the Siverskiy Donets River" that winds through the park, Ms. Kramarenko said that due to fire "the forest looks more black than green."

"The land and the air are polluted," said park director Mr. Priymachuk. "There's nowhere for insects and birds to live."

Mr. Yarotskiy, a researcher at the Kremenna Woods National Nature Park in the nearby Luhansk region, notes that there are no more bats left in the Holy Mountains. "They performed an important function in the forest: They ate the same insects that can be dangerous to trees during reproduction," he told RFE/RL.

Larger animals perished or fled areas of intense fighting at the onset of the invasion, Mr. Yarotskiy said, seemingly evidenced by a rise in the populations of moose and deer in the Dnipro-Orylyk Nature Reserve to the west. It is a vicious sequence, he said.

"Vegetation disappears, mouse-like rodents disappear. There are no rodents, there's no food base for [larger] predators," he said.

Once vegetation reappears, Mr. Yarotskiy adds, rodent populations can then rise quickly with no predators to control their

numbers and spread disease, including to humans.

Generations to recover

Earlier this year, the Environment Ministry announced a plan to restore damaged areas of the Holy Mountains. But then the massive fire struck, and plans had to be abandoned or adjusted as the Russian Army continues to advance on the nearby front.

If the fighting ended tomorrow, according to Oleksiy Prykhodko, head of the Lyman Forestry state enterprise, it would still take 50-70 years to restore the areas' forests to their prewar condition. But he and ecologists who spoke to RFE/RL said that work could only begin once the more urgent problem of residual land mines was solved. Reuters reported that at least 14 forest rangers have died of shelling or mine blasts in the park; the Environment Ministry cited military secrecy in declining to provide an updated figure.

To date, Ukraine's State Emergency Service (DSNS) has managed to clear explosives from only about 2 percent of the Holy Mountains, which is dotted with small settlements.

"According to statements from the Environment Ministry and Defense Ministry, the demining of forests won't begin for 10 years," said Serhiy Zibtsev, director of the Regional East European Fire Monitoring

Center. "Because, let's say we have work [to de-mine] the fields and settlements and the roads for 10 years; in 10 years, the places that were restored with planting after the fire will be overgrown to the point where they'll be practically thickets."

Mr. Zibtsev says it's possible that the Holy Mountains might never be totally demined. He cites the examples of some Balkan countries where dangerous areas were simply made off-limits after the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia.

"They fenced off those forests, and that's it," Mr. Zibtsev said.

But he's quick to add that, while the danger of mines in the national park might remain for at least another decade, nature can do some recovery on its own if it's left to its own devices.

"If you ask a lot of people, leaders, whether this forest will recover, in most cases they'll say that 'No, it won't recover; we need to plant forest [flora],' " Mr. Zibtsev said.

"That's not true. It will recover [on its own]; it will just take more time," he said.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

used the missiles to strike in Kursk and the neighboring region of Belgorod. France also joined the United States and Britain in signaling to Ukraine that it has allowed the use of long-range weapons against targets on Russian territory. French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said in an interview with the BBC that Ukraine could fire French long-range missiles into Russia "in the logic of self-defense." But he would not confirm if French weapons had already been used. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by Reuters, dpa and the BBC)

Russian oil depot, 'important targets' attacked

Ukraine's military said it struck an oil depot overnight in Russia's western Kaluga region and "a number of important targets" in two other Russian regions after Russia shelled the center of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said in a statement on social media that the early morning attacks focused on Bryansk, Kaluga and Kursk. "There is confirmation of a successful impact of the oil base in the Kaluga region," it said. Vladislav Shapsha, the governor of Kaluga, said on Telegram that eight Ukrainian drones were shot down in the region, with debris from one of the downed drones sparking a fire at an industrial site. The fire has been extinguished and no casualties were reported, Mr. Shapsha said. Unconfirmed reports from the Telegram channels Ostorozhno, Novosti and Baza claim the fire affected a tank at a local oil depot and the Kaluga instrument-making

plant Typhoon. Videos allegedly showing the fire at the refinery have surfaced online, though official verification is pending. The attack came as the mayor of Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, said that at least 15 people were wounded in an attack that targeted residential areas, adding to the series of strikes the city has faced in recent weeks that have caused significant casualties and damage to civil and energy infrastructure. In Ukraine's southern Mykolayiv region, Russian strikes hit energy infrastructure overnight, regional Gov. Vitaliy Kim reported. Engineers managed to restore power to most affected areas, and no casualties were reported. Meanwhile, in the southeastern Zaporizhia region, Russian forces launched attacks on industrial facilities using "dozens of drones," according to regional Gov. Ivan Fedorov. One child was reportedly wounded in the strikes. Sources at the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's Ministry of Defense (HUR) told Ukrainska Pravda that the attack on the Kaluga oil depot was planned by Ukrainian special services. The targeted depot is reportedly linked to Russia's military operations against Ukraine. The Russian Defense Ministry reported that on the night of November 25, air defense systems intercepted and destroyed 23 Ukrainian drones across multiple regions. These included eight drones over Kaluga, seven over Kursk, five over Bryansk and three over Belgorod, the ministry said. The overnight strikes highlight the growing intensity of Ukraine's efforts to stop Russia's ongoing invasion that Moscow launched in February 2022. The situation continues to evolve as both sides accuse the other of escalating the violence. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by Ukrainska Pravda)

Georgian Legion leader sentenced in Donetsk

The so-called Supreme Court in Ukraine's Russian-occupied Donetsk region has sentenced Mamuka Mamulashvili, leader of the Georgian Legion, to 23 years in prison in absentia. The court, operating under Russia's authority in the illegally annexed region, accused Mr. Mamulashvili of recruiting and training foreign mercenaries to fight against Russian forces in Ukraine. According to the Russian Prosecutor General's Office, the 46-year-old Mr. Mamulashvili, who says he has been the focus of several poisoning attempts, was found guilty under several articles of the Russian Criminal Code. While the ruling will likely have no practical impact on Mr. Mamulashvili or the Georgian Legion's operations, it provides valuable propaganda for the Kremlin as it continues its campaign to suppress dissent and isolate Ukraine diplomatically. For Ukraine and its allies, the verdict underscores the ongoing challenges in countering Russia's narrative both on and off the battlefield. The charges allege that from 2014 to 2024 Mr. Mamulashvili recruited ex-military personnel from Georgia and other nations not directly involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine. Prosecutors claimed that Mr. Mamulashvili provided training, weapons and logistical support to these recruits, enabling their participation in military operations. The court further stated that Mr. Mamulashvili received compensation equivalent to over 23 million rubles (\$221,500) for his activities. Russian authorities also highlighted an April 2022 interview that Mr. Mamulashvili gave to the Khodorkovsky-LIVE YouTube channel, where he voiced staunchly anti-Russian sentiments and criticized Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. In addition to Mr. Mamulashvili, three other Georgian fighters – Giorgi Rusitashvili, Nodar Petriashvili and Vano Nadiradze – were each sentenced in absentia to 14 years in prison. They were convicted of participating as mercenaries in an armed conflict. The Russian prosecutor's office said that all four individuals would serve their sentences in a strict-regime penal colony if captured. The Georgian Legion, founded in 2014, is a volunteer military unit supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. Composed primarily of Georgian ex-soldiers, the group has been actively involved in key battles across east-

ern Ukraine. Russia has labeled the Georgian Legion a terrorist organization, aligning with its broader narrative of framing foreign support for Ukraine as illegitimate and criminal. The in absentia sentencing of Mr. Mamulashvili and other Georgian fighters appears to serve several purposes beyond legal action. It reinforces Moscow's portrayal of foreign volunteers aiding Ukraine as mercenaries and terrorists, undermining their legitimacy. By focusing on Mr. Mamulashvili's recruitment efforts and financial rewards, Russian authorities aim to discredit the broader network of international support for Ukraine's resistance. The verdict also underscores Russia's effort to project authority over Donetsk, a region it annexed in violation of international law. Issuing high-profile verdicts from a "Supreme Court" in the occupied territory serves to normalize its judicial and political structures in the eyes of its domestic audience, despite their lack of international recognition. (RFE/RL's Echo of the Caucasus)

Russia recruiting fighters from Yemen

The Financial Times reports that Russia has recruited hundreds of Yemeni men to fight in Ukraine, lured by the promise of high salaries and potential Russian citizenship. The November 23 report said they were helped by a Houthi-linked company to travel to Russia, then forcibly inducted into the Russian Army and sent to the front lines in Ukraine. The report said the action illustrates how the Kremlin is desperately trying to avoid a full mobilization of its society by using foreign fighters following reports that North Korea has sent thousands of soldiers to train and fight alongside Russian forces. (RFE/RL)

Russia opens criminal case against Brit

Russia's Investigative Committee announced on November 26 that it had opened a criminal case against James Scott Rhys Anderson, a British citizen accused of committing terrorism and mercenary activities. Mr. Anderson, who is alleged to have fought for Ukraine's International Legion, was detained in Russia's Kursk region after crossing the border in mid-November. His case underscores the growing complexities of international involvement in the Russia-

(Continued on page 19)

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The life...

(Continued from page 3)

doorbell in a tree," Andriy recalls. "Then the Ukrainians had to withdraw from this position. Russian troops stormed the area and one of the enemy soldiers – God knows what he was thinking either – pressed the button. An explosive device was linked to the bell and half of his group was killed in the blast."

One of Andriy's closest calls was when encountering a Russian POM-3 mine. The dreaded, air-dropped device is fitted with a seismic sensor sensitive enough to explode if someone walks into its kill radius.

"We had demined the territory in one area. Everything was going smoothly. Then our driver spotted a parachute from one of these mines. Then he took a few more steps and he called out that he thinks he can see a POM-3 mine. Everyone froze because it should have detonated already," Andriy says. "It seems the mine's battery had run out. It should have self-destructed, but it hadn't. We decided to shoot it with a machine gun from a safe distance. It didn't explode but just broke into pieces."

"Later, we were given the mission to head into this same field to pick up a fallen

drone," Andriy continues. "We looked for a safe area to enter this field, but there were empty containers from POM-3 mines lying all over the place. It was pretty clear these mines were scattered throughout the area. The commander was informed, and he called off the task. He decided the life of a sapper was not worth a drone."

"There is an opinion that sappers are disposable troops," Andriy says, half-jokingly.

As for the psychological support, Andriy says, "Your military family, the brothers with whom you live, are your most important network. Without them, things would become intolerable very quickly. There are seven people in our team. We all live together under one roof. There are older guys and younger, but we all support each other."

"Then it is your wife – this support is important. Then there is my daughter, who rings me and says: 'Dad, you can always call. At any time, call me, talk to me.'"

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With deep sorrow we share the news of the passing into eternity on November 10, 2024, just a few days before his 103rd birthday, of our beloved father and grandfather

Andre Pidwerbetsky

born November 22, 1921 in Horodenka, Ukraine to Oleksa Pidwerbetsky and Vasylyna Pluta.

Funeral Services were held on November 16, 2024 at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Watervliet, NY, followed by interment at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery in Hamptonburgh, NY.

He is survived by his family, who deeply cherish his memory:

son	- Alex Pidwerbetsky
daughters	- Areta Pidwerbetsky with her husband Myron Dytiiuk
grandchildren	- Adriana Pidwerbetsky
	- Nina Dytiiuk
	- Andrew Dytiiuk
nephew	- Askold Wynnykiw
extended family in Ukraine	

Вічна пам'ять

Contributions in memory of Andre Pidwerbetsky can be made to:

St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church
2410 Fourth Ave, Watervliet, NY 12189



With deep sorrow we announce that

Osyp Nimylowycz

a longtime resident of Philadelphia, died Saturday, October 26, 2024. He was 97.

Osyp was born in Drohobych, Western Ukraine in 1927. He was the son of Andrew and Olha Nimylowycz. As a teenage boy in Europe during World War II he became separated from his family as a refugee. After the war ended, the family reunited in a refugee camp in Berchtesgaden, Germany.

In 1950 he immigrated to the United States and settled in Patterson, NJ with his parents and two sisters, Halyna and Vera. After a few years of hard work and learning English, he attended the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he received a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Returning to live and work in Philadelphia, he met his beloved wife Nadia at Soyuzivka, a Ukrainian resort in the Catskills of New York. They married in April of 1958 and had three daughters: Tania, Marta and Lydia.

Osyp worked as an engineer for the Department of Defense until his retirement. Always mechanically inclined, he was credited with thirteen technical patents. Outside of work, he was very involved in the Ukrainian community in Philadelphia where he held many leadership positions, including with the Ukrainian Engineers Society of America, Ridna Shkola (Ukrainian School), Plast Pryat, and the Ukrainian Education and Cultural Center (UECC). At UECC he was active from the ground-up, volunteering countless hours on project planning and execution for many years.

Osyp is preceded in death by his daughter Tania and her husband, David Levine. He is survived by his wife Nadia, his daughters Marta Fox and Lydia Sos, with her husband Yarko. He was very proud of his seven grandchildren and was a fun and playful babysitter during their formative years. Now grown, they are Julian and Monica Levine, Alex and Michael Fox, and Natalie, Andrew and Stephanie Sos.

Osyp's family will greet friends on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 10:30 AM at St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church in Philadelphia. Requiem Liturgy will be celebrated at 11 AM. Committal Prayers will follow at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery. A Memorial Luncheon will follow.

May His memory be eternal.



With deep sorrow we announce that

Wolodymyr Kusznir

passed away peacefully at his home in Warren, MI, on October 6, 2024. He was born in Pobych, Ukraine in 1925.

Like many of his generation, he experienced a world war and multiple foreign occupations, dislocations and, lastly, several immigrations, first to Germany, then to Venezuela and then to the United States.

He joined Ukrainian community life in his adopted USA in 1955 as a parishioner at Immaculate Conception Church in Hamtramck, MI, where his civic-mindedness was in full display and was later transferred to St. Josaphat Church in Warren, MI, where he was a parishioner, church usher and supporter for 59 years. He was also an active



member in organized Ukrainian civic life in and around Detroit, be it as a parent in church-school related organizations or as a member in organizations such as the Ukrainian Liberation Front, the UCCA and others. He volunteered his time, employed his skills and provided financial support. He made a difference in the lives of those he touched. He was known for his warm hospitality and for his devotion to his family, to his church and to his country of birth and its cause of independence. Wolodymyr was a man of faith, courage, compassion and generosity.

Wolodymyr was very proud of his heritage, and he did everything in his power to instill that love in his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, ensuring their appreciation of Ukrainian language, art, culture and traditions. Each honors his legacy by finding ways to be mindful of the needs of others—both in their individual communities and some also in Ukraine.

Wolodymyr was married to Irene Macjowska for 48 years before she died unexpectedly in 1995. Together they had a daughter, Bohdanna (Vitvitsky) and a son, Jaroslaw, who survive him. For the last 24 years of his life, Wolodymyr was married to Maria Lushchak. He is also survived by his younger sister in Ukraine Marta Hontar and her family, his son-in-law Bohdan Vitvitsky and daughter-in-law Diana Kuchar Kusznir, his 6 grandchildren, his 8 great-grandchildren and other family members in the U.S., Ukraine, Canada, England and Australia. He will be missed deeply. Wolodymyr was laid to rest on October 12, 2024.



With deep sorrow we announce that

Olga Karpenko Hunczak

of Chatham Township, NJ, died on November 19, 2024 at the age of 82. She was born on May 1, 1942.

She was born in Kyiv, Ukraine and spent her formative years living in Irvington, NJ. She was a PLAST counselor and an active member of the Ukrainian community where she met the love of her life, Taras Hunczak. They were married on August 19, 1961, and moved to Chatham Township shortly thereafter where they continued to live happily for the next 63 years, raising sons Paul and Dan, working to free Ukraine, and traveling the world. Olga was a selfless person who put others' interests before hers. She was a committed wife and partner to Taras, whom she assisted throughout his career. Olga earned a Bachelor of Arts from Rutgers University, and she also was the Dean of Admissions at the Rutgers Law School in Newark.

Olga was a loving mother to sons Paul and Dan, whom she kept on the right track (mostly). She was a caring individual who helped the elderly in the neighborhood with shopping and doctor's appointments.

In 1972, Olga and Taras built a cherished home in Glen Spey, NY, where they spent many joyful summers surrounded by nature and family. Olga's dedication to her community extended beyond her immediate family; she served as the Secretary and Treasurer of the Ozeriany Lake Association for 35 years. In her role, she played a vital part in fostering community spirit and ensuring the well-being of the lake and its surroundings, further demonstrating her commitment to service and connection with others.

Her father, Semen Karpenko and mother, Irene Karpenko, predeceased her, as did her husband Taras Hunczak. She is survived by her children Paul Hunczak and partner Gloria Kupka; Dan Hunczak and his wife Cynthia Hunczak; and grandchildren Luke Hunczak; Peter Hunczak and his wife AJ Hunczak; Andrew Hunczak; Matthew Hunczak; Trevor Frederick and Tristan Frederick.

Her gracious, caring spirit and love for others will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all that knew her.

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Courtesy of Adrianna Rudyk-Odomirok

Children of the Mykola Pavlukhov branch of the Ukrainian American Youth Association in Chicago (photo on the left) gather to listen to a performance by the Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America (photo on the right).

Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America performs for CYM children in Chicago

by Adrianna Rudyk-Odomirok

CHICAGO – When I was approached to take on the role of head counselor (holovnij vychovnyk) of the Mykola Pavlukhov branch of the Ukrainian American Youth Association (CYM) in Chicago, my immediate response was to say yes. This isn't unusual for me; saying yes to volunteer roles has become a bit of a habit, especially when it comes to CYM. There's a particular pull to this work. I have a strong desire to nurture and pass on Ukrainian culture that feels essential, even if I sometimes feel like I've bitten off more than I can chew.

Sitting down with a calendar, though, I'll admit that I was overwhelmed. There's so much I want to share with these children, so many resources to sift through, and so many materials to explore. Even with past experience in this role at other branches (oseredoks), I'm not one to simply recycle past programs. I think of my own kids, ages 9 and 11, and wonder: How can I make meetings engaging so the children are not just passive listeners but curious participants?

I want our youth (yunatstvo) to experience Ukrainian culture in a way that's real, hands-on, and memorable – something beyond black-and-white photos or YouTube videos. Sometimes, though, the universe hands you exactly what you need.

One recent Saturday morning, after dropping my kids off at Ukrainian school, I arrived at our CYM center (domivka) around 9:05 a.m. to prepare for the afternoon's meeting. As I walked in, I noticed a few familiar faces, but not from CYM. These people, carrying music stands and banduras, were members of the Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America, a



Courtesy of Adrianna Rudyk-Odomirok

Children of the Ukrainian American Youth Association in Chicago sit quietly before a performance by the Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America.

choir that had gathered from across the U.S. for a rehearsal. Many of the members are based in Chicago, making our center an ideal rehearsal spot.

Instantly, I felt a surge of pride that CYM could host their event. But that pride was quickly followed by a twinge of concern: Did this mean we wouldn't be able to use the room for our meeting that day? Then, a lightbulb moment struck. This wasn't an inconvenience; it was a golden opportunity.

I approached Artistic Director Oksana Rodak and President Irene Kytasty Kuzma to ask if they would perform for our children. To my great joy, they agreed. This was no small gesture. Live performances of traditional Ukrainian music, especially with a

bandura, are rare gifts, ones we certainly don't come across every Saturday.

When our meeting came to a close, we led the children into the rehearsal room. It was the quietest I'd ever seen them, each one clearly sensing that something special was about to happen. The choir began with "Hey Sokoly," ("Hey Falcon") and their voices filled the room in waves of melody and emotion that I could feel in my bones. As I recorded it on my phone, my eyes welled with tears. I realized how fortunate we were to witness this moment in real life – not through a screen but here, surrounded by voices and music that has played throughout history.

During our time, the choir's director



Courtesy of Adrianna Rudyk-Odomirok

A member of the Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America shows her instrument to a young CYM member.

spoke to the children, sharing a few facts about the bandura, before inviting them to sing along. I could see how captivated they were – this wasn't just a history lesson; it was an experience they could feel and hear, connecting them to Ukraine in a way words alone can't.

While we look forward to the choir's official tour kicking off in March, this behind-the-scenes experience is something that will stay with us. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to share such a vibrant slice of Ukrainian culture with our youth. Thank you, Women's Bandura Ensemble, for this unforgettable moment. Hray, banduro, hray! (Play Banduro Play!)

Russian IRBM...

(Continued from page 2)

as the Ukrainian Armed Forces continue their incursion into Kursk Oblast and regularly hit military and industrial facilities all around the European part of Russia (Globalaffairs.ru, June 13, 2023; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 16, 24; Interfax.ru, October 30; Udm-info.ru, November 17).

Putin described the "Oreshnik" as Russia's new IRBM system, which has a range of 2,000 kilometers (7,456 miles). "Oreshnik" consists of a conventional warhead and an intermediate-range (500-5,500 kilometer; 310-340 mile) ballistic missile or a light intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of more than 5,500 kilometers (3,400 miles), but it has a

range lower than the ICBM "Yars." Russia has been working on a missile called the RS-26 "Rubezh," however, since the late 2000s-early 2010s when it began its confrontation with the West. That missile was based on the ICBM "Yars" but was 1.5 times lighter. Russia was possibly aiming to make the manufacturing process easier by transitioning to developing the "Rubezh," considering the decreased amount of sophisticated solid fuel required. Even though the project was probably canceled by 2018, it could either be revived later or it could have several remaining test missiles, one of which could be used against Ukraine (TASS, July 1, 2014; Vz.ru, November 18, 2015; TASS, March 22, 2018).

The origins of this project involving the conventional warhead lie in Russia's concerns about the American Conventional

Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) concept, which began as early as the late 2000s-early 2010s (Carnegie Politika, October 4, 2013; January 12, 2015). Russia could try to develop its own version of the CPGS even though it is not compatible with how the Russian armed forces conduct warfare and with the state of the Russian military-industrial base. The undoubtedly low potential production rate and undoubtedly high cost of this missile prevent Russia from using its conventionally armed version on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin decided that the spectacular strike on Dnipro was worth potential escalation because it urgently needs to change the political, psychological and even the combat situation in Ukraine to its favor. Russia will almost definitely use the threat of further escalation in its favor, which could lead to a "war of nerves."

Moreover, Russia could become interested in turning its war against Ukraine into a global conflict because it still believes that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is far from being united and that U.S. and European political and military leaders are not psychologically prepared for a real conflict. Responding with force is perceivably the only effective way to deter the aggressor from further escalation (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 15). While Russia is trying to intimidate both Ukraine and the United States and its allies and divide them, it must be wary of provoking potential retaliation.

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

Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine defeats Albania 2-1 in UEFA Nations League

In what can only be described as a best-case scenario, Ukraine's 2-1 victory over Albania on November 19, combined with Czechia's 2-1 win over Georgia, jumped the blue-and-yellow from fourth and last place into second place in League B, Group 1, with eight points based on their two wins, two draws and two losses. Oleksandr Zinchenko opened the scoring in the fifth minute on a shot from outside the box. A mere five minutes later, Roman Yaremchuk doubled the score with what proved to be the winning goal.

After scoring his 10th goal with the national team, Zinchenko showed off a jersey with the number 1,000 written on it to commemorate 1,000 days of Russia's war on Ukraine. It was Zinchenko's first appearance for his country in over two months because of an injury, and he wasted no time getting back up to speed. Playing in midfield, the 27-year-old pounced on a deflected Yaremchuk shot and volleyed it into the net before Albania's defense could react.

Ukraine held the advantage in shots on target (8-2) but had to endure a tense ending after Nedim Bajrami successfully converted a penalty in the 75th minute.

The sixth and final game of group play was held in Air Albania Stadium in Tirana, Albania. Ukraine dominated possession (59 percent versus 41 percent) and was guilty of more fouls (17-12) with their aggressive game plan.

Ukraine struggled through the tournament, losing the first two games of the group stage before defeating Georgia and settling for a pair of draws. The victory over Albania sends Ukraine into a future match with Belgium, a third-place team from League A with a chance for promotion into

the upper league. The first match is home on March 20, 2025, and the return leg will be away on March 23, 2025.

Rebrov refuses to speak Russian at press conference

During a November 18 press conference ahead of Ukraine's UEFA Nations League match with Albania scheduled for the next day, Ukrainian head coach Serhiy Rebrov refused to answer an interpreter's questions in Russian.

After expressing his condolences to Ukrainian families who have lost loved ones in Russia's recent attacks on Ukraine, an interpreter provided by the Albanian side asked Rebrov to repeat his opening remarks in Russian because the interpreter did not understand Ukrainian very well. Rebrov refused to comply with the request and offered to repeat his statement in English.

A national team press representative emphatically stated that there would be no speaking Russian at the press conference.

Ukrainian athletes dominate MSAC World Championship

Twenty-four teams with a total of 275 athletes representing 17 countries competed in Wroclaw, Poland, on November 14-17 at the International Organization of Military and Sports All-round Competitions (MSAC) World Championship.

Ukrainian athletes finished first in all three age classifications, including seniors, juniors and cadets. Ukraine won 63 medals in senior competitions (26 gold, 22 silver, 15 bronze), 34 medals in junior events (10 gold, 17 silver, seven bronze) and 64 medals in the cadets (youth) class (27 gold, 20



Ukrainian Association of Football

Man of the Match Oleksandr Zinchenko (left) and his teammates mark 1,000 days of Russia's war on Ukraine during the team's UEFA Nations League match against Albania on November 19. Ukraine, which finished in second place in Group B1, won 2-1 against Albania and advanced to the playoff scheduled against Belgium on March 20 and 23, 2025, for promotion to League A.

silver, 17 bronze) for a grand total of 161 medals.

Usyk rewards Khyzhniak for winning Olympic gold medal

Undisputed heavyweight boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk kept his pre-Olympic promise to reward Ukrainian medalists from the Paris Games by giving middleweight Olympic champion Oleksandr Khyzhniak \$100,000. Usyk recently hosted the Olympic gold medalist at his training camp in Spain.

While in Spain, Khyzhniak signed an agreement with the Ready to Fight boxing talent agency to promote his boxing career, which will include personal branding, sponsorship opportunities and profession-

al growth. Khyzhniak also agreed to take an active role in the agency's initiatives, working with boxing federations and promoting amateur boxing worldwide.

Khyzhniak has retained his amateur status with the goal of possibly pursuing a third Olympic medal in 2028 (he also won a silver medal in 2020). He said he is also considering going the professional route in the future.

Usyk is set to face Tyson Fury in an hyped upcoming rematch on December 21 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The co-main event will be a matchup between Uzbekistan's Israil Madrimov (9-0-1, 6 KO) and Ukrainian Serhii Bohachuk (24-2, 23 KO).

(Continued on page 18)

Evgeny Furman teaching Kozak inspired workout in Slovakia

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Working in sales for some time wore out Evgeny Furman, so much so that he developed back pain. In an attempt to heal, the Odesa native took a two-week vacation to Khortytsia, an island in Zaporizhia, where he lived in a tent, did lots of training, hardly ate or slept and practiced an old form of Ukrainian Kozak combat training. Ukrainian Kozaks were warriors who maintained a base in Khortytsia. His experience there allowed Furman to discover Alpha Gravity, a rope-based bodyweight exercise inspired by Kozak training.

This inspiration pushed him to form a company called Octopus for Alpha Gravity to promote the training program in Ukraine. Furman's wife is a trained psychologist, and she began traveling with him on training trips. Her insight and people's reactions to the workout sessions spurred him to study psychoanalysis so that he could understand the interaction between body and psyche.

His presentation on Alpha Gravity at an Odesa sports festival led to a job offer from a local kindergarten. Having received a third university degree in physical education teaching to go with degrees in law and finance, he decided to put to use what he learned about Alpha Gravity's key elements – health, sports, body orientation and rehabilitation – which led to a career move and working with children.

Next came the goal of sharing the

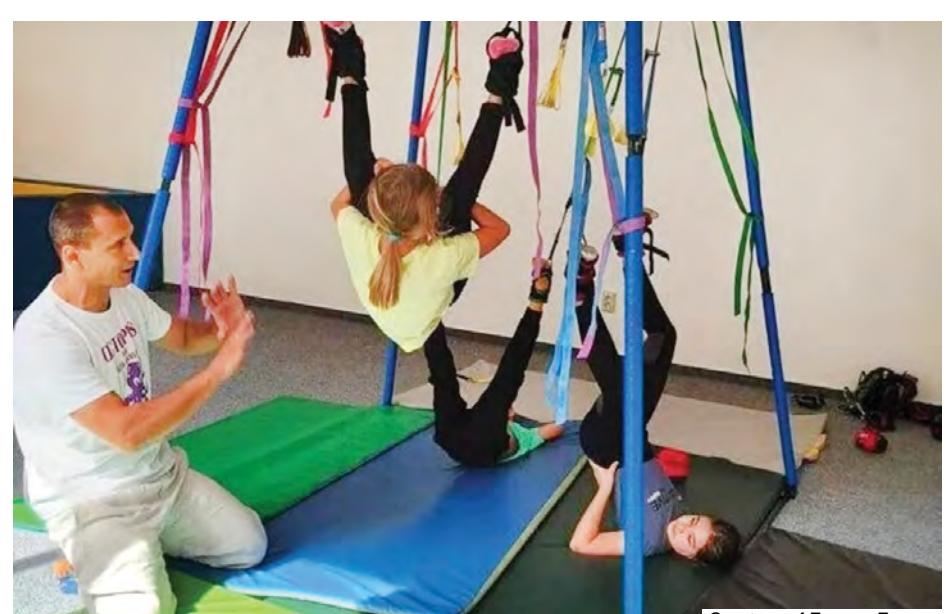
Ukrainian workout with an international audience. In 2021, Furman went to Slovakia for a few weeks to find a potential home base for his business and a new home for his family, preferably centrally located in Europe. As fate would have it, he ended up returning to Slovakia hours before Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Furman settled in Nitra, the oldest city in Slovakia, some 60 miles east of Bratislava, with his wife and two young children. His first job as a bus driver lasted several weeks as he missed deeper interactions with people. He studied Slovak, spending long hours listening to Slovak music, films, audiobooks and television shows.

One of his sons, David, also studied the language, easing the boy's transition to a Nitra kindergarten. The two also practiced Alpha Gravity together with Furman's daughter, Sarah.

In time, the exercise program expanded to include other children. Furman is currently in his second year of holding weekly Alpha Gravity classes at a private kindergarten in Nitra after he convinced the principal it was a worthwhile endeavor.

He is also employed as a physical education teacher at a local school. He and refugee Ukrainian students at the private school struggled to overcome the language barrier. Furman worked to connect Ukrainians with Slovaks and got help from colleagues who held seminars on how to teach Ukrainian children while integrating



Courtesy of Evgeny Furman

Evgeny Furman (left) conducts an Alpha Gravity education class for students in Nitra, Slovakia.

them into Slovak society.

More than two years into his life in Slovakia, and thanks to his newfound career move of working with children, Furman has rediscovered himself and is dedicated to improving the lives of children.

Furman has grown to enjoy Slovakia, having acclimated himself to the city and noting that its cleanliness and strict transportation schedule are huge pluses.

He believes the Slovak people are different from Ukrainians, saying they are men-

tally healthier and have better balance and peace in their lives. He sees Ukrainians as more efficient workers who are more ambitious and better able to cope with stress.

He has not yet decided if Slovakia will be his permanent home. His primary goal is to develop Alpha Gravity in Slovakia and beyond.

(Based on reporting by The Slovak Spectator)

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

One-armed golfer Alex Fourie helping orphans in Ukraine



<https://singlehandgolf.com>

Alex Fourie (right) instructs a young golfer through his educational program Single Hand Golf.

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Alex Fourie was born in 1992 in the Cherkasy Region of Ukraine without a right arm as well as with a cleft lip and palate due to the damaging effects of radiation from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. The radiation seeped into the rivers near Fourie's hometown of Zvenyhorodka, affecting his birth mother.

Fourie has undergone 26 surgeries throughout his life, including on his nose, face and cleft lip. The divorced father of 3-year-old daughter Lila never knew his biological parents. They gave up custody of their son right after he was born, and he lived in orphanages for seven years until some good luck came his way.

A Ukrainian law prohibited children from being adopted after age 7, but Fourie was taken in by Rev. Anton Fourie and his wife, Elizabeth, who were South African missionaries serving in Alabama.

At the time of his adoption in 1999, one month before turning 7, young Fourie weighed only 35 pounds. The boy was used to eating soup for almost every meal.

He moved some 5,000 miles to Bessemer, Ala., to live with his new family. He recalls devouring three McDonald's quarter-pounders for his first meal in America.

During his first week in Alabama, Anton Fourie put a golf club in his adopted son's hand, and a lasting love affair with the sport began. Growing up, he played several sports, including soccer, tennis and football, where he was a kicker at Shades Mountain Christian High School. But golf was the game he loved most.

The youngster experienced some early success at Hoover Country Club when older members started including him in money games. Members would fight over

(Continued on page 19)

War destroying future of sports in Ukraine

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Two years after a Russian missile crushed her summer home in the Odesa region, burying her under debris and severing her left leg, Oleksandra Paskal was among 12 girls training in rhythmic gymnastics. Her prosthetic leg received no attention. Her coach, Inga Kovalchuk, recognized great potential in Paskal when she was 4 years old, thinking she could potentially be a future Olympian. Paskal's tragic experience is a vivid example of how Russia's war on Ukraine is destroying athletic development and sport in the country.

Paskal, now age 8, dreamed of competing at the Olympics, but she now has visions of performing at the Paralympics. She returned to training after only six months of rehab and won her first competition one year after she lost her leg. Her cool-headed grace and agility are an inspiration for many, even beyond the rhythmic gymnastics' community.

Her coach said she doubts whether she can continue working throughout the lengthy war, noting how difficult it is for all involved.

Generally, it takes 10 years to develop an Olympic champion, and the process requires a strong national sports infrastructure that includes training centers, schools, equipment and coaches. The process begins in early childhood for most athletes, and nearly all are filtered out before

they get close to becoming Olympic hopefuls.

Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sports has reported that more than 500 sports facilities have been damaged or occupied by Russian troops, robbing young Ukrainian athletes of places to train. Coaches have joined the military or fled the country to continue training athletes abroad. Many children have left and not returned. The ones who stayed have their workouts interrupted by air raids that can last hours.

Some have estimated that, if Russia's war on the country ended, it would take more than a decade for Ukrainian sports to recover. Coach Kovalchuk lost some 70 of her 110 gymnasts, including many top prospects who fled the country. Her class now has 60 athletes, although she added several internally displaced students from the east of Ukraine.

Her priority has shifted from seeing her students achieve strong results to preserving the mental and physical health of those children.

Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska has said that over 2 million Ukrainian children have fled the country, impacting many sports. Some coaches lost athletes they spent years developing.

Ukraine's national diving team coach Illia Tseliutin lost half of his most promising youngsters, and five of his 20 coaches enlisted in the army or fled the country. Schools in Ukraine's eastern and southern

regions have been impacted the most by Russia's war on the country. Many Ukrainian divers and swimmers are originally from the occupied east and south and have nothing to return to, so they choose to stay abroad.

Children who have left Ukraine may end up competing as representatives of other countries. And with fewer elite athletes in the country, those who have remained have fewer chances to compete against other elite athletes.

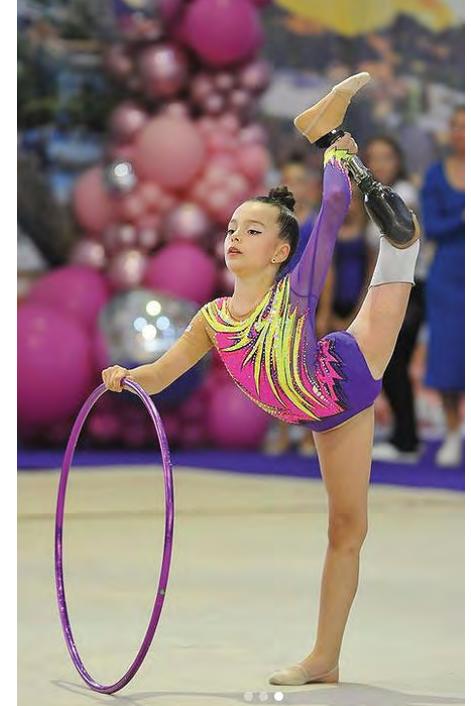
Coaches once created training schedules several years in advance. Now they say they hope their sport survives the war.

Kherson used to be a major hub for rowing teams with many Olympians calling the city home. Today, the area along the Dnipro River serves as a dividing line between Russian and Ukrainian troops. Drones, artillery and missiles fly overhead daily, and the river is filled with mines.

Fifteen coaches and 200 children engaged in rowing have fled Kherson. Kherson's training school for rowers was left in rubble after many Russian bombings and flooding from the Kakhovka dam explosion in June 2023.

Given the danger on the water and the lack of facilities and coaches, the area will likely not be a training ground for talented young Ukrainian rowers any time soon, and the sports infrastructure will not be rebuilt while the war rages on.

Some of the coaches and sports officials



Instagram.com/paskals2016

Rhythmic gymnast Oleksandra Paskal had her leg amputated after being wounded during a Russian missile strike on Ukraine.

who fled Ukraine don't believe rowers will return. Those who had talented young athletes in their charge before the war are now working abroad. They say they want to return, but not before the war ends.

(Based on reporting by The Washington Times.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at ihorgenia@sbcglobal.net.

Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 17)

Sport Shorts

• Ukrainians won nine medals (six silver and three bronze) at the European Thai Boxing Championships in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 7-14. Six medals were won in the U-23 class and three in the senior elite.

• With 1,522 points, Maxim Agarushhev won the bronze medal at the 2024 Modern Pentathlon Baltic Cup in Kaunas, Lithuania, on November 8.

• Ukrainian athletes won 11 medals at the Wheelchair Fencing World Cup held in Pisa, Italy, on November 8-10. Oleh Naumenko won gold in foil (category B), contributing to Ukraine's total haul of five silver and five bronze medals.

• Ukraine won four medals at the 2024

IMMAF Junior and Senior World Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on November 5-10, including two gold and two silver medals.

Premier League club Crystal Palace and Ligue 1 club Marseille are both interested in the services of Mykhailo Mudryk, either permanently or on loan, in the upcoming January transfer window. Chelsea is reportedly only interested in a loan for the time being, holding out faith in the young Ukrainian's potential.

Boxer Maryna "Dark Angel" Malovana won by majority decision in a 10-round bout over challenger Johana Rochl on October 25 in Essen, Germany. The 28-year-old Cherkasy, Ukraine, native captured the Women's International Boxing Federation (WIBF) super lightweight title (140 lbs.).

Ukrainian athletes won six medals at the World Cadet, Youth and Junior Sambo

Championships held in Larnaca, Cyprus, on October 11-13, including a gold medal won by now 19-year-old Anhelina Velichko in the 80-kilogram weight class.

Ukraine's U-17 national women's soccer team defeated Moldova 5-0 and Malta 10-0 in qualifying matches for the Euro 2025 tournament.

Ukraine won four silvers and one bronze medal at the 2024 Balkan Athletics Cross-Country Championships on November 9 at Campulung Moldovenesc, Romania.

Ukraine won third place in the NEOM Women's Beach Soccer Cup final by defeating England 5-4. The event took place on November 13-16 in Neom, Saudi Arabia.

Para table tennis player Iryna Shynkarova received the honorary award of Master of Sports International Class on November 11. The 19-year-old won a bronze medal in mixed doubles at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

English Premier League clubs Manchester City, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur are all interested in signing Ukrainian international Illia Zabarnyi, whose consistent performances for Bournemouth have not gone unnoticed. His new deal, signed in the summer and running through 2029, will require a huge transfer fee.

Illia Kovtun won the Memorial Arturo Gander gymnastics competition in Balerna, Switzerland, in early November. Kovtun competed in four disciplines and scored 57.100 points to win the overall competition.

Ukraine's U-17 women's football team defeated Romania 3-0 in the final match of League B qualification for Euro 2025, winning their group and earning promotion to League A.

(Based on reporting by the Kyiv Independent, ESPN, UNN and Mail Online.)

OUT & ABOUT

December 3 New York	Presentation by Mark Temnycky, "A Spark of Light: Ukraine's Energy Sector During the Russian Invasion," Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu	December 8 Concord, MA	Christmas market, fundraiser for children in Ukraine, Ukrainian Cultural Center of New England, Concord Scout House, www.tickttailler.com/events/ucccnorg
December 4 Cambridge, MA	Presentation by Dafna Rachok, "Deadly Care: What HIV Policies Reveal about Russia's Colonial Logic During the Invasion of Ukraine (2014-ongoing)," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu	December 9 Cambridge, MA	Panel discussion, "The Budapest Memorandum after 30 Years: A Conversation with Eugene Fishel, John Herbst and Serhii Plokhi," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
December 6 Glenside, PA	Concert, "A Ukrainian Christmas," Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus, St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church, www.bandura.org/events	December 10 Cambridge, MA	Presentation by Kateryna Ruban, "Abortion, Emancipation and Reproductive Disobedience in Ukraine," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
December 6 Ottawa	Christmas Party, Ukrainian National Federation - Ottawa-Gatineau branch, Qaisar Restaurant, vkarplak@rogers.com	December 10 New York	Ukrainian Tech Forum, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
December 6 Whippany, NJ	Centennial celebration, Carpathian Ski Club, Ukrainian American Cultural Center, 646-265-1463 or info@klkusa.com	December 14 Jenkintown, PA	Christmas bazaar and food fest, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.ueccphila.org
December 6-7 New York	International holiday boutique, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	December 14 New York	Yalynka celebration, Ukrainian Engineers' Society of America and the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
December 7 Washington	Concert, "Ukraine Lives!" Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus, Ukrainian Catholic Shrine of the Holy Family, www.bandura.org/events	December 14-15 Chicago	Winter makers market, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, www.uima-chicago.org
December 6-27 Chicago	Exhibit, "Heritage in Bloom: The Art of Petrykivka" by Kateryna Kryvolap, Ukrainian National Museum, www.ukrainiannationalmuseum.org	December 17 Lancaster, PA	Christmas trip, "Joy to the World," Ukrainian American Senior Citizens Association, American Music Theater, 215-699-6068
December 7 Miami, FL	Ukrainian Christmas traditions, food, crafts and more, with concert of "Carol of the Bells" and visitation by St. Nicholas, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, https://ukrainianmiami.org	December 19 New York	Christmas concert, with Valeria Vovk and Firma Chupakhin, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
December 8 New Haven, CT	Charity concert, featuring Iryna Lonchyna, Igor Yuziuk, Liubomyr Chermak and Ridna Shkola's Singing Group "Ukrainian Hearts," St. Mary the Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 203-494-6278 or halial@aol.com	December 21 Philadelphia	Performance, "The Ukrainian Nutcracker," featuring Voloshky School of Ukrainian Dance, Syzokryli Ukrainian Dance Ensemble and other guests and performers, Abington Friends School, https://31129.danceticketing.com
December 8 Jenkintown, PA	Petrykivka workshop and ornament decoration, Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.ueccphila.org		

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

NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

Ukraine war and the heightened risks faced by foreign volunteers. According to the Investigative Committee, Mr. Anderson, alongside other members of Ukrainian forces and foreign mercenaries, illegally entered Kursk with weapons, military equipment and drones armed with explosive devices. Russian authorities claim the group carried out actions intended to intimidate the local population, cause "significant" property damage and destabilize government operations. A statement from the Investigative Committee said that Mr. Anderson and his associates were armed with automatic firearms, missile systems and drones, underscoring the technological capabilities of Ukraine's forces and their international allies. The authorities allege these actions constitute terrorism under Russian law. A video circulated on pro-Russian Telegram channels and by the state news agency TASS over the weekend showed a man identifying himself as James Scott Rhys Anderson, a 22-year-old former British Army signalman who joined Ukraine's International Legion after leaving military service in 2023. Speaking with a clear British accent, Mr. Anderson confirmed his identity and discussed his role in the ongoing war. However, the footage has not been independently verified, raising questions about the circumstances surrounding its recording. Mr. Anderson's situation highlights the dangers faced by foreign volunteers in Ukraine's resistance, as well as the propaganda value such incidents hold for Russia. The Kremlin has consistently sought to portray foreign

fighters as illegitimate actors, using their presence to bolster its narrative that Ukraine's defense is dependent on mercenaries and extremists. Since Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's 2022 call for international recruits, thousands of foreign volunteers have joined Ukraine's International Legion. The elite unit, integrated into Ukraine's military, has attracted fighters from across the globe, including Western nations. For many, the war represents a fight against Russian aggression and a defense of democratic values, but their participation also exposes them to legal and physical risks. Mr. Anderson's

case is not the first instance of a foreign fighter being captured or accused by Russia. Moscow has consistently sought to criminalize foreign involvement, labeling such fighters as mercenaries – a status not protected under international law – and often accusing them of terrorism. This tactic not only targets individual fighters but also aims to deter further international participation in Ukraine's defense. The announcement of Mr. Anderson's detention comes amid shifting dynamics in the border regions, including Kursk. Ukraine's recent cross-border operations signal an escalation in tactics, challenging Russian

defenses within its own territory. These incursions, while symbolic of Ukraine's bold resistance, also amplify Moscow's narrative of external aggression threatening its sovereignty. At the same time, reports of Russia employing North Korean soldiers and pushing to reclaim territory lost during Ukraine's August counteroffensive suggest a deepening of the war. Russia's efforts to portray foreign fighters like Mr. Anderson as central to these operations serve as both a legal and propaganda tool, distracting from its own controversial use of international personnel and tactics. (RFE/RL)

One-armed...

(Continued from page 18)

having Fourie on their team, and some profited from his skill. He even managed to procure a set of new golf clubs.

Golf continued to play an important role in his life. He played in the No. 2 spot on his high school golf team as a senior and went on to become a club pro in his home town of Knoxville, Tenn. He owns an impressive 0.6 Handicap Index and started playing in tournaments in 2020.

His career highlight thus far was the honor of competing in the United States Golf Association's (USGA) inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open at Pinehurst Country Club in July 2022. As the country's top-ranked one-armed golfer (according to the U.S. Adaptive Alliance), he didn't play very well (scores of 95-83-86) in the three-day event because of a broken finger and torn knee ligament. But he said he was still thrilled with the experience. The U.S.

Disabled Golf Association and the North American One-Armed Golfer Association recognized him for his performance.

Fourie began a charity called Single Hand Golf to help adaptive kids get into the sport. His mission is to grow disabled golf by developing tournaments, clinics for kids at the tournaments and having parents in attendance to help them better understand what kids are going through.

The beneficiaries of his mission, however, changed because of Russia's war on Ukraine. As of late January 2023, Fourie had raised some \$60,000 through Single Hand Golf t-shirt sales. The proceeds went toward moving 350 fellow orphans from his native country through a partnership with Hope Now Ministries, the same organization that helped him find a new home more than 20 years ago.

As the war continues, new challenges have emerged and Fourie viewed a horrifying video of his hometown orphanage being destroyed. He had an idea of raising additional funds to purchase a bulletproof

vehicle to transport children to safety after a driver was shot in the leg.

When the war broke out in February 2022, Fourie wanted to return to his homeland to join the fight against Russia, even though he is missing an arm. He wasn't sure what he could have done with one arm, but he wanted to help. His friends in Ukraine persuaded him to stay in Alabama, telling him he could do more from afar, especially for orphans.

He has supported a charity for orphans called Hope Now in Cherkasy, so it was a simple and natural progression to use his t-shirt sales and fundraisers to help the orphans. The shirts have two different mottos written on them: "One arm, zero handicap," and "Single-handedly growing the game."

He offers others advice at the clinics: "Don't use your disability as a disability. Use your disability as an ability to promote and to fight!"

(Based on reporting by Golf Digest and Over the Mountain Journal.)



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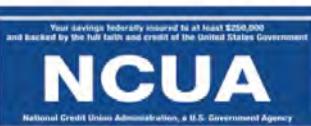
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