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Report: Putin, other Russian officials directly involved in transfer, deportation of Ukrainian children

by Mike Eckel
RFE/RL

Senior Russian authorities, including President Vladimir Putin, were directly involved in ordering the forcible transfer, fostering and later adoption of Ukrainian children moved out of war zones and occupied regions of Ukraine, U.S. researchers found.

In a report released on December 3, investigators from Yale University said that at least 314 children from Ukraine were subject to a "systematic program of coerced adoption and fostering" by Russian individuals and families.

"The Russian Federation engaged in systematic, deliberate and widespread forced adoption and transfer of children from Ukraine," the report says. "The operation ... was initiated by Putin and his subordinates with the intent to 'Russify' children from Ukraine."

The findings add to a growing body of evidence pointing to possible culpability for war crimes by Putin and other top officials.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Putin in March 2023

for the "war crime of unlawful deportation" and "unlawful transfer" of children from Ukrainian territory to Russia. The Kremlin's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, was also charged.

Researchers at Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab, whose work is partially supported by the U.S. State Department, said they had documented the following by Russia since 2022:

Planes registered to the Russian Air Force and the presidential office were used to fly children to Russia;

Ukrainian children were taken to Russia for months, enrolled in Russian schools, then listed in child placement databases;

Some Ukrainian children appear in Russian databases as if they were Russian-born, not Ukrainian-born;

Russian citizens who took on legal guardianship of Ukrainian minors were "empowered" to apply for Russian citizenship for the children in their custody;

Ukrainian children were subjected to "pro-Russian reeducation" at Russian state-run institutions.

The majority of the children from

(Continued on page 6)

Russian woman arrested in U.S. for alleged ties to Russian intelligence

RFE/RL's Siberia. Realities

A Russian national, Nomma Zarubina, has been arrested on charges of providing false information to U.S. law enforcement and maintaining connections with Russian intelligence services, linking her to another suspected spy who fled the United States while being pursued by authorities.

According to FBI allegations presented in a New York Southern District Court hearing in late November, Ms. Zarubina was recruited by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) in 2020 and operated under the codename "Alyssa."

She allegedly worked to build a network of contacts among journalists and experts while carrying out tasks for an FSB officer from her native city of Tomsk in Siberia.

The FBI claims that Ms. Zarubina deliberately misled agents in 2021, denying any connection with Russian intelligence. Contrary to her statements, she allegedly attended forums and meetings in Europe and the United States to fulfill assignments from the FSB.

Notably, Russian opposition figure in



Russian national Nomma Zarubina, who was arrested by U.S. authorities on charges of providing false information to U.S. law enforcement and maintaining connections with Russian intelligence services, is pictured inside the United Nations General Assembly in July 2023.

(Continued on page 7)

More than 1 million Ukrainians left without electricity after Kremlin attacks

Russian drones batter Kyiv, as 3 people killed in Kherson



State Emergency Service of Ukraine (Volyn region)

Firefighters work at the scene of a Russian missile strike in Ukraine's Volyn region on November 28.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Russia unleashed a "massive" attack on Ukraine's infrastructure on November 28, leaving more than 1 million people without power in freezing temperatures across the country.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of a "despicable escalation," as the Interior Ministry recorded damage to infrastructure in nine regions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the latest attack was Moscow's "response" to Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory with U.S. medium-range ATACMS missiles.

Speaking during a trip to Kazakhstan, Putin warned that Russia's future targets

could include "decision-making centers" in Kyiv.

Putin said Russia launched more than 90 missiles and 100 drones in the "comprehensive strike" on November 28 and that 17 targets had been hit – the type of detail that the president rarely gives.

Ukraine's air force said it had shot down 79 missiles and 35 drones, while 62 drones were "lost," meaning they had likely been disrupted by electronic warfare.

All missiles or drones aimed at the capital, Kyiv were downed, officials said.

The attack forced national power-grid operator Ukrenergo to "urgently introduce emergency power cuts," Energy Minister

(Continued on page 12)

Ukrainian community, former NHL players balk at 'Russian Heritage Night' game in Ohio

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – A sizable Ukrainian advocacy umbrella group in Ohio and several former National Hockey League (NHL) players have voiced disapproval of a professional hockey game that is taking place between the Columbus Blue Jackets and visiting Washington Capitals because it will promote a "Russian Heritage Night."

An undisclosed gift will be provided to individuals who purchased tickets in the group package. Members of the group will also have their picture taken on the ice after the game, according to the event's advertisement.

As Russia continues to mount a genocidal war against Ukraine, the United Ukrainian Organizations in Ohio (UUO) has questioned the appropriateness of the event and has asked the NHL's Blue Jackets to rethink holding the event organized by the Russian Heritage Network (RHN), the group promoting the event.

A chief organizer from RHN, Alex Braverman, said the organization is unincorporated, yet the UUO found a business corporation registered by the same name in Mississauga, Canada.

In a letter posted on Facebook by the

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Russia faces increasing troubles financing its war against Ukraine

by Ksenia Kirillova
Eurasia Daily Monitor

The ruble has dropped to its lowest value since the beginning of Russia's war on Ukraine in February 2022, valued at 113 rubles to one dollar as of November 27 (The Moscow Times, November 26, 27). Inflation in Russia continues to rise and cannot be denied even by pro-Kremlin sources. Independent economists note that the goals of maintaining convincing rates of economic growth and macroeconomic stability have become incompatible in Russia. To continue Russia's war against Ukraine, Moscow must sacrifice economic stability at the risk of creating widespread discontent among their citizens (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 29; Re-Russia.net, November 20).

In the spring, certain independent socio-political surveys showed that 54 percent of respondents considered rising prices in Russia a more important problem than the war and terrorist acts (Levada.ru, April 9). Today, pro-Kremlin Telegram channels acknowledge this (T.me/Russica.ru, November 19). Officially, inflation stands at 8.5 percent, although even pro-Kremlin media admit that the real inflation figures are much higher, with the real rate thought to be around 15.3 percent, and judging from the weakening ruble exchange rate, it will only grow (Finam.ru, November 19).

The Central Bank's main tool for slowing price growth is to increase the prime rate,

which currently stands at 21 percent, and the Central Bank has hinted at a further increase (Russian Central Bank, October 25; Kommersant.ru, November 19). In turn, economic experts confirm that, even considering the measures taken, reaching the desired 4 percent inflation per year will not be possible, even by 2026 (Forbes.ru, November 5). Likewise, independent observers note that the extremely high prime rate has already led to an economic slowdown. The Central Bank's operational statistics show that economic activity was lower than average in October for the third quarter. Experts at the Center for Macroeconomic Analysis and Short-Term Forecasting warn that, "in the near future, Russia is threatened by an economic downturn and a collapse of investments" (Forecast.ru, November 12).

Against this backdrop, the confrontation of Russia's "war party," which advocates maintaining economic growth at any price, with the "party of strict credit policy" is intensifying. Experts predict that a "war party" victory is guaranteed. As a result, the head of the Central Bank, Elvira Nabiullina, must accept that the government will abandon the goal of containing inflation (Re-Russia.net, November 20). Criticism of Ms. Nabiullina is growing, not only in radical-patriotic circles but also in relatively "moderate" sources, including some close to the presidential administration. The

(Continued on page 6)

Belarus and Russia work on new security agreements

by Yauheni Preiherman
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On November 22, a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Collegiums of Russia and Belarus occurred in the Belarusian city of Brest (Mfa.gov.by; Mid.ru, November 22). The two ministers, Maxim Ryzhenkov and Sergey Lavrov, presided over a day of discussions that focused on various spheres of bilateral cooperation and preparations for the 25th anniversary of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, on which Minsk and Moscow intend to sign two new important documents. The delegations also explored coordinated approaches to advancing relations with countries in the so-called Global South and ways of countering Western economic sanctions and political pressure.

Annual joint meetings of the two countries' foreign affairs ministry collegiums have taken place since the Treaty on the Establishment of the Union State of Belarus and Russia was signed in 1999. The recent event in Brest was the 25th such gathering, which brought together the ministers, deputy ministers and the directors of the main departments of both states' foreign ministries. According to the 1999 treaty, foreign policy issues belong to the joint responsibility of the allied states (Minsk Dialogue, April 1, 2019). In other words, Minsk and Moscow develop their cooperation in foreign policy related to the treaty's implementation on an inter-state basis, and no authority is delegated to the supranational level.

This requires inter-state coordination

within the framework of annual joint meetings of the ministerial collegiums and regular thematic consultations between respective departments of the foreign affairs ministries. Moreover, the countries adopt multi-year programs of coordinated Union State actions in foreign policy. The programs mainly apply to their participation in multilateral international organizations, such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and joint efforts to strengthen the integration groupings they belong to, for example, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. In the past, such programs were normally signed for two-year periods, yet the current one covers three years (2024-2026) (Pravo.by, January 30).

The joint meeting took place for the first time in 25 years, not in the countries' respective capitals but in a regional city. Brest, which is in Western Belarus and borders Poland, was chosen as the venue for a reason. In June 1941, it was the first Soviet city attacked by Nazi Germany, and the heroic defense of the Brest fortress became a legendary episode in the Belarusian history of World War II. By organizing the meeting in Brest, the hosts wanted to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from the Nazis and to underline "the policy of preserving the historical truth" regarding World War II (Mfa.gov.by, November 22).

In addition to the location, the agenda for the latest gathering also looked some-

(Continued on page 10)

NEWSBRIEFS

NATO on protecting Ukraine's infrastructure

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members have agreed to make protecting Ukraine's infrastructure a top priority, alliance chief Mark Rutte said on December 4, as Russia continues to pound Ukrainian cities and towns with drone and missile strikes. Speaking to reporters ahead of the second day of a meeting of foreign affairs ministers from the 32-member military alliance, Mr. Rutte said the gathering discussed providing Ukraine with enough air defenses to protect its infrastructure from Russian attacks. "There was a clear agreement around the table last night that to help Ukraine, particularly with its infrastructure, has to be a priority," Mr. Rutte said. "I'm confident that allies will follow up in the coming days and weeks in making sure that whatever they can supply to Ukraine will be supplied," he said. Russia has been targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure for the third winter in a row, causing casualties and hampering the supply of electricity to thousands of civilians. Early on December 4, Russian drones attacked the northern Chernihiv region, damaging several houses in a village, regional governor Vyacheslav Chaus said on Telegram. In the central region of Vinnytsia, debris from a falling drone set a house on fire in the Haysyn district, partially destroying it, the State Emergencies Service said on December 4. Separately, the Ukrainian Air Force said Russia launched a guided air missile and 50 drones at targets in Ukraine. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 29 drones in nine regions - Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Mykolaiv and Donetsk - the air force said, adding that 18 drones were neutralized after their navigation systems were jammed using Ukraine's electronic-warfare capabilities. Separately, strong explosions were reported overnight in Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, one of the main hubs for Russian oil exports and an important military port that hosts part of Russia's Black Sea fleet. An air alert was announced and Novorossiisk Mayor Andrei Kravchenko called on residents to take shelter because of a drone attack. Neither Ukraine nor Russia have so

far commented on the explosions. (RFE/RL)

Germany's Scholz visits Kyiv

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz arrived in Kyiv on an unannounced visit on December 2 vowing to deliver hundreds of millions of euros in additional weapons for Ukraine's defense this month, with questions mounting among Kyiv's allies and signs of a possible diplomatic shift around the 3-year-old full-scale Russian invasion. Mr. Scholz's visit follows Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's suggestion that an invitation to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership even limited to territory under Kyiv's control could put an end to "the hot stage of the war." It also comes ahead of a U.S. presidential transition in January and a German election expected in February. After arriving by train on December 2, Mr. Scholz met in Kyiv with Mr. Zelenskyy for the first time since the Ukrainian president publicly accused Mr. Scholz of opening a "Pandora's box" and easing Moscow's isolation by speaking by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin last month. Mr. Scholz has also been among the more cautious NATO leaders concerning possible alliance membership for Ukraine. It is also Mr. Scholz's first Ukraine visit since the months following Russia's nearly full-scale invasion, which started in February 2022. In a post on X, he pledged that "Germany will remain Ukraine's strongest supporter in Europe." "At the meeting with President Zelenskyy, I will announce additional weapons worth 650 million euros, which are to be delivered in December," he added. Messrs. Scholz and Zelenskyy jointly visited wounded Ukrainian soldiers. Dpa quoted Mr. Scholz as lauding the Ukrainian people's defense of their country "in a heroic manner against Russia's merciless war of aggression" for more than 1,000 days. "Ukraine can rely on Germany. We say what we do. And we do what we say," Mr. Scholz said. A German Defense Ministry spokesperson said the aid bound for Ukraine this month includes IRIS-T air-defense systems, Leopard 1 tanks, and weaponized drones. It

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The militaristic Russian youth organization Yunarmia is active across the Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine. Some former members are fighting in Moscow's war against Ukraine (composite file photo).



krmyr.org via RFE/RL

Two boys from Yunarmia hold guns at an event in Sevastopol, on the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula, in August 2019.

How Russia prepares children in occupied Ukraine for war against their own country

by Maksym Savchuk and
RFE/RL's Schemes

Russia is using a militaristic youth organization, Yunarmia, to foster the loyalty of teenagers in occupied parts of Ukraine and prepare them to fight in Moscow's war against their native country.

The development of Yunarmia amid the full-scale invasion is evidenced by previously unpublished documents from the Russian occupation authorities that were obtained by the Ukrainian hacker group KibOrg and provided to Schemes, the investigative unit of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, and its media partners.

Yunarmia, or Youth Army, was created in 2016 at the initiative of then-Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, and says it has 1.3 million members. Children as young as 8 can join its ranks by filling out a questionnaire using a mobile application.

The organization claims it facilitates the spiritual, moral, social and intellectual development of the so-called Yunarmia cadets. It also says it "forms a positive motivation to fulfill the constitutional duty and prepares young men for service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation."

In 2017, Yunarmia cadets marched alongside soldiers at the May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow, with President Vladimir Putin presiding. This year, Yunarmia children from the Russian-occupied Luhansk region took part in military celebrations in the Russian city of Novosibirsk.

Russia opened the first Yunarmia branch in the occupied territories of Ukraine in Crimea months after the organization's official formation. By September 2016, Yunarmia had spread across the Black Sea peninsula, according to Oleh Okhredko, an analyst at the Almenda Center of Civic

Education, a Ukrainian group whose activities include documenting violations of the rights of children in wartime.

In 2014, Russia occupied Crimea and fomented war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine, known as the Donbas.

'Militarized reeducation'

Yunarmia "was created with the specific idea of the militarized reeducation of not only Russian [children] but also Ukrainian children from the occupied territories," said Kateryna Rashevskaya, a lawyer at the Regional Center for Human Rights, which was forced to move from Crimea to Kyiv after the Russian occupation.

By January 2022, a month before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Yunarmia had 29,000 members in Crimea alone, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Ukrainian law enforcement has charged Yunarmia leadership in occupied Crimea with violating the protection of civilians guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions, citing an article that prohibits "propaganda aimed at ensuring the voluntary enlistment of civilians."

Iryna Sedova, an expert of the Crimean Human Rights Group, supports the official indictment.

"We consider the activities of this organization to violate international humanitarian law, and the leaders of this organization are committing a war crime against the residents of Crimea, and in particular, children and teenagers whom they zombify and de facto involuntarily involve in Yunarmia," she told RFE/RL's Crimea Realities in 2022.

In response to the accusations, the head of the Sevastopol branch of Yunarmia, Volodymyr Kovalenko, said he considers the



VK.com (social media), via RFE/RL

An image from the Yunarmia branch in Mariupol, Ukraine, which Russian forces occupied after a long and devastating siege in the spring of 2022.

current Ukrainian government illegitimate and denied he has committed any crime.

Yet, since the invasion, some former Yunarmia members from occupied areas have joined the Russian military and fought in Russia's war against Ukraine.

Among them is Illya Zozulskiy, 23, a native of the Crimean village of Poltavka and an artilleryman who has been awarded the prestigious Zhukov Medal, according to Russian media. The Russian outlet Mash reported in January 2023 that he was one of 50 "mentors" from Yunarmia who were fighting in the war.

Mr. Zozulskiy did not respond to calls or messages from Schemes and its media partners for comment.

Britain announced sanctions targeting Yunarmia on November 19, calling it a "Russian paramilitary organization central to Putin's attempts to forcibly deport and indoctrinate Ukraine's younger generation." It said the organization is "involved in Russia's systematic attempt to erase Ukrainian cultural and national identity."

The sanctions announcement came amid reports that the Russian military has for the first time drafted people from occupied parts of Ukraine as conscripts.

Yunarmia itself began operating in the Donbas only after Putin baselessly claimed in September 2022 that the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, along with the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions farther southwest, were parts of Russia. Since 2019, though, a similar group called Young Guard-Yunarmia has been in place.

In 2023, Yunarmia "houses" – school premises adapted for firearms and sports training – were opened in Russian-occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk. According to documents provided by KibOrg, Yunarmia uses the school buildings free of charge, with financial backing and other support coming from the Russian federal government and the Yunarmia headquarters in Moscow.

'The reality of our region'

Schemes received a dozen school records of children living in the occupied areas from KibOrg. Most of the children listed either belong to Yunarmia or participate in its activities.

An example is an eighth grader from one of the Russian-occupied cities in the Donets region whose name is being withheld to protect the privacy of a minor. According to his hometown's social media page, he took part in a training camp called Guardian-2024 and won a bronze medal for disassembling and reassembling an AK-74 rifle.

Participants "practiced shooting and received basic military training, studied modern tactics and methods of warfare," according to the post. It also said that "more than 300 schoolchildren" from Russia and the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions "took the oath of allegiance to Yunarmia."

Former members of Young Guard-Yunarmia from the occupied part of the Donetsk region are fighting in the war.

Stanislav Sikorskiy of Horlivka, who graduated from high school in 2018, was a member of both Yunarmia and Young Guard-Yunarmia, according to the latter's account on the social network VKontakte. After Russia's full-scale invasion, he "was in the ranks" of the Russian military and fought in battles in the Kherson region, it said.

Mr. Sikorskiy was demobilized in 2023. He did not respond to messages and calls from Schemes' media partners.

Hanna Lisovenko, also from the Donetsk region, joined a Young Guard-Yunarmia unit called Spartans in 2017 when she was 17. Her social media posts indicate that she is now fighting against Ukraine as a drone operator in a tactical group of Russian military intelligence consisting mainly of



Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with members of Yunarmia in September 2019.

(Continued on page 16)

Odesa artistic sisters plant roots in New York, discuss lost homeland and Russia's war

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – It's not easy to shed societal status in one's homeland when emigrating to another country, even more so when you end up doing menial work not connected to a profession.

Engineers or physicians become taxi drivers, or prominent literary figures become care givers for senior citizens.

Yulia Verba, 50, did as much after fleeing Odesa – where she once hosted audiences of up to 200 people at book readings – when Russia launched its war on Ukraine. A



Lesya Verba holds her 56-string bandura in New York City.

native of the notorious Moldovanka crime-ridden neighborhood of the Black Sea port city, the novelist fled Ukraine in April 2022 when Russia was encroaching closer to her doorstep after occupying the southern cities of Kherson and Mykolaiv.

Moscow's war plans were to create a land bridge through the city into neighboring Moldova where Russian forces have been stationed in the breakaway region of Transdnister.

"It was social death," the mother of three children told The Ukrainian Weekly in an audio interview about deciding to leave her beloved city and join her younger sister in Brooklyn. "Like other city dwellers, we like traveling as tourists but Odesa will always be my home."

Her oldest son, 30, stayed behind because men of military age are not allowed to leave the country. She took her younger son and daughter and first found work at an adult day care center where she inspired the elderly residents to start a theater and publish a newsletter for them.

"I was a local celebrity in Odesa," Ms. Verba said. "I wrote plays for theater performances, novels ... even a four-volume book about my neighborhood of 'Moldovanka' with criminal elements in it."

The near-nonfictional series drew attention to her and before she left Odesa she was working on a screenplay for a national television channel mini-series.

Now, "I'm working on two novels simultaneously," she said, while mentioning that her first book was published in Russian after switching to writing in Ukrainian.

"In the first few years" of living in the U.S., Ms. Verba said, "I was in survival mode."

Now, one of the novels she is writing is "more historical, and the other one is a non-fictional psychological thriller," she mentioned without naming who is "the serious literary agency" with whom she is cooperating.

Her sister, Lesya Verba, 45, had a softer landing in New York after emigrating a year before Russia's all-out invasion.

A multi-disciplinary artist, Lesya Verba says playing the bandura "is my passion." She learned to play a 56-string Chernihiv model in her native Odesa.

She is also known as a muralist, singer and a book



Courtesy of Andriy Rafael
Odesa writer Yulia Verba signs a new edition of her book of short stories, titled "Moldovanka Bastard," after a book reading in Odesa on July 14, 2021.

researcher of songs known in Odesa, a city of more than 1 million that has not been spared from Russian aerial bombardment.

Although she is a trained engineer-economist, her life has been devoted to artistic endeavors. She managed to find work in Brooklyn as a vocal teacher and still delve into the arts.

"I managed to find opportunities to show my creative work," Lesya Verba said.

Although Russia initially invaded Ukraine in 2014 with the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula, "I did not expect the war to open up my strengths," she added. "I didn't imagine

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Forced Russification of Ukrainian children

The forced transfer and indoctrination of Ukrainian children by Russia is one of the most abhorrent aspects of its war against Ukraine. This deliberate campaign of cultural erasure, spearheaded by senior Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, constitutes not only a grave violation of international law but also a moral atrocity. By forcibly deporting children from war-torn regions of Ukraine, placing them in Russian families, and subjecting them to indoctrination, Russia is engaging in a systematic program to destroy the identities of these children and eradicate their Ukrainian heritage.

Investigations by Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab and other organizations have revealed the extent of this practice. Since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, at least 314 Ukrainian children have been subjected to coerced adoption and fostering under a program designed to "Russify" them. Russian authorities have transported these children on planes registered to the Russian Air Force, enrolled them in Russian schools and altered their records to erase their Ukrainian origins. Many have been placed in state-run institutions where they are exposed to relentless pro-Russian propaganda and militaristic reeducation.

This operation is no accident; it is a deliberate strategy orchestrated at the highest levels of the Russian government. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has recognized the gravity of these actions, issuing arrest warrants for Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights. Both face charges of war crimes for the unlawful deportation and transfer of children from Ukrainian territory. These charges underscore the illegality and brutality of a campaign designed to obliterate the cultural and national identities of these children and assimilate them into Russian society.

The Kremlin has attempted to justify its actions under the guise of humanitarian aid, claiming that it is rescuing children from the horrors of war. However, this narrative crumbles under scrutiny. In many cases, Russian authorities have made little to no effort to identify or reunite the children with their families, and obstacles have been deliberately placed in the way of returning these children to Ukraine. This is not an act of mercy; it is a calculated effort to sever ties between these children and their homeland, effectively weaponizing their identities against Ukraine.

The human toll of this practice is staggering. Official Ukrainian figures estimate that over 19,500 children have been deported to Russia since the start of the invasion. For these children, the loss is profound and multifaceted: they are stripped of their families, their culture and their sense of belonging. Many will grow up in a foreign land, believing false narratives about their origins, and some have been indoctrinated to fight against their homeland.

The international community must not stand idle in the face of such heinous acts. Forced deportations and the erasure of cultural identity are clear violations of the Geneva Conventions and constitute acts of genocide under international law. The systematic nature of this campaign – initiated and supported by senior Russian officials – demands swift and decisive action.

Sanctions against individuals and organizations complicit in these crimes, such as Yunarmia, are a necessary first step. But the response must go further. Governments, human rights organizations, and international courts must prioritize efforts to identify and return these children to Ukraine and hold those responsible accountable for their actions. Furthermore, awareness campaigns must shed light on these atrocities, ensuring that the world does not forget the stolen futures of these Ukrainian children.

This is not merely a matter of international law; it is a moral imperative. The theft and indoctrination of children are among the most egregious war crimes imaginable. By targeting the most vulnerable members of society, Russia's actions seek to extinguish the very soul of Ukraine. The global community must respond with unwavering resolve to condemn, confront, and ultimately put an end to this atrocity.

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Turning the pages back...

Nine years ago, on December 8, 2015, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden addressed the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during a four-day working visit to the country.

Mr. Biden recalled the events of the Orange Revolution of 2004, which showed that "Ukraine's leaders [were] incapable of delivering on the promise of democratic revolution." The reforms put in place in 2004 were rolled back "by the pervasive poison of cronyism, corruption and kleptocracy," he added.

The Revolution of Dignity, on the other hand, rekindled that flame of hope. "This time they were not going to be denied the future that so many of your country have longed for, for so long," Mr. Biden said. He noted highlighted the coordinated actions of thousands who brought food, clothing, blankets, medical supplies and their support to the Maidan [Independence Square] in Kyiv.

"Amidst fire and ice, snipers on rooftops, the Heavenly Hundred paid the ultimate price of patriots the world over," Mr. Biden said. "Their blood and courage delivered to the Ukrainian people a second chance for freedom. Their sacrifice – to put it bluntly – is now your obligation."

Acknowledging Ukraine's challenges ahead, Mr. Biden reiterated commitments from the United States and Europe to maintain pressure on Russia to fulfill its obligations under the Minsk Agreement. Among them were the removal of Russia's heavy weapons from Ukraine's territory, that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe must be granted full and unencumbered access, that Russia's hostages must be released and Russian troops must leave the territory of Ukraine, as well as control of the Ukrainian side

(Continued on page 7)

Report: Putin...

(Continued from page 1)

Ukraine who are listed in Russian databases, the report says, were taken from Donetsk, an eastern Ukrainian region that has been partially occupied by Russian and Russian-allied forces since 2014.

The Kremlin has declared the annexation of the Donetsk region, and three other Ukrainian regions – Luhansk, Zaporizhia and Kherson – plus the Crimean Peninsula. Only Syria and North Korea have recognized the move.

Russian officials frequently portray their efforts as a humanitarian gesture, sheltering, feeding or protecting children from war or the breakdown of services in occupied regions. However, in many cases, Russian authorities did little to identify parents, relatives or legal guardians of the Ukrainian children.

Ukrainian officials, journalists and civil society activists, meanwhile, have also compiled substantial evidence of Russian state support for transferring and deporting children out of Ukraine.

In many cases, the effort strained Russia's already overburdened social welfare infrastructure. Hundreds of Ukrainian children were transferred from occupied Ukrainian regions and sent to a network of summer and holiday camps in Belarus, where they were exposed to pro-Russian education and propaganda, RFE/RL found.

According to official Ukrainian figures, as of July 24, 19,546 children had been

deported from Ukraine to Russia since the start of Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022.

Ukraine's human rights commissioner last month said that 1,012 children had been returned from Russia to date.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement on December 4 that it was pursuing visa restrictions for five Russian officials backed or installed by Russia in response to their involvement in human rights abuses in Ukraine, including the forced deportation of children.

"Many of these children have had their identities changed and origins obscured, have been subjected to pro-Russian indoctrination and militarization, or have been adopted by Russian families," the State Department said.

It did not identify the five Russian officials but added that Kremlin authorities had created obstacles preventing the return of the children to Ukraine.

"Russia's continued contempt for its international legal obligations to report the locations of these children makes securing their safe return nearly impossible," the State Department said.

(With reporting by Current Time and RFE/RL's Ukrainian and Belarus services)

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Russia faces...

(Continued from page 2)

Telegram-Channel Nezygar blames Ms. Nabiullina for her methods of restraining inflation through raising the prime interest rate unsustainability (T.me/Russica.ru, November 20). The channel's writers also reproach the Central Bank for putting Russian industry "on the brink of collapse," with people, due to high interest rates on deposits, preferring to keep their funds in banks rather than returning them to the real sector of the economy (T.me/Russica.ru, November 19).

There are reports that government spending in Russia is becoming more difficult to maintain, reserves are exhausted and the economy is showing classic signs of overheating (T.me/Russica.ru, November 19). Vladimir Boglayev, director of the Cherepovets Casting-Mechanical Plant, called the situation "critical," declaring that, "for over a year, deliveries under Rosoboronexport have not been paid for" (T.me/Russica.ru, November 20). This does not mean that Russia can no longer finance the war, however. Both independent Russian economists and Western experts agree that Moscow can finance it for several more years despite an overheated economy (Istories.media, June 5; Pravda.com.ua, October 27). The costs of such financing are growing. This growth not only causes an uncontrolled increase in inflation but also deprives other economic sectors of funds. In September, the economist Igor Lipshitz predicted, "money will be found for the war in Russia, but nothing for the rest" (Svoboda.org, September 23). According to sociological survey results, Russians themselves believe that the healthcare, housing and utilities, social assistance, and road infrastructure sectors are seriously underfunded (T.me/Russica.ru, November 20).

As for the social sphere, independent journalists report that war veterans receive up to 83 percent of the regions' social budgets. For example, in Stavropol'sky krai, offi-

cials allocated 12 times more money to contract soldiers than to help orphans and six times more than what is allocated to support unemployed residents of the region. In Karachay-Cherkessia, veterans and the families of the deceased received 75 percent of all social payments, while in Kaluzhskaya Oblast, they received 52 percent (Istories.media, November 11). To address the economic imbalance, Russian officials called for restrictions on overtime work to be lifted. This initiative was raised by the head of the Ministry of Economic Development, Maksim Reshetnikov, who also announced the widespread use of teenagers and the elderly in the workforce (T.me/Russica.2, November 19). Child labor, however, is not enough to resolve the worsening economic imbalance.

The Kremlin will need additional funds and productive capacity to modernize deteriorating weapons and produce more as Russia runs through its Soviet stockpile (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, March 14). Last spring, there were reports that India had refused Russian arms exports, not only because of sanctions but also because the Russian military-industrial complex has failed to modernize its weapons (Re-Russia.net, May 6). Today, even channels loyal to the Kremlin report, "Russian air defense systems are complete garbage compared to Iranian ones," the lower quality Russian air defense systems angering the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp, who have since reduced their usage (T.me/Russica.ru, November 19). Given the Ukrainian strikes into Russian territory, modernization of air defense systems is an urgent task for Moscow, which also will be difficult to achieve in a slowing economy (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 21). Despite the economic issues and their impacts, it is clear that the Kremlin will resolve problems to continue the long war at the cost of the population's well-being.

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

Russian woman...

(Continued from page 1)

exile Leonid Volkov said on Facebook on December 2 that he saw Ms. Zarubina at a Washington gathering with his supporters in January 2023.

The case also links Ms. Zarubina to Elena Branson (aka Chernykh), the head of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the United States, who was charged in 2022 for illegal activities on behalf of Russian intelligence.

Ms. Branson, who fled the United States after police searched her New York apartment at the time and is believed to be currently in Russia, has reportedly mentored Ms. Zarubina since 2016.

Ms. Zarubina has been released on \$25,000 bail, with restrictions barring her from leaving New York, contacting Russian officials and surrendering her passport. She said her bail was guaranteed by a third party, but did not say who the party was.

Ms. Zarubina has maintained an active public profile, often participating as an expert at conferences, such as the Forum of Free States of Post-Russia.

On social media, she speculated about Siberia's political future, advocating for a United States of Siberia.

Despite her public statements denying espionage, her online activity suggests a more complex narrative.

For instance, until September 2023, her profile on the Russian social networking platform VKontakte included posts supporting Kremlin policies, including President Vladimir Putin's 2014 speech on the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region, a move the United Nations, the United States and the European Union have all called illegal.

Blurred lines

In an interview with RFE/RL's Siberia.

Realities, Ms. Zarubina denied working as an FSB agent but admitted to being contacted by Russian intelligence in late 2020.

She described being coerced into a meeting with FSB officers in Tomsk, where she discussed her personal background and was subsequently monitored by them. Ms. Zarubina asserts that she also contacted the FBI in April 2021 to cooperate, sharing insights on various topics, including Ukraine, and has continued to meet with them.

Ms. Zarubina says she did not expect that the FBI would arrest her, stating: "I thought we had good relations; I was helping them. I didn't expect them to use my information against me."

She said that she fears reprisal from Russian intelligence, which she believes was unaware of her cooperation with U.S. authorities.

"This is no longer about false testimony – it's treason in their eyes," she said.

Ms. Zarubina's case underscores the complexities of modern espionage and influence operations.

Her alleged dual involvement with Russian and U.S. intelligence highlights the blurred lines between cooperation and subversion. The mention of her internship at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies and her outreach to opposition activists adds to her narrative.

While Ms. Zarubina downplays the risk of deportation, citing her American-born daughter, the case is a test of the U.S. judicial system's ability to handle allegations involving foreign intelligence activities.

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Mr. Polyansky said.

Speaking earlier at the same Security Council session, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenca highlighted recent Russian long-range missile strikes on 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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assistance from the U.S. that had already been delivered to Ukraine.

To maintain international support, Mr. Biden urged Ukraine to fulfill its commitments to the International Monetary Fund. "Anything else will jeopardize Ukraine's hard-won progress and drive down support for Ukraine from the international community, which is always tenuous," he said.

Offering words of hope and support, Mr. Biden said, "If you succeed, you will be the founders of the first truly free, democratic, united Ukraine."

Source: "Vice-President Joe Biden's address to the Verkhovna Rada," The Ukrainian Weekly, December 13, 2015.



WASHINGTON IN FOCUS

by Orest Deychakiwsky

The Orange Revolution: A defining moment

Twenty years ago, on November 21, 2004, I was in the central Ukrainian city of Kirovohrad (now Kropyvnytsky), observing elections as part of the American contingent of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) international election mission. We were there for the runoff of the Ukrainian presidential election, pitting then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych against pro-Western reformer Viktor Yushchenko. They were the two top vote-getters in the October 31 first-round election, but neither had received the required majority needed to win the presidency outright. I have observed more than three dozen elections in nine countries, but never have I come close to witnessing as many flagrant voting violations, including voter intimidation, as I did that day in Kirovohrad. Serious violations were also prevalent elsewhere in Ukraine, especially in the east.

Driving back to Kyiv the next morning, my American colleagues and I were surprised to see thousands of people, many clad in orange, flooding into the center of the city in massive numbers to protest the fraudulent elections. Later that day, walking along Khreshchatyk to Independence Square amid a throng of some 100,000 people and a tent city that seemed to have sprung up out of nowhere was almost a surreal experience. The numbers even exceeded the expectations of Ukraine's political opposition, which had been planning protests for months, as it became increasingly obvious from the pre-election environment that the elections would be highly problematic.

Even on that first day of what quickly came to be known as the Orange Revolution, it was clear that this peaceful manifestation of the Ukrainian people's yearning for democracy would have a profound impact on Ukraine internally.

But little could we have imagined that this was, in the words of Peter Dickinson writing in the Atlantic Council's UkraineAlert blog, "... the opening act in a geopolitical drama that would eventually lead to the largest European conflict since World War II."

Throughout 2004, it became evident that President Leonid Kuchma and his oligarchic cronies wanted to hold on to power and neutralize the democratic opposition and its reformist and pro-Western leader, Viktor Yushchenko. The run up to the campaign saw a plethora of violations. These included media harassment and censorship, exemplified by the issuance of presidential administration directives called "temnyky" sent to the media indicating what subjects should be covered and how. Other violations included the denial of equal access to candidates, disruptions of opposition congresses, tax police harassment of the opposition, and incidents of violence.

The backdrop of these pre-election abuses and election fraud that precipitated the Orange Revolution was a Kuchma regime that had become increasingly corrupt and contemptuous of the rule of law

and human rights. This was perhaps most starkly demonstrated by its involvement with and cover-up of the murder of journalist Heorhiy Gongadze in 2000.

This backtracking was met with dismay by Ukraine's friends, notably the United States, which actively supported Ukraine's path toward human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The U.S. Congress, including the Helsinki Commission, reacted with resolutions, hearings, statements and direct interventions with Ukrainian officials. There were modest cuts in U.S. assistance for programs benefiting the central government, reallocating funds to those programs supporting democracy-building efforts and Ukraine's growing and vibrant civil society.

The United States and other Western countries were not the only ones paying close attention to the Ukrainian elections. At the time, Russia had considerable influence over Ukraine, although in many respects the two countries were quite different. Ukraine, notwithstanding all its flaws, was at least semi-democratic. This was in contrast with Vladimir Putin's Russia, where authoritarianism was gaining the upper hand. Moreover, even under Mr. Kuchma, Ukraine was looking toward the West, which made Moscow nervous.

Whereas the West was encouraging democracy and a free and fair election process in Ukraine, Putin was doing what he could to achieve an outcome favorable to Russia. This meant ensuring the election of Mr. Yanukovych, who also enjoyed the backing of Mr. Kuchma and of Ukraine's powerful oligarchs, who were not above playing dirty.

The Kremlin was anything but subtle in promoting their preferred candidate and interfering in the Ukrainian electoral process. In fact, in the days before the October 31 first-round election, Putin himself spent four days in Kyiv, making press and public appearances. But Putin's heavy-handed approach backfired badly.

Weeks of massive, peaceful protests and international pressure emboldened Ukraine's institutions, so much so that on December 3, 2004, the Supreme Court invalidated the November 21 election and ordered a repeat vote. On December 26, 2004, my colleague Gene Fishel from the State Department and I observed a clean, free and fair vote in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions that could not have been a greater contrast from the fraudulent one I had observed in Kirovohrad a month earlier. Mr. Yushchenko was declared the winner.

Putin did not forgive or forget. He became more hostile to the United States, whom he blamed for the Orange Revolution – arrogantly denying the Ukrainian people any agency for their own free choices. And, following the Orange Revolution, Putin began to more assertively stifle democratic expression within Russia itself, fearing that the Russian people could catch an "Orange" virus.

The Orange Revolution was a turning point for the Ukrainian people, who realized they could affect positive change. It was also a defining step in Ukraine's formal rejection of the imperial Russian project in

Trump nominates...

(Continued from page 3)

ditions, 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 that 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,"

Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

of the border must be returned to Ukrainian control.

In addition to military action needed to defend Ukraine, constitutional and governmental reforms also needed to be realized to eliminate the culture of corruption in Ukraine.

Mr. Biden also announced nearly \$190 million in assistance for Ukraine to help combat "corruption, strengthen the rule of law, implement critical reforms, bolster civil society, advance energy security." This was in addition to \$760 million in direct

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Stanley Wlodkowski

Some 62 golfers took part in the 26th annual Plast Chicago Golf Classic on September 7 at the Renwood Golf Course in Round Lake Beach, Ill.

More than 60 golfers take part in 26th annual Plast Chicago Golf Classic

by George G. Kuritzka

ROUND LAKE BEACH, Ill. – On a picture-perfect sunny and crisp Saturday morning, 62 golfers from across the nation gathered on September 7 at the familiar Renwood Golf Course in Round Lake Beach, Ill., the site of many previous golf tournaments, hosted by Chicago's Pobratymy Plast fraternity and the Pobratymy Foundation, Inc.

For more than a quarter century, more than 1,000 golfers have come from all corners of the United States, including Illinois, California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, Florida and Washington, D.C., to take part in the highly anticipated and enjoyable charity golf tournament and related festivities.

Using a shotgun start and team scramble format, the outing provided an opportunity for participants to enjoy friendly competition and great camaraderie surrounded by beautiful natural surroundings. Afterward, the fun continued with the customary post-golf reception dinner held at the nearby Ukrainian Youth Camping Organization's (UYCO) campground, where award winners were announced.

The team of Mike Tsilis, Nick Tsilis, Oleg Baliuk and Andre Birkus won the men's division with a score of 12 under par,



Maria Melnyk

Pictured at the 26th annual Plast Chicago Golf Classic held on September 7 at the Renwood Golf Course in Round Lake Beach, Ill., is the women's championship team of (from left to right) Lida Stankevych, Areta Siryj-Kuritzka, Katrusia Saldan and Natalka Mirutenko.

while the team of Katrusia Saldan, Lida Stankevych, Areta Kuritzka-Siryj and Natalie Mirutenko won the women's championship. The men's and women's "longest drive" competitions were won by Carlos Wilson and Katrusia Saldan, respectively, while the men's and women's "closest to the pin" contest was won by George Kuritzka and Mary Mycyk, respectively. Wasyl Mirutenko won the "putting contest."

For 26 years, the event has supported the youth developmental work of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in Chicago, North America and Ukraine. This year's fundraiser raised more than \$16,500 to help support Ukraine and Ukrainian scouting.

Since 1992, the Pobratymy Foundation, established by members of the Plast Pobratymy fraternity, a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) tax-exempt corporation, has raised over \$500,000 to carry out its mission and further the principles of Plast and Ukrainian scouting for Plast chapters in the United States, Canada, Germany and Ukraine.

This year's event was coordinated by Oleh Skubiak and included the following organizing team members: Andres Durbak, Daniel Hryhorczuk, Danylo Marushka, Mariya Kokor, Andrij Ripecky and Roman Saldan. Stanley and Maria Melnyk provided

(Continued on page 16)

Plast's Pobratymy fraternity holds 58th annual meeting, elects new leadership and amends by-laws

by Daniel Hryhorczuk

BARABOO, Wis. – Members of the Pobratymy fraternity of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the United States held their 58th annual meeting ("Velyka Rada") on September 27-29 at the Beskyd campground in Baraboo, Wis.

The meeting was attended by 22 full members and eight candidates from the United States and Canada, with seven members from Ukraine taking part via Zoom. The Pobratymy fraternity was founded in the United States in 1968 and currently has 55 members in the United States, Canada and Ukraine.

The Velyka Rada unites scouts from all branches of Pobratymy, with members spanning in age from their early 20s to their 70s. The primary purpose for the special Velyka Rada was to discuss changes to the Pobratymy bylaws that would grant greater autonomy to members in Ukraine.

The meeting on Saturday was led by Myron Peniak, the leader (kurinny) of the senior branch of the fraternity.

Over the past year, a Crimson Committee selected by the membership met to discuss and recommend changes to the bylaws. The Pobratymy in Ukraine have historically fallen under the organizational structure of North America and, due to geographical and wartime constraints, were hampered in



Courtesy of Pobratymy

Members of the Pobratymy fraternity of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the United States are seen at their 58th annual meeting on September 27-29 at the Beskyd campground in Baraboo, Wis.

developing their work plans and accepting candidates for membership in the fraternity.

The Crimson Committee recommended that the Pobratymy be comprised of a North American branch and a Ukraine/Europe branch that can function autonomously yet fall under a special committee that includes the four kurinny (elected leaders of younger and older scouts in the North American and Ukraine/Europe branches). One individual is elected as the titular head of the entire Pobratymy fraternity.

The North American and Ukraine/Europe branches agreed to meet in person during a special meeting held once every 5 years. Regionally, the individual kurinny will continue to meet every year, while the meeting of younger and older scouts will continue to be held every two years. The recommendations of the Crimson Committee were accepted and are now in effect.

The current leadership of the Pobratymy includes Andriy Fylypovich as "bratuch," Stephan Iwanik as kurinny of scouts in North America, Antin Durbak as kurinny of senior scouts in North America, and Andriy Andriychuk as the kurinny of scouts of Ukraine/Europe. The Ukraine/Europe branch has yet to start its own fraternity for senior scouts.

(Continued on page 12)

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of US marks Veterans Day in South Bound Brook, N.J.

UOC-U.S.A.

SOUTH BOUND BROOK, N.J. – The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. hosted Veterans Day observations with a deeply moving prayer service, or Moleben, at the spiritual center of the UOC of the U.S.A. in South Bound Brook, N.J.

The site, a place of profound spiritual and cultural importance, stands at the intersection of Ukrainian and American histories, marking decades of sacrifice and shared ideals between the two nations. The faithful, joined by distinguished veterans and honored guests, gathered in a solemn assembly to pay tribute to those who served their country.

The day's events began as clergy exited St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Memorial Church, holding the icon of the Protection of the Mother of God, the official icon of chaplains of Ukraine's Armed Forces. The sacred icon, with its deep symbolism of divine sheltering and strength, has long been a source of comfort and intercession for the Ukrainian people.

The procession moved toward the National Monument of Ukrainian American Veterans, located outside of Saint Andrew Memorial Church. As the first North American monument to the 1932-1933 Holodomor – the artificially created famine in Ukraine that took millions of lives – the church and its surrounding monuments embody the resilience and enduring spirit of Ukrainians, both in Ukraine and abroad.

Gathered at the foot of the monument were veterans of various generations, including a contingent of Ukrainian Americans who served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II. Their presence underscored the day's mission: honoring not only the American tradition of service but also the unique contributions of Ukrainian Americans to the defense and ideals of their adopted homeland.

The clergy from local communities were present at the Veterans Day prayer service, as well as seminarians from St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary, who chanted responses during the prayer service.

The observance opened with a heartfelt address by Metropolitan Antony. Citing a statement from the Council of Bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., the prime hierarch reflected on the national observance of Veterans Day, a time set aside to honor those who have stood courageously in the face of war, protecting their homeland's freedom and dignity.

"As we mark this Veterans Day, a solemn national observance honoring the sacrifices and valor of those who have served in the armed forces of the United States, we, the Council of Bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., offer our prayers for those who have served and continue to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces," Metropolitan Antony said. "This day holds



Mykola Stefanyk/uocoftheusa.org

Metropolitan Antony and Archbishop Daniel (center, left and right, respectively) with clergy and participants, mark Veterans Day on November 11 at the National Monument of Ukrainian American Veterans at the spiritual center of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. in South Bound Brook, N.J.

profound meaning for us, especially as Ukrainian Americans, as we honor not only the courageous individuals who have safeguarded this great nation but also those of Ukrainian descent who have served and continue to serve with devotion and distinction in the United States Armed Forces."

"Our Church stands at a unique intersection of American and Ukrainian heritage. This is reflected physically in the Ukrainian American Veterans Monument at our spiritual center, a site hallowed in prayer and dedication, where the lives of our ancestors and the legacy of our veterans are uplifted and remembered. This monument stands as a testament to the spirit of both God and country, a place where the dual threads of faith and patriotism weave together, honoring those who, throughout history, have defended their homeland and upheld the sacred call to serve," he said.

"Scripture teaches us that 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15:13). To serve in the armed forces, to willingly place oneself in harm's way for the protection of others, is an act of profound faith and courage. Our veterans have answered this call, embodying the virtues of sacrifice and service that are dear to the heart of our Orthodox faith. In honoring their dedication, we honor the enduring principle that to serve one's country is also to serve God, fulfilling the holy charge to protect and care for his creation and his people," he said.

"On this Veterans Day, we come together in prayer, lifting up those who have served and those who continue to serve. May our veterans be blessed with peace, strength, and the abiding presence of our Lord. Let us strive always to remember their sacrifices with gratitude and to honor their legacy with lives dedicated to faith, love, and service," Metropolitan Antony said. "May the

memory of all those who have served be eternal, and may our living veterans know the blessings of health and the love of a grateful nation."

Following Metropolitan Antony's address, Archbishop Daniel spoke in Ukrainian, weaving together the histories of Veterans Day and the sacrifices of Ukrainian American veterans. He recounted the origin of Veterans Day, initially established to honor the service members of World War I, and its formal recognition in 1954 – a recognition made possible by the advocacy of veteran organizations that sought to expand its scope.

"Seventy years ago," Archbishop Daniel said, "this day became a national call to remember those who risked and gave all. Today, as we gather at this monument, we pay tribute not only to American heroes but to the rich heritage of Ukrainian Americans who answered that same call."

Archbishop Daniel, who is also a veteran and served in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps, addressed the significance of the icon of the Pokrova of the Mother of God, who intercedes for Ukraine's people, including those defending it today. He spoke poignantly about the icon's presence at the observance, noting its deep resonance amidst Ukraine's current struggle for freedom.

"This icon," he said, "is a symbol of protection for our brave men and women, those on the frontlines who guard the land we hold dear. It serves as a powerful reminder that the love for one's homeland is eternal, transcending borders and connecting hearts across generations. It is the official icon of Ukrainian chaplains who serve the spiritual needs of the men and women of the Ukrainian armed forces and the international legionnaires who have joined the Ukrainian army."

Archbishop Daniel's words highlighted the ongoing bond between the Ukrainian

American Veterans and Ukraine's Armed Forces. Many Ukrainian soldiers have been trained or influenced by the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, learning the same principles of duty, integrity and sacrifice. The archbishop emphasized the unity of spirit that exists between those who defend Ukraine and those who defend the United States.

"To honor the veterans of the United States is also to honor our own heritage," he said. "In remembering those who served America, we recognize a legacy of bravery that binds us to our homeland, our ancestors, and to each other. Their courage has paved a path for future generations to stand for what is true, noble, and just."

Following the prayer service, Lt. Col. Michael Hrycak, national commander of the Ukrainian American Veterans, spoke on the importance of the monument at the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A.'s spiritual center. He reflected on the upcoming 10th anniversary in 2025 of the monument's erection – a milestone marking a decade of honoring the intertwined histories of Ukraine and America.

"This monument," Mr. Hrycak said, "stands as a testament not only to those who served but to the enduring partnership of two nations that cherish freedom. It is a place of remembrance, of honor, and of unity for all Ukrainian Americans who served."

The day concluded with the singing of "Mnohaya Lita," or "God Grant You Many Years," dedicated to the veterans, especially those of Ukrainian descent who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Protodeacon Valentyn Vysotskyi and his wife, Valentina, prepared a festive luncheon in the Sisterhood Hall of Saint Andrew Memorial Church, offering the veterans and their families an opportunity to gather and celebrate in fellowship.

Odesa artistic...

(Continued from page 5)

how much I could do as an artist for my people and Ukrainians. ... I painted, I performed at concerts – in one week, I could be on the stage for five days; ... this is my war even if it is a long distance from here."

Both women have researched their heritage.

They found a Kozak lineage going back to a great-great-grandparent and Jewish blood with another great-great-grandparent, Yulia Verba said of her roots.

"I've found inspiration in [Jewish-Ukrainian] writer Isaac Babel," Yulia Verba said.

Other authors from whom she derives inspiration are Serbian writer Milorad Pavic and Norwegian novelist Erlend Loe "for his plain-spoken words," she said.

Life in New York

Finding beauty in everything "I do" is what has kept Lesya Verba going after making Brooklyn her new home.

She said it was "a novel discovery to meet so many bright and interesting people with Ukrainian roots that I never met in

Odesa, she said.

Still, there is a dearth of coordination between legacy Ukrainian American organizations "that I think should coordinate more with each other rather than duplicating their activities."

Connectivity between different waves of refugees also exists, Lesya Verba said.

"We have different worldviews, different attitudes than some of the established Ukrainian organizations," she said.

There exists "a different mode of thought ... and many [people from Ukraine] are traumatized," she added.

Yulia Verba only "thinks about today. ... I

don't know when the war will end – Russia took away 'tomorrow' and we still live in the proverbial suitcase," she said of what authorities advised her to do in case people have to flee their homes in Ukraine on short notice.

"I don't know about my children, but I want to go home; ... from now on, Brooklyn is my home away from home," Yulia Verba said.

If and when she does return to Ukraine, she wants to "open a school of art to unite the best teachers and include jazz" in the curriculum. She said she wants "to live in both countries."

NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

will also include winter equipment and handheld weapons, the spokesperson said. Mr. Scholz's main conservative rival in the upcoming German elections, Friedrich Merz, has accused him and his Greens partners of being slow and overly cautious in their government's supply of aid to Ukraine. Western supporters led by Washington last month gave permission for Ukraine to use their weapons for long-range strikes even deeper inside Russia, adding a new wrinkle to the war that Kyiv had long desired. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said of Mr. Scholz's visit that it had no "expectations" and it was part of Berlin's "continuing ... line of unconditional support to Ukraine." U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to take swift and dramatic action to end the Ukraine war but provided no details regarding how he would do so. Sources told RFE/RL's Hungarian Service last week that Mr. Trump had held multiple conversations with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban since winning the U.S. presidential election in early November, and the two had discussed possible routes toward ending the

war. Mr. Orban has consistently criticized European Union and U.S. policies since Russia's unprovoked invasion began in February 2022, and launched his own uncoordinated "peace mission" with visits to Kyiv, Moscow and Beijing in July – a move that infuriated Brussels. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by Reuters)

\$725 million aid package for Ukraine

The United States on December 2 announced a new \$725 million military aid package for Ukraine that includes another shipment of landmines and ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and other artillery systems, Stinger missiles and drones. The United States announced a first shipment of land mines last month in a move that U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said was necessary because Russian forces were using dismounted infantry units instead of vehicles to lead their advances. The Ukrainian defenders "have a need for things that can help slow down that effort," Mr. Austin said. The Biden administration is working to provide more aid to Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes office. Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticized U.S. assistance to Kyiv. U.S. Secretary of State

Antony Blinken in a statement called the new aid a "significant package of urgently needed weapons and equipment." (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Ukraine again calls for full membership

Ukraine has again called for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), saying that only joining the alliance in full would guarantee its future security as it fights to stave off Russia's nearly three-year-old full-scale assault. "We are convinced that the only such real guarantee of security for Ukraine, as well as a deterrent factor for further Russian aggression against Ukraine and other states, is only Ukraine's full membership in NATO," Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement released ahead of a December 3 meeting of the alliance's foreign affairs ministers in Brussels. In reaction to the ministry's statement, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on December 3 that Ukraine's joining NATO would be "unacceptable" and a "threat" to Russia. The statement comes just days after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Sky News that Ukraine's NATO admittance could end what he described as the "hot phase of the war" triggered by Russia when it launched its

full-scale invasion in February 2022. Mr. Zelenskyy told Sky News on November 30 that he would be willing to consider a cease-fire if Ukraine's unoccupied territories fell under NATO's protection, as long as an invitation to join the alliance recognized Ukraine's international borders. "If we want to stop the hot phase of the war, we need to take under the NATO umbrella the territory of Ukraine that we have under our control," Mr. Zelenskyy said. Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Andriy Sybiha is set to brief his NATO counterparts in Brussels on the current situation on the eastern front, where Russian troops have been making incremental but steady advances against Kyiv's outnumbered and outgunned forces. The meeting in Brussels is to focus on NATO's continued military support for Ukraine, examine Kyiv's air-defense needs, and also discuss Russia's launching last month of an experimental ballistic missile against the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. Russia has said that the new medium-range missile, called Oreshnik, can also strike targets across Europe and cannot be stopped by air defenses. On December 3, Mr. Zelenskyy announced that

(Continued on page 11)

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Belarus...

(Continued from page 2)

what special compared to previous meetings. The usual routine of such joint meetings entails reviewing the results of bilateral cooperation in the preceding year and agreeing on coordination plans and schedules for thematic consultations for the next year (Mid.ru, November 10, 2021; Mfa.gov.by, December 15, 2023). This time, the delegations also covered the traditional agenda and signed a bilateral consultation plan for 2025.

They additionally worked on a few other noteworthy agenda items (Mfa.gov.by, November 22). For example, the two ministers signed a declaration on the need to elevate the role of international law in countering unilateral economic sanctions and other means of political pressure, which Minsk and Moscow qualify as violating the United Nations Charter. They also issued a statement outlining a joint vision for the Eurasian Charter for Diversity and Multipolarity in the 21st Century, an idea that Belarus put forward two years ago at the Minsk International Conference on Eurasian Security (Mid.ru, November 22). While the idea remains at an abstract stage, Minsk intends to start working on its substance on international platforms, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS (a loose political-economic grouping originally consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

Two other draft documents that Belarusian and Russian diplomats discussed in Brest appear of most interest, the Security Concept of the Union State and the Agreement between Russia and Belarus on Security Guarantees. Both draft documents have now been finalized and are expected to be formally signed by the two countries' presidents on December 6 in Minsk at a summit that will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Union State. While the exact contents of the documents remain non-public, it appears easy to assume what they might contain, especially after Russia publicized the amended version of its nuclear doctrine on November 19 (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 26).

According to the updated doctrine, the Russian nuclear umbrella now explicitly covers Belarus. Moscow will now equate armed aggression against Belarus with any type of weapons that can critically threaten its sovereignty and/or territorial integrity

with an analogous scenario affecting Russia's own sovereignty and territorial integrity and will consider it as a legitimate condition for a nuclear strike against the perpetrator (Kremlin.ru, November 19). This newly added wording is in itself the utmost security guarantee that a nuclear state can offer to a non-nuclear one. Hence, the bilateral agreement on security guarantees, as well as the Security Concept of the Union State, will likely revolve around this new provision, as well as the fact that Russian tactical nuclear weapons have been stationed in Belarus (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 4, 2023). Presumably, the two documents will also lay out more nuanced mechanisms for how the Union State will arrange other elements of defense cooperation, including in hybrid areas, amid growing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and the world in general.

The Belarusian government has insisted on the adoption of the bilateral agreement on security guarantees. The question remains why Belarus would be interested in such a new treaty, given that formal security guarantees already exist within the Union State's framework, which is similar to the mutual commitments that the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have according to Article 5 of their treaty. Minsk's logic seems identical to what can be observed in the behavior of NATO's eastern flank nations, which never miss a chance to insist on new explicitly written commitments by the United States and other allies.

Minsk appears to view these bilateral guarantees as a prologue to future multilateral guarantees it wants to negotiate for itself after the end of Russia's war on Ukraine (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 14). Whether such calculations prove feasible will depend on a number of factors, including the exact setup that the hypothetical negotiations on peace in Ukraine will take and their exact agenda. It will be crucial for Belarusian interests that the negotiations go beyond the ceasefire only and address some fundamental issues of a future European security arrangement. If they do not, the bilateral security guarantees that Minsk will receive from Russia might further cement the "Iron Curtain" type of military divisions in Europe.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 10)

Ukraine had conducted a test on new, domestically developed missiles. "We thank our Ukrainian missile developers. We're speeding up production," Mr. Zelenskyy said on Telegram after a meeting with the leadership of the Ukrainian military. Russian hybrid attacks and sabotage incidents against NATO members is also due to be discussed in Brussels. Early on December 3, Russia launched yet another drone attack on Ukraine that was largely repelled by Ukrainian air defenses, which shot down 22 out of the 28 incoming drones over nine regions - Kyiv, Chernihiv, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Sumy, Odesa, Mykolayiv and Dnipropetrovsk. Russian shelling also killed a woman early on December 3 in the Dnipro district of the southern region of Kherson, local officials reported. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Pledge to increase military aid to Ukraine

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.

(Continued on page 14)

"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 that 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



With great sadness we announce the passing of our beloved Mother and Grandmother on November 11, 2024.



DARIA ZAREWYCH REMENIUK

Born on September 9, 1936
in Verkhnie Syniovydne, Stryi Region, Ukraine

She was predeceased by her husband Roman Remeniuk, parents Maria and Dmytro Zarewych, sisters Irene Pyluk, Stephanie Petraszczuk, and Marika Mychalczak

Remaining in deep sorrow:

daughter Marta Hapij with husband Adam and children Ulana and Matthew

daughter Roma Remeniuk

daughter Ulana Snihura with husband Taras and children Taisa and Inessa

brother Marion Zarewych and family

brother Dr. Bohdan Zarewych and family

as well as extended family and many friends in the US and Canada

Memorial Liturgy and Funeral was held on December 6, 2024 at St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church in Warren, MI. Her remains were laid to rest at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery in Chicago, IL

Вічна й пам'ять!



Ulana Kebalo-George

October 28, 1938 – November 23, 2024

Ulana Mary Kebalo was born in the village of Pidsosniv-Mykolajiv in the Lviv Oblast of Ukraine, where her grandfather, Very Reverend Mykhailo Kaczorowsky was pastor and her father, Dr. Constantine Kebalo practiced medicine.



Ulana, her parents Constantine and Myroslawa, brothers Yuriy (1945-2020) and Orest, and grandmother Olena (Kekish) Kaczorowska, came to the United States on the USS General J H McRae. They settled in New York City's Lower East Side. Ulana was a member of Plast Ukrainian Scouting, sang with the Dumka Chorus, and studied dance with ballet master Valentina Pereyaslavec. She graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors from City College in 1961.

Ulana had a daughter, Sonia Bohachevsky (1971-1980) with her first husband, Dr. Ihor Bohachevsky. In 1994, she married Dr. Michael J. George from Greensboro, North Carolina, with whom she lived in Los Alamos, New Mexico, before they returned to New York to make their home in Forest Hills. She was a member of Branch 113 of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America. Ulana was a lover of the arts, ballroom dancing, and opera. She was especially devoted to supporting the Ukrainian Institute of America and its Music at the Institute (MATI) concert series.

She died in her sleep at home, leaving behind in grief:

husband Michael J. George
brother Orest M. Kebalo (Martha Kichorowska)
nieces Andrea Kebalo and Olena Kebalo
relatives Olena Sidlovych-Saleh (Basam, and son Nazar)
family Kmets in New York; Kekish-Dmyterko in Chicago
family Sidlovych and Reshetko in Lviv, Ukraine

Funeral services

December 12: Visitation 5 – 8 pm; Parastas 7 pm at Peter Jarema Funeral Home, 129 E 7th St, New York City;
December 13: Funeral Mass 10 am at St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church, 30 E 7th St, New York City;
Private interment at St. Andrew Ukrainian Cemetery, 280 Main St, South Bound Brook, NJ.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to:

Ukrainian Institute of America, The Ukrainian Museum of New York, UNWLA, Inc., Dumka Chorus, Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization, or the Ukrainian Catholic University Education Fund.

May she rest in peace. May her memory be eternal.



Peter Horodysky

June 28, 1940 – November 27, 2024

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of violinist and professor, Peter Horodysky. He died peacefully in his sleep while under hospice care. A World War II refugee from Drohobych, Ukraine, Peter immigrated to the United States as a teenager with his parents Ivan and Irene Horodysky, eventually settling in Irvington, New Jersey. There, his family joined St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church in Newark, where his parents sang in the choir. Peter was also a member of Plast Youth.



Attaining Masters' degrees in Violin Performance and Music Ed from The Manhattan School of Music, he studied with renowned teachers like Stanley Bednar, Eudice Shapiro, and Berl Senofsky. Peter furthered his studies at the University of Southern California, where he studied with artists William Primrose and Gregor Piatigorsky, and was a member of the University Student Quartet in Residence. This quartet was a prizewinner at the 1965 International Chamber Music Competition in Munich.

In 1966, Peter joined the music faculty at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For three decades Peter served as Professor of Violin, conductor of the UT orchestra, and tutor to generations of Suzuki string players. He performed in featured solos, and with the UT faculty "Storioni" String Quartet. He was concertmaster of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra for over a decade, and concertmaster of both the Chattanooga and Kingsport Symphonies.

Peter had a wonderful sense of humor, was an avid dog lover, fisherman, and champion bowler. He spent his free time building beautiful and practical wooden objects such as vases and custom cabinets. Above all, he loved being with his students, so much so that he returned to work as academic advisor.

Peter was predeceased by his grandmother Julia Daszko, parents Ivan and Irene Horodysky, and aunt and uncle Roman and Theodora Bryttan. He is survived by his first wife and mother of his daughter, Virginia McFadden Dougherty, daughter Virginia Horodysky Bayne with husband Stuart, all of Oliver Springs, TN. Peter also leaves behind cousins Adrian Bryttan of NY and Julian Bryttan with wife Jane of Ottawa.

Funeral Liturgy will be celebrated on Tuesday, December 10, at 10:30 AM at St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church, 733 Sandford Ave., Newark, NJ. Following the liturgy, a graveside service will be at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery, 141 Sarah Wells Trail, Campbell Hall, NY 10916.

May he rest in peace.

Ukrainian community...

(Continued from page 1)

UUO, the group said it was "shocked" to learn about the Russian-themed promotional event.

"We are outraged by the timing and the content of this 'promotion,'" the group wrote in a November 27 letter to the Blue Jackets.

NHL vice president for public relations and media services, Gary Meagher, said that the league "isn't sanctioning" the event.

"It's a Blue Jackets night; we didn't schedule this event," Mr. Meagher told The Ukrainian Weekly from Toronto.

RHN's Mr. Braverman, who spoke from Boca Raton, Fla., insisted that the event has "nothing to with politics."

It's "about hockey diplomacy," he said, while adding "that we [Ukraine and Russia] once were part of one country and spoke a common language [Russian]."

Born in Moldova, a former Soviet republic, and having studied in the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi, Mr. Braverman said "we're doing it for the love of hockey; ... there is no financial gain here."

Five Russian-speaking players are part of the Columbus Blue Jackets and over the last few years more than 20 Russian players were drafted by NHL teams, "who pay taxes, a portion of which goes toward assistance for Ukraine," he said.

In his letter to the Blue Jackets, UUO President Dr. George Jaskiw urged the team "to reevaluate the propriety of your promotion ... [and] the reputations of the CBJ [the Columbus Blue Jackets] as well as the NHL and to come to a belated but correct decision."

In turn, Blue Jackets group sales manager Ian Wilkerson told the Ohio group that there will be "no in-game recognition of the group [Russian Heritage Network] or in-arena activation or celebration surrounding this group ticket offer."

He did not respond to multiple calls placed by The Ukrainian Weekly or an emailed message requesting comment.

Criticism about the event also came from Dmitri Khristich who currently coaches Ukraine's national hockey team.

The Kyiv native who scored more points in the NHL than any Ukrainian told The Ukrainian Weekly that the event promoting Russian heritage was "inappropriate."



Russian Heritage Night Facebook page

An unidentified woman wears a t-shirt with the two-eagled Russian coat of arms and the letters "RHN," which stands for Russian Heritage Network. The group is responsible for organizing a Russian Heritage Night during the National Hockey League game between the Columbus Blue Jackets and the visiting Washington Capitals on December 12.

A former player for the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs, Washington Capitals, Los Angeles Kings and Boston Bruins, Mr. Kristich said that "I have a negative attitude about this event ... and the NHL thinks it is not involved in politics, but this is political."

Regarding what other Russians say, Mr. Kristich said that "Russians think that what their country does is separate than the political leadership, but that is not the case here."

When he retired from the NHL, the hockey legend racked up 259 goals and had 337 assists.

Another former professional hockey player, NHL Hall of Fame goalie Dominik Hasek, also voiced frustration over the upcoming event.

After playing 16 seasons in the NHL, he criticized the league for supporting Russia in their ongoing war against Ukraine.

"The NHL has definitely gone crazy," he said in a lengthy post on X (formerly



Alex Ovechkin of the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals takes the ice wearing a jersey that reads "legends of hockey" in Russian.

More than 1 million...

(Continued from page 1)

Herman Halushchenko said early on November 28.

"Once again, the energy sector is under massive enemy attack. Attacks on energy facilities are taking place across Ukraine," Mr. Halushchenko wrote on social media.

Energy provider DTEK said early in the day that emergency power outages were being introduced in the regions of Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk.

Kyiv had also reportedly disconnected several nuclear power units from the network during the attack. Ukraine gets more than half of its electricity from nuclear plants.

It comes as the temperatures across Ukraine dropped to around freezing.

Earlier in November, a senior United Nations official, Rosemary DiCarlo, warned that Moscow's targeting of Ukraine's energy infrastructure may make this winter the "harshest since the start of the war" nearly three years ago.

Later, on December 1, Russia launched dozens of attack drones at the Ukrainian capital, officials said, in the latest of a series of air strikes that have battered Kyiv and its power grid.

No injuries were immediately reported in the attack. Ukrainian air defenses shot down about a dozen of the drones, military administrator Serhiy Popko said in a post to Telegram.

In the southern city of Kherson, however, Russian drones killed at least three people and seven others were wounded, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said.

Ukraine's air force said 78 drones in total were launched at targets across the country overnight, and it claimed 32 of them were intercepted or downed. Another 45 drones were "locationally lost," the force said, as a result of electronic jamming.

For months now, Russia has pummeled Ukraine with both drones and missiles, targeting not only military sites but also energy infrastructure in what appears to be an effort to demoralize and exhaust the civilian population.

Experts have warned that large parts of Ukraine could face heating or power outages or blackouts during the winter.

Ukraine has used its own drones to target Russian infrastructure and other sites across the border. In the Bryansk region, a child was reportedly killed by a Ukrainian drone early on December 1, Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said in post to Telegram.

In Kyiv, meanwhile, the European Union's newest top officials arrived in a show of solidarity with the Ukrainian leadership. The trip by European Council President Antonio Costa and Kaja Kallas, the E.U.'s foreign affairs policy chief, came on their first day in their new roles.

"From day one of the war, the E.U. has stood by the side of Ukraine," Mr. Costa said in post to X. "From day one of our mandate, we are reaffirming our unwavering support to the Ukrainian people."

Both Ms. Kallas and Mr. Costa have been strong supporters of Ukraine since Russia's February 2022 invasion, and their visit comes as Kyiv struggles to hold off a relentless Russian offensive across large parts of the 684-mile front line.

The European Union says its institutions and member countries have provided around \$133 billion in aid to Ukraine since the start of the all-out invasion.

"In my first visit since taking up office, my message is clear: the European Union wants Ukraine to win this war," Ms. Kallas wrote on X. "We will do whatever it takes for that."

Speaking to reporters after talks with the visiting E.U. officials, Mr. Zelenskyy argued that an invitation to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was necessary for his country's survival. And he said there was still time for the United States to convince "skeptics" in Europe about membership in the alliance.

NATO has said that Ukraine should even-



Russian Heritage Night Facebook page

A promotional poster advertising a Russian Heritage Night during a National Hockey League game on December 12 includes depictions of a bear and nesting doll, two symbols often associated with Russia.

Twitter).

He then continued the social media post with a lengthy enumeration of Russia's litany of war crimes starting from World War II in the previous century.

The Washington Capitals boast future Hall of Famer Alex Ovechkin, who is on the cusp of breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL all-time scoring record.

However, Mr. Ovechkin, an avowed supporter of Kremlin tyrant Vladimir Putin, has a knee injury and won't play against the Blue Jackets during Russian Heritage Night.

Mr. Ovechkin said he stood for peace when Russia's full-scale invasion began in February 2022, saying "this is something I cannot control," according to reporting by Voice of America. "This is not in my hands ... but I hope this [war] ends soon and both sides establish peace." In November 2017, a year before the sham presidential election, the Russian hockey player took the helm of Team Putin, a social movement that supported the dictator as he sought victory for another presidential term.

tually become a member of the alliance, but resistance from some European allies has resulted in little progress toward that goal. For its part, Moscow has cited Ukraine's potential membership as one of several justifications for launching its all-out invasion.

Mr. Zelenskyy also told reporters that an invitation to join must apply to all of Ukraine's territory. However, he conceded that the alliance's defensive arrangement could not apply to the occupied parts of Ukraine.

(With reporting by RFE/RL's Current Time, Reuters and AFP)

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Plast's Pobratymy...

(Continued from page 8)

The Pobratymy accepted seven new members to the fraternity. All Pobratymy are also members of the Pobratymy Foundation, which held its annual meeting during the annual meeting. On Saturday evening, the activities included a traditional campfire with singing, anecdotes and

remembrance of those who have passed.

Members of Pobratymy are active in Plast and Ukrainian community organizations and churches throughout the United States, Canada and Ukraine. For more than 50 years, the Pobratymy have assisted in preparing Ukrainian youth for life by upholding the ideals of scouting. Readers are invited to explore the group's Facebook page "Pobratymy – Побратими" and visit the webpage www.Pobratymy.org.

Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

World Athletics names Mahuchikh Field Athlete of the Year

World Athletics acknowledged Yaroslava Mahuchikh's record-breaking season by naming her the women's Field Athlete of the Year on December 1. Yet, Mahuchikh's wish is for peace in her war-torn country of Ukraine. The 23-year-old high jumper enjoyed a fantastic year competing for Ukraine in hopes of providing some positivity for her compatriots. She lit up the Paris Olympics on two occasions, won the European Championship, the Diamond League final and in late October was recognized as Europe's Best Women's Athlete of 2024.

In July, Mahuchikh broke the women's world record, which had stood for 37 years, with her jump of 2.10 meters at Charley Stadium, and then was crowned Olympic champion several weeks later at the Paris Games.

"Paris will be in my heart all my life," she said in a late November interview with AFP.

Her winning jumps furnished her with some well-deserved joy before she returned home to Dnipro, Ukraine, after the season where she witnessed the massive devastation caused by Vladimir Putin's unprovoked, full-scale invasion that began in February 2022.

Seeing countless destroyed and damaged buildings brought her to tears. She spoke about rockets hitting a building only 200 meters from her house in mid-November. Despite the strength and resilience shown by the Ukrainian people, Mahuchikh prays and hopes for an ending to the war and a victory for Ukraine.

She had to consider all of the risks involved of her returning to home to Dnipro, but she wanted to visit her home.

Mahuchikh left Ukraine soon after the invasion, though she said it was difficult to leave her family, especially her father, Oleksiy. She finally decided Dnipro was her home, the place where she grew up, and she felt a strong desire to come back to her home and her people, where she lived almost her entire life.

Though these should be the prime years of her professional life, she said she will not feel normal until the air raid sirens and missile attacks come to an end.



Wikipedia

High-jumper Yaroslava Mahuchikh, seen at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games where she won gold, was named female Field Athlete of the Year on December 1 by World Athletics.

The reigning high jump outdoor champion has to train abroad, like many of her fellow athletes, but she has made an effort to contribute to the war effort. She has helped raise funds for wheelchairs for disabled orphans and donated her Olympic prize money to the Ukrainian army and an animal shelter.

She has visited wounded soldiers in Dnipro and Kyiv, bringing along her gold medal to show and inspire them.

Mahuchikh enjoyed an emotional reunion with her father who got to see her Olympic gold medal. He had seen her performance at the Paris Games, but did not get to see her world record leap because of a livestream malfunction. He was told by friends that his daughter had jumped 2.10 meters.

When asked about her passion for the high jump, Mahuchikh made an animal analogy, being the animal lover she is.

"I am ready to fly like a swallow," she explained in her interview with AFP. "Your body takes off for several seconds, you fly."

Wladimir Klitschko considers return to ring

In a startling revelation made public on November 28, former world heavyweight boxing champion Wladimir Klitschko (64-5, 53 KO) has been negotiating a possible return to the ring to fight current International Boxing Federation (IBF) title holder Daniel Dubois (22-2, 21 KO), Mail Sport reported.

The 48-year-old Klitschko has declared himself fit and ready to fight Dubois in Saudi Arabia on February 22, 2025, according to Mail Sport. Talks regarding the fight have been temporarily put on hold following 58-year-old Mike Tyson's bout against YouTuber Jake Paul. The organizers of the Saudi event are hesitant about risking a repeat of the Tyson fight, where the ex-champ could only land 18 accurate punches in eight rounds.

The IBF has not yet decided to sanction the fight as a voluntary defense for Dubois.

A source claimed Klitschko is "obsessed" with the idea of beating Dubois and becoming the world's oldest champion. That record is held by George Foreman, who retired at the age of 46 years and 169 days in 1995 while holding the IBF title.

Klitschko ended his career in April 2017 after losing to Anthony Joshua.



Anatoliy Tymoshchuk, seen in 2014 with Zenit St. Petersburg (Russia), won his appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on November 18 after being sanctioned by the Ukrainian Association of Football for his pro-Russia stance on Russia's war against Ukraine.

Labeled by most of the Ukrainian soccer community as a traitor, Tymoshchuk played for Volyn and Shakhtar Donetsk before moving to Russian club Zenit St. Petersburg and Bayern Munich before returning to Zenit. He concluded his playing career with Kairat in the Kazakhstan League before transitioning into coaching as an assistant with Zenit, where he is still employed.

After Russia invaded Ukraine, Tymoshchuk remained in Russia as a football coach and made a controversial statement when he said that Ukraine should seek peace for the sake of the country's parents and children. In December 2022, Tymoshchuk granted an interview to the Zenit fan club in which he said he saw no difference between the people of Russia and Ukraine, stating that residents of both countries have the same mindset and mentality. He also underlined how much he brought to Ukrainian football while representing the country in national competitions.

That same month, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada adopted a resolution to sanction 55 Russian athletes and Tymoshchuk. In January 2023, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy approved the resolution.

In September, Tymoshchuk donated a signed St. Petersburg football jersey in support of the Russian military, with proceeds from the fundraiser going to assist the Russian armed forces in the Kursk region. The jersey sold for some \$7,000 and the action was widely condemned in Ukraine.

Young Ukrainian's potential transfer blocked by Brexit

Nineteen-year-old Ukrainian goalkeeper Vladyslav Krapivtsov is a youngster without a permanent soccer home. Previously of SC Dnipro 1, his dream of signing with Arsenal or Chelsea of the English Premier League (EPL) was not realized and he finds himself training with La Liga's Girona in Spain as he attempts to secure his professional future. The reason that his potential moves to Arsenal and Chelsea failed is related to Brexit.

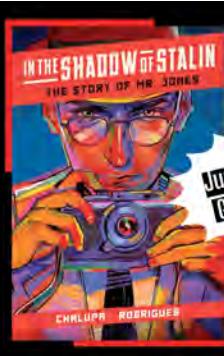
When the United Kingdom left the European Union, signing international prospects became more complicated. New restrictions post-Brexit mean that 18 to 21-year-olds from non-E.U. countries face difficulties in meeting the work permit criteria.

The criteria for work permits includes a points-based system that weighs several factors, including international caps, playing time and the competitive level of the player's current and prospective leagues. Given Krapivtsov's youth career and minimal experience in senior-level competition,

(Continued on page 14)

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Ukrainian pro sports update: soccer

by Ihor N. Stelmach

PSV's dramatic comeback stuns Shakhtar Donetsk

Down 2-0 through 87 minutes of play, Dutch club PSV mounted a furious comeback against 10-man Shakhtar Donetsk to win its UEFA Champions League match 3-2 in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, on November 27. The win left PSV with eight points (2-2-1) and stunned Shakhtar, which holds a record of one win, a draw and three losses, good for four points.

The visitors struck early when Yukhym Konoplya set up Danylo Sikan after just eight minutes. Sikan's shot squeezed past PSV goalkeeper Walter Benitez. Oleksandr Zubkov doubled Shakhtar's lead with an excellent curling finish in the 37th minute, putting the Ukrainian side in control.

Shakhtar looked untroubled until Pedro Henrique was sent off with a red card for his dangerous challenge on Johan Bakayoko in the 69th minute. The hosts started to press offensively and Malik Tillman's free kick barely got past Dmytro Riznyk at the near post in the 87th minute. Three minutes later Tillman leveled the score with a blast from outside the area. Ricardo Pepi was left to finish off a passing move with a shot that went in off the post in the 95th minute, sparking a mad frenzy among the home fans.

The Ukrainian champions used lightning quick counter-attacks to catch PSV with a sucker punch combination play on their first goal and followed with Zubkov's superb shot after Konoplya stole the ball from a startled PSV defender. Shakhtar goalkeeper Riznyk held down the fort until Tillman's long-range effort gave PSV some life. Shakhtar's defense seemed to crumble and the Hirnyky looked panic-stricken the rest of the way.

Shakhtar will host Bayern Munich (3-0-2, 9 points) in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, on December 10.



Ukrainian Association of Football

Yukhym Konoplya (front, left) shoots the ball against Dutch club PSV Eindhoven on November 27 as part of the UEFA Champions League. Shakhtar lost the match 2-3 in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Dynamo Kyiv loses fifth in a row in Europa League

Czechia's Viktoria Plzen defeated Ukraine's Dynamo Kyiv 2-1 in the fifth round of the Europa League's main stage on November 28 at the Volksparkstadion in Hamburg, Germany.

In the first half, both goalkeepers stood firm despite the teams trading dangerous scoring chances. In the 51st minute, Dynamo thought they had finally scored their first goal in the Europa Cup competition when Kostyantyn Vivcharenko delivered a deflection off Mykola Shaparenko into the opposing net. Unfortunately, a video review showed that the play leading up to the goal was offside.

Minutes later Viktoria capitalized on their momentum when Matej Vydra struck from outside the penalty area, hitting a very precise shot into the bottom corner to give the Czech side a 1-0 lead.

Despite a determined effort to equalize by Dynamo, Viktor Sulc doubled Viktoria's lead in the final minute of regular time, sealing the result. Dynamo managed a late consolation goal by Vladyslav Kabayev in stoppage time to finally register the team's first goal in the tournament.

The 1-2 defeat was Dynamo's fifth consecutive loss in the Europa League, leaving them in 36th and last place in the group standings. Their next match is against Real Sociedad on December 12.

Ukrainian footballer refuses to shake Russian's hand

It is traditional for players on European teams to shake hands before kick-off in UEFA Champions League matches to demonstrate respect, sportsmanship and fair play.

However, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine heading into its third year, Benfica's Ukrainian goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin

refused to shake hands with Monaco's Russian player Aleksandr Golovin before the Champions League clash on November 27 at the Stade Louis II in Monaco.

The two were seen exchanging handshakes with their other respective opponents, but Trubin did not offer his hand to Golovin as he walked by. The Russian was observed turning his head although the Ukrainian did not look back as he shook hands with the next Monaco player.

There have been many examples of Ukrainian athletes refusing handshakes with Russians in sports since the full-scale war began in February 2022. It has been a common sight in tennis among Ukrainian women on the pro tour.

Zinchenko may be leaving Arsenal

Oleksandr Zinchenko's career in Arsenal may soon come to an end with reports suggesting the Ukrainian national could be on the move. Since his arrival in the 2022-2023 season, Zinchenko has struggled to maintain consistent fitness, forcing the club to seek alternate solutions for his position. The emergence of other reliable options in his role has made Zinchenko expendable and other clubs have expressed interest in his services. Inter Milan has been identified as a team where the Ukrainian could be an excellent fit.

Zinchenko's future at Arsenal may depend on how head coach Mikel Arteta values his contributions beyond the pitch and if Inter's offer lines up with Arsenal's financial and team-building game plan. At the moment, his role with the Emirates is quite uncertain. It will require a substantial fee to obtain his release and transfer.

(Based on reporting by The Guardian, ESPN, Ukrainska Pravda, Metro and Just Arsenal.)

Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 13)

the requirements were not met.

His Ukrainian citizenship hindered his moves to Arsenal and Chelsea. His talent and international exposure at the U-21 level for Ukraine was not enough to land him a transfer.

Even though Krapivtsov's arrival at Girona's training session was a surprise, it nonetheless offers the young goalkeeper a chance to restart his career after the EPL disappointments. He will try to impress Girona's coaching staff in an effort to earn a contract. Viktor Tsyhankov's presence on the club can only help his young fellow Ukrainian.

Sport Shorts

• Ukrainian judokas won one silver and two bronze medals at the European Judo Championships for U-23 individuals that was held in Pila, Poland, on November 15-16. The results were good enough for Ukraine to take 12th place out of 36 competing countries.

• Ukraine finished in second place at the 2024 Cerebral Palsy World Cup, losing their final match to Iran 3-0. Ukraine missed the chance to win the competition for the fourth time, settling for the silver medal.

• The English Premier League's Everton club inked a multi-year partnership with Ukrainian vodka brand Nemiroff, becoming

the team's official premium vodka partner.

World Aquatics eased rules for approved Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete in team events at international events. Neutral designated athletes will be allowed to compete in swim relays, artistic swimming and synchronized diving.

• Ukrainian featherweight boxer Alexander Solomennikov (16-0, 8 KO) won a unanimous decision over Venezuelan Mykol Beaumont (19-7-1, 9 KO) in an International Boxing Association (IBA) international title fight in Estoril, Portugal, on November 20. The bout went the full 10 rounds and the 26-year-old won the first title fight of his career and his first championship belt.

• The Ukrainian women's foil fencing team won the silver medal at a World Cup foil competition in Tunis, Tunisia, on November 21-24, and the country's national women's épée squad also won silver at the 2024 World Cup in Vancouver on November 24, improving its performance from a year earlier when they won bronze.

• Ukraine finished in second overall place with 40 medals including 16 golds at the EUBC Balkan Elite, Youth and Junior Boxing Championships held in Loznica, Serbia, on November 16-24.

(Based on reporting by UNN via Tribuna, Daily Cannon, Just Arsenal, aholo! Sports via AFP and Tribuna.com.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at ihorgene@sbglobal.net.

NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 11)

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 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 par-

ties 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 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. (RFE/RL, with reporting by Reuters, dpa and The Wall Street Journal)

The Orange...

(Continued from page 7)

1991 – something that was not going to be left unchallenged by the Kremlin. With the Orange Revolution Putin became consumed with a pathological loathing of a Ukraine that dared to see itself apart from Russia – especially one that aspired to a democratic, European future. The Euromaidan Revolution of Dignity nine

years later only fueled Putin's determination to crush Ukraine, which became fully manifested with the February 2022 full-scale invasion.

We are at a critical juncture, with questions about whether the United States and some of its partners will remain committed to Ukraine. Notwithstanding the serious challenges that lie ahead, I am convinced that Moscow will fail in its savage attempts to vanquish the Ukrainian nation. Evil will not prevail.

OUT & ABOUT

Through January 1 Chicago	Pop-up art gallery exhibit and sale, MAK Chicago, located at 1716 W. Grand Avenue, makchicagoshop@gmail.com	December 15 Philadelphia	Visit with St. Nicholas, Ukrainian American Youth Association (Philadelphia branch), Ukrainian American Citizens' Association, kasiapyz@cym.org
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 16 New York	Conversation, "An evening with Oleksandra Matviichuk," Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
December 9 Online	Online book presentation, "The Making of Cossack Ukraine: Political Thought, Culture and Identity Formation, 1569-1714," with Frank Sysyn, Serhii Plokhi, Nancy C. Kollmann and Zenon Kohut, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, held via Zoom, www.ualberta.ca	December 17 Lancaster, PA	Christmas trip, "Joy to the World," Ukrainian American Senior Citizens Association, American Music Theater, 215-699-6068
December 10 Cambridge, MA	Presentation by Kateryna Ruban, "Abortion, Emancipation and Reproductive Disobedience in Ukraine," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu	December 18 Ottawa	Film screening, "Bucha," Mayfair Theater, www.eventbrite.ca
December 10 New York	Ukrainian Tech Forum, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	December 19 New York	Christmas concert, with Valeria Vovk and Firma Chupakhin, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
December 14 Jenkintown, PA	Christmas Bazaar and Food Fest, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.ueccphila.org	December 21 Somerset, NJ	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 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 21 Cambridge, MA	Concert celebration, "Christmas at the Seminary," St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary, https://stsuots.edu or 732-469-7555
December 14 North Wales, PA	Christmas Bazaar, Ukrainian American Sports Center - Tryzub, www.tryzub.org	December 22 Ottawa	Ukrainian Christmas Concert, featuring vocalist Valeria Vovk and jazz pianist Fima Chupakhin, Ukrainian Cultural Center of New England, Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church, www.tickettailor.com/events/uccnorg
December 14-15 Chicago	Winter Makers Market, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, www.uima-chicago.org	December 22 Ottawa	Christmas Concert, Ottawa Ukrainian Children's Choir, Ukrainian Banquet Hall, www.eventbrite.ca
December 15 Lehighton, PA	Christmas Bazaar, featuring Ukrainian food and craft items, Ukrainian Homestead, 610-377-4621 or www.ukrhomestead.com		Spider (pavuk) Workshop, Ukrainian Banquet Hall, www.ukrainianorthodox.info or 613-728-0856
December 15 Ottawa	Winter performance, Ottawa School of Ukrainian Dance, Svitankok Ukrainian Dance Society, Ottawa City Hall, www.facebook.com/events/8170786027120		

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.



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More than 60...

(Continued from page 8)

their photography services for the event.

The Pobratym Foundation expressed its gratitude to all of the event's volunteers, participants and sponsors who, through their support, generosity and commitment, have been the lifeblood of the annual charity outing.

In particular, the foundation expressed its thanks to the Selfreliance Foundation of Selfreliance Federal Credit Union and the Heritage Foundation of First Security Federal Savings Bank for their continued support throughout the years.

Other individuals and organizations that made donations during the event were Dr. Bohdan and Roxana Charkewycz; Oleh Skubiak; Lida Tkaczuk; Charysh and Birabek, Ltd. (Mike Charysh); Clearwater Capital Advisers, LLC; Dynamic Electronics

(Myron Stasiuk, president); George and Bohdanna Domino; Edgebrook Radiology (George Kuritz, M.D.); Leo De Pointis; Cook Alex, Ltd. (Andrew Kolomayets, partner); Drs. Vassyl and Roksolana Lonchyna; Nestor and Olya Popowych; Dr. Andrij and Ruta Ripecky; Alex Tkaczuk; Irka Tkaczuk and Alan Golub; the Ukrainian Catholic University Foundation; Drs. Daniel and Christine Hryhorczuk; Walter and Tamara Bratkiv; Andrew Chychula; Wasyl and Natalie Mirutenko; Dr. Roman and Katrusia Saldan; Roman B. Hirniak, Esq.; the Ukrainian National Association (Roman Hirniak, president); Dr. George and Christine Demidowich; Andrij and Motria Durbak; Drs. Roman and Mary Mycyk; Nina Prybula; and Dr. Roman and Marie Tkaczuk.

Next year's Plast-Chicago Golf Classic will be held on September 6, 2025. All previous participants are invited to return for the event. More information is available online at www.PobratymFoundation.com.



Maria Melnyk

The team of (from left to right) Nick Tsilius, Andre Birkus, Oleg Baluik and Mike Tsilius won the men's championship of the 26th annual Plast Chicago Golf Classic held on September 7 at the Renwood Golf Course in Round Lake Beach, Ill.

How Russia...

(Continued from page 4)

Donetsk region militants involved in the war since 2014.

"I was in Yunarmia myself, and now I serve in the army. About half of those who studied with me chose the military path. Unfortunately, many of them have already died. Some have been seriously wounded and cannot continue their service," she told Schemes' media partners. "This is the reality of our region."

Ms. Lisovenko said the "skills in handling weapons, physical training and the history education" she acquired in Young Guard-Yunarmia proved useful during the full-scale war against Ukraine.

Messrs. Zozulskiy and Sikorskiy and Ms. Lisovenko are from parts of Ukraine that have been controlled by Russia for a decade. But Yunarmia also operates in areas that Russian forces occupied after the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

This past summer, its newly opened Mariupol branch held seven sessions at a camp on the Azov Sea. Among other things, the children were taught to shoot with assault rifles.

One of the camp's organizers was Valeriy Onatskiy, the head of the Department for Family and Children's Affairs of the occupation administration of Mariupol. A Schemes investigation in 2023 found that Mr. Onatskiy was involved in the relocation of Ukrainian children from the occupied territories to Russia – activity that prompted the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Putin on suspicion of war crimes.

Occupation authorities said in November 2022 that branches of Yunarmia had also been established in the Russian-held parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhia

regions.

The head of Yunarmia in the Zaporizhia region is Fidail Bikbulatov, a Russian man whom Ukrainian intelligence has accused of involvement in the mass abduction, illegal deportation and forced transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia.

In a comment to Schemes' media partners, Mr. Bikbulatov said Yunarmia sees "its members tying their lives to military service in the future."

"We see potential in them, we expect them to become military personnel," he said. "We train them, work with them and want them to become military men – the Defense Ministry even provides benefits for former Yunarmia members when they join – but all this is done voluntarily."

Evidence indicates that Yunarmia's leadership judges the performance of its branches, at least in part, by the number of former members who join the Russian military.

In October, Yunarmia deputy chief Viktor Kaurov sent letters to regional branches about the mandatory annual "review competition" that said the evaluation would include two parameters: "the number of Yunarmia cadets called up for military service and enrolled in military universities" and "the number of Yunarmia cadets enrolled in military training centers."

Yunarmia's central headquarters in Moscow has not responded to requests for comment from Schemes.

(Adapted from the original Ukrainian by Aleksander Palikot)

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