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Zelenskyy floats option of foreign troops in Ukraine until NATO membership



Office of the President of Ukraine
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (left) and German Christian Democratic Party (CDU) Chairman Friedrich Merz shake hands during their meeting in Kyiv on December 9.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

KYIV – President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would consider the temporary deployment of foreign military forces on Ukrainian soil until full North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership as a way of securing his country as part of a peace settlement with Russia.

Speaking on December 9 at a joint news conference in Kyiv with German opposition leader Friedrich Merz, Mr. Zelenskyy said Ukraine's security needed to not only include NATO membership, but ultimately

European Union accession as well, to ward off future aggression by Moscow.

"A contingent of military forces from one country or another could stay in Ukraine until it becomes a NATO member," he said in a sign of Kyiv's growing openness to finding a diplomatic solution to Russia's nearly three-year-long, full-scale assault.

The proposal echoes discussions earlier this year when French President Emmanuel Macron called for the deployment of European forces in Ukraine.

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Resilience, tradition and hope: Christmas comes to Lviv bearing a message of unity and strength

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV and ISTANBUL – In a city rich with history and resilience, Lviv's Christmas celebrations take on a deeper meaning this year. From a unique post office reviving the art of postcards to a tree symbolizing hope, Lviv's festive spirit embraces tradition and its people's strength.

A special Christmas post office opened in Bandinelli Palace on the city's Rynok Square. It is here that Lviv residents and visitors can buy and send a unique postcard to any corner of the world. The Christmas post office will also serve as the central information hub for Christmas in Lviv, where visitors can learn all about events in the city, take part in themed workshops and see an exhibition

of Christmas cards from private collections and museums.

"The Christmas post office will be open in Lviv until January 10. We want people to revive the tradition of sending postcards for the holidays. None of us saves greeting cards in online messengers, and a physical postcard is something we would like to keep, just like our parents or grandparents did," said Khrystyna Lebed, head of Lviv's tourism department.

The Christmas post office building is located where the first post office in Lviv was founded four centuries ago. The Bandinelli Palace is a Renaissance architectural monument named after its owner, Florentine merchant Roberto

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Zelenskyy hails talks with Macron, Trump, says 'a just peace' was discussed

As Trump criticizes decision to allow Ukraine to strike inside Russia



Office of the President of Ukraine
French President Macron (center) meets U.S. President-elect Donald Trump (left) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Paris on December 7.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called his trilateral talks with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump "good and productive" and said the leaders discussed the situation on the ground in Ukraine and the potential for "a just peace."

"We talked about our people, the situation on the battlefield and a just peace for Ukraine. We all want to end this war as quickly and fairly as possible," Mr. Zelenskyy said on Telegram from Paris on

December 7 as world leaders gathered to mark the reopening of Notre Dame cathedral.

"President Trump, as always, is determined. We are thankful for that," he added.

Mr. Macron said, "Let us continue joint efforts for peace, security."

It was not immediately known if Mr. Trump would make public comments following the talks.

Mr. Zelenskyy, looking to bolster support for his nation's fight against the full-scale

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NHL's Columbus Blue Jackets call off 'Russian Heritage Night' following Ukrainian community backlash

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – The Columbus Blue Jackets of the National Hockey League (NHL) on December 11 canceled a "Russian Heritage Night" group outing for dozens of fans less than 24 hours before faceoff on December 12 against the visiting Washington Capitals in the wake of an advocacy campaign run by a Ukrainian non-profit group in Ohio.

Founded in 1928, the United Ukrainian Organizations of Ohio (UUO) umbrella group had voiced concern about the appropriateness of the event given the context of the ongoing genocidal war that Russia is waging against Ukraine.

Letters of protest were written to some 20 of the Blue Jackets' corporate sponsors, the NHL's top management and Ohio's governor as part of the campaign soon after members of the organization learned of what the UUO described as a pro-Russian "soft power" event.

In an emailed response to The Ukrainian Weekly, Blue Jackets communications manager Glenn Odebralski confirmed that "the group ticket outing involving Russian Heritage Network [RHN] will not be held."

"It's not happening; ... it's not on tonight's docket," a woman said who

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Georgian Dream launches Russian-style repression against opponents

by Beka Chedia
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze's November 28 announcement about suspending European Union integration discussions has caused a pre-revolutionary situation to develop in Georgia (Facebook.com/KobakhidzeOfficial, November 28; see Eurasia Daily Monitor, December 6). Since November 28, strikes and protests have spread across the country. The government, which has been accused of election fraud and seeking to establish Russian-style authoritarianism in the country, is brutally cracking down on its opponents (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 9, 24, May 1, 13, July 3, October 28, November 5). As a result of the ongoing protests, hundreds of people have been arrested, beaten and maimed, including opposition party leaders, politicians, civil activists, journalists and ordinary citizens, including teenagers and women.

On December 7, Georgia's public defender, Levan Ioseliani, warned that, if the unrest does not stop, the country will descend into civil war (Facebook.com, December 7). On the same day, an unidentified masked group attacked journalists from an opposition television channel live on air, emphasizing Mr. Ioseliani's concerns (TV Pirveli, December 8). The ruling Georgian Dream party denied involvement in the incident, but local media reports suggest that government agencies were behind the attacks. As Georgians continue to protest the Georgian Dream's path away from E.U. integration and toward authoritarianism, Georgia's Western turn becomes increasingly at risk.

Due to the difficulty of dealing with mass protests, the government has introduced new legislative restrictions similar to the repressive tactics seen in Russia. On December 8, Mr. Kobakhidze declared that, by the end of December, there would be a new law prohibiting face coverings for those participating in public demonstra-

tions (Facebook.com/KobakhidzeOfficial, December 8). A similar law was approved by the pro-Russian regime in Ukraine in 2014 during the Euro-Maidan demonstrations when protests broke out after then-President Viktor Yanukovich decided not to sign the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement (Ukrainews, January 17, 2014). Since November 28, demonstrators have used masks to both protect themselves from the tear gas that police have been actively using to brutally disperse them and to protect their identities from the special services and police.

Georgian Dream and its supporters are taking steps to show that they will not allow the West to "arrange" a revolution in Georgia similar to the 2014 Euro-Maidan Revolution in Ukraine. Mamuka Mdinardze, the leader of the parliamentary majority, claims that the West, in alliance with the Georgian opposition, planned a revolution for December 16-20. According to Mr. Mdinardze, Georgian Dream was able to foil these plans (Imedi TV, November 29). The Georgian Education Ministry has threatened to revoke the licenses of schools and higher education institutions whose students and teachers went on strike after November 28. Leaders of the ruling elite have openly threatened state employees who signed a petition condemning the government's latest steps. The mayor of Tbilisi and the executive secretary of Georgian Dream, Kakha Kaladze, indirectly threatened to fire city employees who signed these petitions and said that the "reorganization" of those employed by the mayor's office has already begun (Interpressnews.ge, December 1).

Since November 28, thousands of employees of various ministries, including defense, justice and foreign affairs, have openly protested, writing against the suspension of integration with the European Union. Many officials, including the Georgian Ambassador to the United States,

(Continued on page 16)

The ruble swoons and Russia's economy wobbles further

by Mike Eckel
RFE/RL

When you're a Russian retiree living on a limited income, it's bad enough trying to contend with skyrocketing prices for staples such as eggs, potatoes or butter. Now add to the list of worries: a swooning ruble hitting lows not seen in years.

"I see these prices, my eyes get wide," said one retired history teacher who lives in St. Petersburg and tries to get by on a 19,100-ruble (\$187) monthly pension. "What's going on? Prices are rising for absolutely everything"

"Polite words fail me, of course" the 72-year-old woman told RFE/RL's Russian Service. She asked for her name not to be used to avoid police harassment. "I have to joke about it to cool down my anger," she added.

Nearly three years into the Kremlin's all-out invasion of Ukraine, Russia's economy has defied expectations and the experts who predicted that it would be crippled by sweeping Western sanctions imposed in response to Moscow's military aggression.

Fueled by the flood of government spending that prioritized the war above all else, gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to clock in at 3.6 percent growth this year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But the torrid pace of spending is overheating the economy. Grappling with inflation hovering above 8 percent, the Central Bank has already hiked rates and could raise them even further in the coming weeks. That in turn has pushed up residential mortgages, not to mention business loans, prompting vocal complaints from business leaders.

Now comes another symptom of an increasingly unhealthy economy: the plunging Russian currency, hitting levels not seen since March 2022, weeks after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine.

As of December 5, the ruble stood at 103 to the U.S. dollar. That's down from 85 in September, but up from its lowest recent level - 113 - which it hit in the final days of November.

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NEWSBRIEFS

Zelenskyy hails talks with Macron, Trump

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called his trilateral talks with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump "good and productive" and said the leaders discussed the situation on the ground in Ukraine and the potential for "a just peace." "We talked about our people, the situation on the battlefield and a just peace for Ukraine. We all want to end this war as quickly and fairly as possible," Mr. Zelenskyy said on Telegram from Paris on December 7 as world leaders gathered to mark the reopening of Notre Dame cathedral. "President Trump, as always, is determined. We are thankful for that," he added. Mr. Macron said, "Let us continue joint efforts for peace, security." It was not immediately known if Mr. Trump would make public comments following the talks. Mr. Zelenskyy, looking to bolster support for his nation's fight against the full-scale Russian invasion that began in February 2022, arrived in the French capital at midday as more than three dozen global dignitaries gathered for the ceremonies, many of whom applauded the Ukrainian leader at the Notre Dame event. Mr. Zelenskyy arrived at the Elysee Palace for the three-way talks at 5:30 p.m. Paris time. The three men posed for photos but made no public comments before the talks began. Mr. Zelenskyy was expected to leave Paris immediately following the ceremonies at Notre Dame, which was restored following a devastating 2019 fire, aided by some \$1 billion in donations from around the globe. Mr. Trump, who will take office on January 20, has criticized the billions of dollars the United States has poured into Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion. Mr. Trump has also said he could end the war within 24 hours of retaking the White House, a statement that has been interpreted as meaning that Ukraine would have to surrender territory that Russia now occupies. The two also have a long history, mainly through an infamous phone call. During that July 2019 call, Mr. Trump asked Mr. Zelenskyy to look into the activities in Ukraine of Joe Biden and his son, Hunter. The elder Biden went on to defeat Mr. Trump in the 2020 presidential election. The call led to accusations that Mr. Trump had conditioned the release of near-

ly \$400 million in military aid on an investigation into the Bidens, and Mr. Trump was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2019 on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The Senate acquitted Mr. Trump on both charges in February 2020. "We expect a good decision from today's meeting with [Mr.] Macron," a source within the Ukrainian delegation told the AFP news agency before the announcement of the three-way talks. AFP also reported that Elon Musk, the world's richest man and one of Mr. Trump's closest allies, was expected to attend the ceremonies. On social media, Mr. Zelenskyy earlier said that Ukraine had received a second shipment of sophisticated F-16 fighter jets from Denmark. "The second batch of F-16s for Ukraine from Denmark is already in Ukraine. This is the leadership in protecting life that distinguishes Denmark," he wrote on Telegram. "The planes provided by the Danes from the first batch are already shooting down Russian missiles and saving our people, our infrastructure. Now our air shield is additionally strengthened. If all partners were so determined, it would be possible to prevent Russian terror," he said. In November, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced that Denmark would transfer two more batches of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine. Six had already been transferred, with a total of 19 aircraft earmarked for delivery by Copenhagen. Separately, Washington said it is preparing a \$988 million package of arms and equipment to Ukraine, with funds taken from the remaining \$2.21 billion available in the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. The funds will be used to buy ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and drones, the Pentagon said, as the administration of President Joe Biden attempts to bolster Kyiv before he leaves office. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by AFP and Reuters)

US loans Ukraine \$20 billion

The United States on December 10 said it had loaned Ukraine \$20 billion backed by the interest earned on frozen Russian

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Russia closes in on key Ukrainian city amid surge in peace diplomacy

Macron, Tusk set to discuss EU peace force for Ukraine

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Russian forces continue to take ground near the strategic eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk amid a surge in diplomacy to end Europe's biggest war in decades.

According to the Deep State online war-mapping platform, Russian troops on December 12 were as close as 2 miles from the southern part of Pokrovsk, a key logistical junction for Ukraine as well as home to the country's only domestic coking-coal supplier.

"Unconventional decisions must be made to enhance the resilience of our defense and ensure more effective destruction of the occupiers," Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, Ukraine's top commander, wrote in a post on Facebook.

"The battles are exceptionally fierce. The Russians are throwing all available forces forward, attempting to break through our defenses," the general said.

For months the area has seen some of the fiercest battles in Russia's 33-month-old full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for reinforcements amid signs of Ukrainian positions being overwhelmed by Russia's advantage in manpower.

Speaking to RFE/RL, Serhiy Filimonov, the commander of the 108th "Da Vinci Wolves" battalion, warned that the "main reason" for losses as Russia heads in the direction of Pokrovsk were "unrealistic tasks" for troops in the region given the current numbers.

The intensification of fighting on the battlefield comes as both sides look to



A Ukrainian man stocks up on fresh water in Pokrovsk, Ukraine, as Russian troops gain ground in their march toward the strategic city.

strengthen their positions amid signs of potential peace talks in the coming months.

Foreign affairs ministers from France, Germany and Poland were scheduled to meet on December 12 in Berlin to discuss the situation in Ukraine, while Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, whose country has been a staunch supporter of neighboring Ukraine, will host French President Emmanuel Macron for talks in Warsaw.

Leaders from across Europe are looking to show U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who will be inaugurated on January 20, that they are willing to assume their share of the burden to end the almost three-year war on Ukraine.

Mr. Trump has claimed that he could end the war in 24 hours, raising concern that he could force Ukraine to concede territory to Russia among other concessions, endangering European Union security.

Messrs. Tusk and Macron were expected to discuss the deployment of a postwar

peacekeeping force in Ukraine when the two meet in Warsaw.

The Polish prime minister said on December 10 that peace talks could start "in the winter," as Warsaw prepares to assume the E.U.'s rotating presidency on January 1.

Mr. Zelenskyy has demanded concrete Western security guarantees be part of any peace deal, arguing that Russia could invade again once it has rebuilt its forces.

Messrs. Macron and Tusk were expected to discuss the deployment of a postwar peacekeeping force in Ukraine on December 12, according to two media outlets, the latest sign of a surge in diplomacy to end Europe's biggest war in decades.

Polish outlet Rzeczpospolita, citing unidentified sources, reported that the two E.U. leaders are considering a 40,000-strong peacekeeping force that would be made up of troops from various countries.

Mr. Trump's victory in the November 5

U.S. presidential election has set about a flurry of diplomacy in Europe to find an acceptable compromise on ending the war in Ukraine before he takes office on January 20.

The United States has played a big role as it has been Ukraine's largest supplier of military aid. Mr. Trump has threatened to curtail it if Mr. Zelenskyy refuses to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Zelenskyy has demanded concrete Western security guarantees be part of any peace deal, arguing that Russia could invade again once it has rebuilt its forces.

The United States and Britain gave Ukraine vague security assurances in 1994 to persuade it to give up its nuclear weapons. However, neither nation came to Ukraine's defense when Russia invaded for the first time in 2014.

A 40,000-strong Western peacekeeping force would serve as a meaningful security guarantee while Ukraine waits to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Diplomacy overdrive

Diplomacy to end the nearly three-year Russian invasion has been in overdrive this month with Messrs. Trump, Macron and Zelenskyy meeting in Paris on December 7 to discuss peace options.

Mr. Trump then met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has been the loudest critic of Western support for Ukraine and the main spoiler of a united E.U. voice against the Kremlin.

Messrs. Zelenskyy and Orban took jabs at each other on social media on December 11 over negotiations and peace.

In a tweet, Mr. Orban said that he had an hourlong phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin about the conditions for a cease-fire and peace talks with Ukraine. Mr.

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Ukraine caught in the middle as U.S.-China trade fight targets drones

by Reid Standish
RFE/RL

Escalating trade hostilities between China and the United States are putting drone supplies critical to Ukraine's war effort in the crosshairs.

U.S. media reports suggest Chinese manufacturers are limiting the sale of vital drone components to companies in the United States and the European Union that supply the parts to Ukraine.

The Chinese restrictions could hinder Ukraine on the battlefield, where drones have played a pivotal role. Kyiv's arsenal of cheap but effective drones is used for reconnaissance, dropping explosives on targets and defending against Russian attacks.

Beijing's move is seen as a response to Washington's decision in December to restrict the sale of high-bandwidth memory chips and additional semiconductor equipment to China. In reaction, Beijing has already banned the sale of dual-use items to the American military and several materials with high-tech and military applications to U.S. companies.

But cutting supplies to drone components that form a key part of Ukraine's war effort against Russia marks a new element of the escalating trade tensions.

The Chinese move, experts say, also sends a message to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration of China's ability to counter sanctions imposed by Washington.

"This is partly a response to U.S. tariffs and a form of punishment for American



Ukrainian servicemen attach munitions to a modified drone.

export control measures," said Joseph Webster, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. "But restricting this drone tech will have battlefield consequences for Ukraine and could be important ahead of potential cease-fire negotiations."

Affordable and commercially available drones have become a staple of the nearly three-year war in Ukraine for both Kyiv and Moscow.

The United States maintains an edge in larger military drones. But China dominates the market for cheaper and smaller drones and their components, which have dual-use civilian and military applications.

Several independent surveys estimate that China controls 90 percent of the drone market in the United States and 80 percent

globally.

Given this foothold, experts have warned about a growing dependence on China's control over the global supply chain for drones. Washington has expressed a need to create new supply chains as tit-for-tat trade moves between Beijing and Washington are poised to escalate under the second Trump administration.

"These new controls only underscore the importance of strengthening our efforts with other countries to de-risk and diversify critical supply chains away from [China]," a State Department spokesperson told RFE/RL.

China's Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Industry and Information Technology did not respond to RFE/RL's

request for comment.

The trade war meets the drone war

Since 2019, China has created what it called an "unreliable entity list" to penalize companies that undermine Chinese national interests and introduced rules to punish firms that comply with U.S. restrictions on Chinese entities.

The broader reach of these laws enables Beijing to potentially choke global access to critical components, including materials like rare earth resources and lithium that form essential components in everything from smartphones to electric vehicles.

In terms of the latest limits on shipments of drone components to the United States and Europe, Chinese producers of motors, batteries and flight controllers have cut the quantities they deliver or, in some cases, stopped shipments altogether.

One notable example occurred in October when the U.S. drone maker Skydio, which supplies Ukraine's military, was hit by Chinese sanctions in response to winning a contract from the Taiwanese government.

Skydio has been heralded as a home-grown U.S. alternative to Chinese manufacturers and dependence on Chinese supply chains.

While the U.S. firm had spent years building a supply chain outside China for its products, it still relied on the country for one vital component: batteries.

The Chinese restriction on the supply of batteries to Skydio left the company scram-

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Ecocide in Ukraine: The toxic legacy of Russia's war

by Eugene Z. Stakhiv

It's hard to imagine an archipelago of Chernobyl-type exclusion zones stretching from Kyiv through Kharkiv to Kherson. Yet, this is what the roughly 600-mile battle-front line between Russia and Ukraine, littered with millions of unexploded artillery and land mines, will likely become.

That is the horrible prospect facing Ukraine after the war. At least 10 such Chernobyl-size areas would need to be placed off-limits to residents, farmers and the public because of extreme danger from land mines and unexploded ordnance. It will take several generations to clear these zones, following France's experience after World War I, as an example.

The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is nearly 1,600 square miles. Public access without official approval and habitation are strictly forbidden in that zone because of high radioactivity, caused by the nuclear power plant disaster in 1986.

During the war, at least 10 major battles occurred along the war's extensive front line, including in Melitopol, Mariupol, Irpin, Izium, Bakhmut, Soledar, Avdiivka and Chasiv Yar. They form an archipelago of devastated pockets of urban areas, forests and agricultural lands, each about 50-miles in diameter. These zones are littered with land mines and unexploded ordnance, comparable to the French "Zones Rouges," formed after the brutal trench battles of World War I. This expansive crescent of toxic zones will pose a threat to the health and safety of farmers and villagers for generations to come. The environment will be the conduit for those health threats – through its groundwater, streams, forests and agriculture.

One thousand days of relentless Russian bombardment and more than 2 million Russian landmines and roughly 2 million units of unexploded ordnance will impose some of the war's worst and long-lasting damage. The mines will leave toxic contamination and perilous safety concerns for generations to follow, recalling the aftermath of year-long trench warfare battles during World War I.

After that war, France did not allow people, housing, farming or forestry in the affected area, creating a "Zone Rouge," a crescent of land stretching 250 miles and 25 miles wide, where French and German armies had fired about 10 million artillery shells. To this day, there are still millions of unexploded shells in the soil around Verdun. And farmers plowing their fields outside the zone still die each year after they encounter an unexploded ordinance.

Ten million shells at Verdun? Russia fired that many in 2023 alone. The big difference, though, between the damage in France and Ukraine is the use of land mines, which were not used heavily during World War I. Over 2 million mines have been laid in Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale war on the country, already contributing to more than 1,000 civilian injuries and fatalities in Ukraine.

Russia's war on Ukraine has cost it nearly 300,000 battlefield casualties, created over 10 million refugees, with thousands of civilian casualties and more than 20,000 children kidnapped and deported to Russia. But the damage to Ukraine goes much further than that. Russia has committed a series of grave war crimes, and ecocide needs to be added to that list, as it is recognized by many international institutions as such.

The environment is the silent victim of Russia's assault on Ukraine. Among the most damaging and long-lasting ecological

and public health impacts will be the millions of units of unexploded ordinance and land mines.

There's a dilemma, though. The cheaper, faster way of removing these mines – blowing them up in place – creates the longest-lasting consequence of pollution, leading to a suite of adverse secondary and tertiary environmental and human health consequences.

However, manual defusion of unexploded ordinance is laborious, time-consuming and costly. The World Bank estimates that demining in Ukraine alone will cost over \$37 billion.

But the damage goes much further than that. Russia's actions have devastated the environment; not only the natural environment but also the managed human environment, including forestry, agriculture and water resources.

This war will leave a toxic legacy that will plague Ukraine for generations to come and public health impacts will become a huge intergenerational problem – just as 11,000 Superfund sites and 1,700 formerly used Department of Defense sites have become in the U.S.

The consequences of ecocide may not be as visible or as easily valued as the destruction of a bridge or school, but it has been well documented – from the destruction of hundreds of thousands of acres of natural preserves in Ukraine, to the demolition of Kakhovka Reservoir and its devastating impacts on the riverine and estuarine ecosystems downstream. Those losses can be estimated in economic terms, using widely accepted methods.

Experts know it will be very costly. The Ukrainian government estimates damage to the environment at \$56 billion. As large as this number is, it captures only a portion of the damage done. The loss of this prime farmland alone will leave a permanent mark on the economy and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people across future generations of Ukrainians.

Added to this figure are several additional types of environmental damage that go well beyond the \$56 billion that must be accounted for: the long-lasting toxic effects of unexploded ordinance and landmines on ecosystems; loss of biodiversity, species and habitat; lost productivity by industry, agriculture and forestry; and, in particular, the long-term public health and safety consequences of bombing and land mines across a combat frontline that extends more than 600 miles from Kyiv through Kharkiv to Kherson.

These categories are interrelated. For example, the destruction of the Kakhovka reservoir on June 6, 2023, resulted in the ruin of aquatic ecosystems in the lower Dnipro River basin, ultimately affecting migratory birds and waterfowl from Central Asia, which are greatly diminished in numbers. But the ecological loss also has a huge human dimension.

More than 1.5 million acres are now without irrigation water formerly provided by the Kakhovka Reservoir. As a result, fields lie fallow, affecting food production, jobs, health and self-sufficiency for tens of thousands of farmers. A full accounting of these impacts will be necessary after the war.

For example, according to a United Nations Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report, while the direct physical loss to the infrastructure of the Kakhovka dam demolition was \$2.8 billion, the indirect loss to the economy is estimated to be nearly four times as much, roughly more than \$11 billion. Justice suggests that Ukraine must somehow receive compensation for these

losses.

A few analogous examples in the U.S. offer a sense of the scope and scale of environmental damage and the long-term costs associated with the restoration of destroyed habitats and remediation of toxic and hazardous waste sites.

Recall the recent train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, that spilled a wide range of toxic chemicals that burned for days. That cleanup has cost more than \$1 billion and counting. And the public health costs are mounting. There are scores of destroyed chemical, fertilizer and wastewater treatment plants and energy facilities in Ukraine.

The cost of remediation in the U.S. for comparable toxic waste contamination problems is more than \$23 billion for Superfund sites, and tens of billions more for the formerly used Defense Department sites program. Mariupol, alone, is one huge Superfund site, with coal, iron and steel processing plants and waste slag heaps destroyed by Russia's months-long bombing campaign.

These are useful analogs for Ukraine's looming toxic remediation problems it will need to address after the war. They are not being explicitly considered as yet by institutions accounting for the war's damage, such as the World Bank.

The World Bank and other institutions, such as the Kyiv School of Economics, have done a very good job estimating the damage that Russia has done to civilian infrastructure. Accounting for the destruction of buildings, schools, energy facilities, roads, hospitals, clinics, factories, water and wastewater treatment plants puts those estimates at more than \$400 billion to date. The reconstruction of this critical infrastructure needs to be prioritized for Ukraine to rebound economically. And ruined and demolished towns and cities need to be demined first before reconstruction can begin.

Moreover, the long-term public health consequences of the war have been neglected in the accounting of environmental impacts. Based on recent comparable incidents in the U.S., treating just the long-term public health consequences associated with the toxic contamination of land mines and unexploded ordinance will be extremely costly.

Among the largest hidden long-term costs are those associated with the human health consequences of war. For example, the recent Camp Lejeune settlement for the effects on human health from contaminated groundwater is estimated to cost about \$21 billion over the next 20 years.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is another critical category of public health consequences that has been largely unmentioned. Millions of Ukrainians, both military and civilians, are experiencing mental health struggles dealing with the trauma of war. Fear, deprivation, constant stress and anxiety, hopelessness, shock and depression are prevailing emotions. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities are the most vulnerable and most in need of help.

According to the U.S. Veterans Administration, a traumatic event occurs if an individual has suffered a serious injury, personal or sexual trauma, or sexual violation, or was threatened with injury, sexual assault or death. By that definition, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who lived in the Russian-occupied zones in Ukraine and were subjected daily to torture, death threats, assaults and sexual violence have experienced a traumatic event.

PTSD is the most commonly diagnosed

psychiatric disorder in military veteran populations with estimated lifetime prevalence rates of 30 percent for Vietnam veterans, 12 percent for Gulf War veterans, and 14 percent for U.S. Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans. These will likely grow as new cases are identified.

It is expected that both civilians and military personnel in Ukraine are already experiencing similar symptoms of PTSD. An elaborate medical rating system was developed by the doctors of the U.S. Veterans Administration to determine the degree of psychological injury and commensurate medical benefits. This system can be applied to Ukraine's psychologically impaired populace to calculate damages for monetary compensation and medical care.

The estimated annual cost of PTSD in the United States among all U.S. civilians, active-duty military personnel and veterans is \$232 billion, according to the American Psychological Association. Those costs include direct treatment, disability payments and loss of employment. Considering that Ukrainians throughout the country are and will be suffering from PTSD, the cost of this burden on Ukraine's social safety and well-being infrastructure will be immense.

Finally, Ukraine is home to 35 percent of Europe's biodiversity. There is serious damage to 160 of 271 Emerald Network special conservation sites totaling 627,000 hectares. These sites are part of a European system of protected conservation areas and natural habitats for endangered species. Also, 16 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Ramsar sites, totaling 2.9 million hectares, have been substantially impaired. These sites are wetlands designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO.

The Everglades Restoration project in Florida provides a sense of what will have to be done, collectively, to restore Ukraine's damaged natural environment, as it is roughly equivalent to the scale and scope of the efforts needed for Ukraine.

The project scale, complexity and costs of the Everglades projects rival what Ukraine would probably need over the next three decades to restore the numerous habitats and ecosystems destroyed by Russia's wantonly destructive military operations. As of last year, the cost of Everglades restoration projects is \$23 billion.

So far, at least an additional \$100 billion in costs for ecological restoration and toxic and hazardous waste remediation have been enumerated to deal with the intergenerational adverse environmental impacts of Russia's indiscriminate bombing and mining of Ukraine. The costs of treating PTSD will rise dramatically for the next generation.

Ukraine has many other urgent priorities before demining its red zones can begin. As with France's "Zones Rouge," the many islands of forbidden zones in Ukraine's archipelago that make up some 10,000-15,000 square miles of land stretching along the more than 600-mile arc of destruction and desolation from Kyiv to Kherson may be off limits for generations to come.

The article above is based on testimony delivered on July 16 by Dr. Eugene Z. Stakhiv, a lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, before the Helsinki Commission, formally known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Ukrainian Action delivers aid to Ukraine and provides rehabilitation for veterans

by Matthew Dubas

PARSIPPANY, N.J. – A charity organization, Ukrainian Action, has delivered more than 66 convoys of humanitarian aid and medical supplies to those in need in Ukraine. The charity was founded in 2022 by Jefferey Hartman, a former U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Ukraine in the early 2000s.

The organization is 100 percent volunteer-based, with many individuals helping from the United States and the United Kingdom. Many of those volunteers drive vehicles (400 volunteers since 2022 have taken part in 66 convoys) loaded with humanitarian aid to those near the frontlines, and they often deliver vehicles as well for use as medical, emergency support and supply transport. A humanitarian convoy is deployed every two weeks, and more than 320 vehicles have been donated since 2022.

“The trucks and supplies are donated to the brave and vulnerable people of Ukraine through a trusted network of friends and colleagues that I know personally from my time as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine. Some of our volunteers and partners I have known for 20 years. This strong network in Ukraine provides critical intelligence on the

most vital needs in the country,” Mr. Hartman said.

“In the first days after the invasion, we sent supplies to the family that housed me 20 years ago in a village in central Ukraine. They welcomed me into their home like family and put up with my broken Ukrainian for three months, and I am so grateful that we were able to provide their community with critical supplies,” he said.

The charity also has been instrumental in launching a certified rehabilitation program for veterans, “Heroes of Ukrainian Action,” offering rehabilitation programs for psychological as well as physical trauma, allowing veterans time to decompress from their experiences on the frontlines in a natural setting at ski resorts in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine.

It is that natural setting, Mr. Hartman explained to The Ukrainian Weekly, that the veterans are immersed in, which promotes healing, as well as planned physical activities that also contribute to rehabilitation. The rehabilitation program utilizes best practices, directs the selection process and program development, oversees partnerships and is expected to expand in 2025. Psychological counselors are available for veterans during their time in rehabilitation.

The selection process begins with organization officials



Deputy Minister of Ukraine’s Ministry of Veterans Affairs Maksym Kushnir (left) and Jeffrey Hartman, founder of Ukrainian Action charity organization, after the signing of a memorandum of cooperation in Kyiv on November 19 in Kyiv.




Volunteer drivers prepare to depart in a convoy to deliver humanitarian aid and supplies to those in need throughout Ukraine.

identifying who can be best helped through the program, and family re-integration is part of that therapy program, Mr. Hartman said.

Ukrainian Action announced on November 25 that Jack Lopresti, a former member of parliament who represented Filton and Bradley Stoke (2010-2024) in the United Kingdom, is appointed patron of the Ukrainian Action Heroes rehabilitation program. As an MP, Mr. Lopresti had visited Ukraine many times, including as a private citizen. The organization’s mission, he added, “aligns closely” with his commitment to supporting Ukraine, both militarily and with humanitarian aid.

Mr. Lopresti said he called his appointment a “huge honor and privilege to support the fantastic work

(Continued on page 14)



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THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Russian ecocide in Ukraine

In the days, months and years following the launch of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the consequences for the war-ravaged country extend far beyond the tragic loss of lives, the displacement of millions of people and the destruction of infrastructure. A silent yet devastating victim of the war is Ukraine's environment, which has been subjected to a catastrophic assault that will echo for generations. This environmental toll – an act of ecocide, as one story in this issue of The Ukrainian Weekly rightly notes – demands global condemnation and immediate international action.

The 600-mile frontline from Kyiv to Kherson is becoming a grim archipelago of Chernobyl-type exclusion zones. These zones, stretching across devastated areas, such as Bakhmut, Mariupol and Kharkiv, are littered with millions of unexploded artillery shells and land mines. Ukraine faces the horrifying prospect of designating at least 10 exclusion zones, each 50 miles in diameter, to protect its citizens from the dangers of unexploded ordinance. These areas will likely remain uninhabitable for generations, paralleling the "Zones Rouges" of post-World War I France.

France's experience after Verdun, where millions of shells still pose a deadly threat over a century later, offers a sobering parallel. Yet the scale of devastation in Ukraine surpasses even that. Russia fired approximately 10 million artillery shells in 2023 alone, and its forces have laid over 2 million land mines, endangering farmers, villagers and ecosystems. This deliberate destruction is not only a violation of human rights but also an egregious attack on the environment.

The environmental consequences of Russia's actions are staggering. Beyond the immediate threat of unexploded ordinance, the use of mines and heavy artillery has left toxic contamination that will leach into Ukraine's soil, water and food supply for decades. The Kakhovka Reservoir's destruction on June 6, 2023, is emblematic of this ecological assault. Its demolition wiped out riverine ecosystems, disrupted migratory bird patterns and left 1.5 million acres of farmland without irrigation. The indirect economic loss from this single act is estimated at \$11 billion, underscoring the immense scale of environmental and human suffering.

Ukraine's biodiversity, a treasure trove that includes 35 percent of Europe's species, has also been irreparably harmed. Over 160 European Emerald Network conservation sites and 16 UNESCO Ramsar wetlands have been damaged or destroyed. These areas are vital not just for Ukraine but for global ecological health.

The toxic legacy of war extends to public health. The millions of unexploded ordinances scattered across Ukraine pose long-term health risks, from direct injuries to the contamination of water and soil. Manual demining is slow and expensive – estimated to cost over \$37 billion – but the alternative, blowing up mines in place, risks worsening pollution.

Moreover, the psychological toll on Ukraine's population is immeasurable. Millions of Ukrainians, both military and civilian, are grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health struggles. Drawing from U.S. data, the cost of treating PTSD among Ukrainian survivors could rival the \$232 billion annual expenditure seen in the U.S. for similar conditions. The burden on Ukraine's healthcare and social infrastructure will be immense.

Russia's war crimes, including the wanton destruction of Ukraine's environment, cannot go unpunished. Ecocide must be formally recognized as a crime under international law. The estimated \$56 billion in environmental damages reported by the Ukrainian government is just the tip of the iceberg. The long-term costs of ecological restoration, public health treatment and toxic remediation will likely exceed \$100 billion.

Global institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations must expand their accounting to include environmental impacts alongside infrastructure damage. Ukraine's recovery will require massive international support, not just to rebuild cities but also to restore ecosystems, protect public health and ensure food security for future generations.

Justice demands that Russia be held accountable for the immense harm it has inflicted on Ukraine's environment and people. The world must recognize ecocide for what it is: a crime against humanity and the Earth itself.

Dec.
13
2018

Turning the pages back...

Six years ago, on December 13, 2018, Vladimir Socor's analysis for Eurasia Daily Monitor, which appeared in the December 21, 2018, issue of The Ukrainian Weekly, underscored the geopolitical immaturity of the failed Normandy format (Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France) and offered lessons from this approach to deterring Russia.

In her scheduled press briefing after the meeting of the Normandy format, German Chancellor Angela Merkel glossed over the details of disagreements with Russia, which rejected an expanded mandate to include the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) unhindered access to the Kerch Strait and the Azov Sea to monitor shipping accessibility in the region. Moscow rejected this proposal but did not exclude the possibility of French and German observation representatives monitoring the region.

"The proposal was hastily improvised after the crisis had reached the point of eruption, although it had been brewing for six months with little international notice," Mr. Socor observed, adding that the changing of an OSCE field mission mandate would be "laborious and time-consuming, and ultimately counter-productive." Russian diplomacy's bad faith in the OSCE and its use of its veto power, he added, results in dysfunctional missions vulnerable to Russian sabotage.

This pattern has been repeated in other territories occupied by Russia, including in

(Continued on page 7)

NHL's Columbus...

(Continued from page 1)

responded to the team's main office number without providing her name on December 12, the day of the game.

According to Alex Braverman, a chief co-organizer of the informal Russian Heritage Network group that organizes similar events at NHL games, his group was told that the decision to cancel the event was ostensibly to protect "the safety of the players."

"They [the Blue Jackets] promised to send [an] explanation to fans, but so far [they have] just refunded the fee with no explanation," he added.

The Ohio-based NHL team was scheduled to host the Washington Capitals, whose star player is Alex Ovechkin, a future hall of fame honoree who openly supports Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Braverman added that there were "five Russian-speaking players" who were to play in the game on December 12.

The Russian fan group only received an emailed cancellation notification the previous day.

More than 50 fans had purchased tickets within the Russian group, according to matchtv.ru, a free-to-air federal sports television channel owned by Gazprom Media, a subsidiary of Gazprombank, which is directly linked to the Russian state-owned Gazprom energy giant.

According to the Russian broadcaster, a Russian dance troupe was supposed to perform at the event and it was canceled before the Blue Jackets canceled the game tickets. As part of the package, a group fan photo was scheduled to take place with Blue Jackets forward Kirill Marchenko after the game.

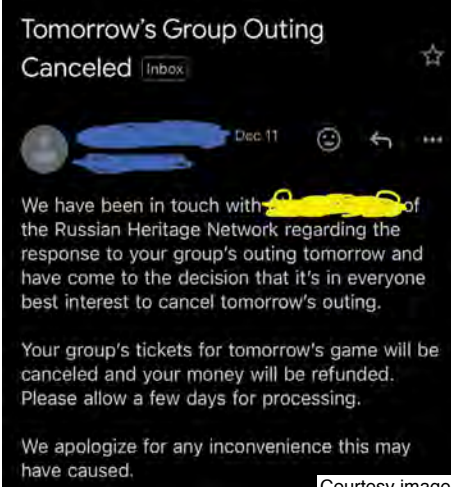
In its report, Matchtv.ru blamed pressure from "the Ukrainian community in Ohio" for the group outing's cancellation.

In turn, Gary Meagher, the NHL's vice president for public relations and media services, previously told The Ukrainian Weekly that the league "wasn't sanctioning" the game.

In February 2022, the NHL condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a statement, saying that it "urges a peaceful resolution as quickly as possible. ... Effective immediately, we are suspending our relationships with our business partners in Russia and we are pausing our Russian language social and digital media sites."

All NHL competitions within Russia were also indefinitely canceled, according to the statement.

"This is good news," said Marta Kelleher, immediate past president of the UUO. "We



Courtesy image

A screenshot of an emailed message from the Columbus Blue Jackets sent on December 11 informed individuals who purchased tickets as part of the "Russian Heritage Night" fan group event, which was to take place during the team's December 12 game against the visiting Washington Capitals, that the event was canceled.

would like to help others duplicate our efforts to draw attention to similar [pro-Russian] events in the future."

A new statement from the group on December 12 said that the UUO was "pleased" to hear the event had been called off, saying the Blue Jackets had "made the right decision."

It furthermore voiced "gratitude" toward "the corporate sponsors and individuals who voiced their concerns to the team."

As a result, the episode was described as a "teaching moment" for the NHL and corporate sponsors to conduct "due diligence and responsibility when forming partnerships" to avoid aligning with groups "that may have hidden or problematic agendas."

The RHN was described as a pro-Kremlin "soft power" group by the Cleveland-based Ukrainian advocacy organization, which unites more than 50 various cultural, civic, financial, educational and religious organizations. The UUO also said research found that RHN is a registered business entity in Canada and that RHN helps Russian companies evade Western sanctions.

Mr. Braverman, one of RHN's leaders, told The Ukrainian Weekly that it only promotes "hockey diplomacy" and that "sports has nothing to do about politics."

He denied all and any allegations of helping Russian business entities circumvent sanctions that have been imposed since Moscow's forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

On its LinkedIn page, the RHN notes that its purpose is a "celebration of the Russian contribution to the growth of the game of hockey."

Some hockey fans were flabbergasted after learning of the Russian heritage night. Sports writer Chris Lerch in New York sarcastically tweeted, "When's the Nazi Heritage Night?"

In a previous interview, former NHL player and Ukrainian national hockey team coach Dmitri Khristich said that "Russians think that what their country does is separate than the political leadership, but that is not the case here."

And retired NHL Hall of Fame goalkeeper Dominik Hasek tweeted that "the NHL has definitely gone crazy."

Other so-called Russian heritage nights have been held at NHL games.

In the 2019-2020 NHL season, 10 such events were held when Russia was already at war with Ukraine, having forcibly seized the Crimean Peninsula and covertly invaded and occupied part of the easternmost regions of Luhansk and Donetsk in 2014.

After the all-out invasion in 2022, RHN held a heritage night on April 22, 2022, when the Capitals hosted the visiting Toronto Maple Leafs.



Before announcing that the event had been canceled, the National Hockey League's Columbus Blue Jackets used a promotion poster to announce a "Russian Heritage Night special ticket package" that included a team "gift and a group photo on the ice after the game."

The ruble...

(Continued from page 2)

'The rules of the game will be changed'

The main – though not only – reason for the drop? A new set of sanctions that the United States announced on November 21, targeting dozens of Russian banks, including the largest bank to avoid sanctioning to date. The state-owned Gazprombank had dodged that bullet mainly due to its role as a conduit for transactions related to oil and gas exports. Washington had previously feared that sanctioning it would disrupt global oil markets and send oil prices skyrocketing.

Russians – individuals, banks and businesses – were rushing to make transactions ahead of December 20, when the restrictions take effect, Sergei Aleksashenko, a former top official in the Central Bank, said, and that has flooded the market with rubles.

"It seems to me that the sharp jump in the ruble [or dollar] is explained by the fact that the rules of the game will be changed, and no one knows what the new rules will be," he told RFE/RL's Russian Service.

Officials, including President Vladimir Putin, have tried to calm jittery nerves for both average consumers and business leaders.

"As often happens in such situations, there is currently an excessive emotional component on the currency market," Economic Development Minister Maksim Reshetnikov told reporters on November 27. "Experience shows that, after a period of increased volatility, the rate always stabilizes."

The economic crosswinds are causing headaches for policymakers, both big and small.

Regular Russians – particularly those in poorer regions far from urban centers like St. Petersburg – have benefited from the torrent of cash in government spending. Dizzily high wages paid to men who volunteer to fight in Ukraine – not to mention the bonuses and benefits paid to war widows – have spurred consumers to spend, or even splurge.

Soaring inflation, stuttering growth

High war wages, however, have forced civilian factories, particularly military-industrial enterprises, to hike wages to compete, and fill vacancies. Putin himself has publicly lamented that labor shortages have been a problem.

Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

Transdnier, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine's Donbas region.

The reactionary methods of Western governments, after months of attempts to ignore the crisis, resulted in a flawed mandate for the OSCE. The logic espoused by those tasked with ensuring peace and security, prefer "a flawed mission than no mission," Mr. Socor wrote. This logic has been employed by not only the OSCE but by member governments of the European Union as well as member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Neither the E.U. nor NATO want to fulfill their responsibilities when going against Russia, and the Russia-influenced OSCE had become the go-to international organization to address security matters in Europe, Mr. Socor said.

Russia has maintained its pattern of denying the OSCE the means to fulfill its mission, not only in Russia, as it did in 1995 during its invasion of Chechnya under

Elevated salaries have fueled inflation, driving up the cost of everyday goods, including butter, potatoes and eggs. Several regions have reported a rash of thefts of butter and other dairy products as prices climb. Some retailers have taken to putting dairy products under lock and key to prevent theft.

Rates on residential mortgages are also soaring, in conjunction with the Central Bank's interest hikes, which have in turn choked off home and apartment sales in a growing number of regions.

The ruble's drop, meanwhile, will make imported goods more expensive – at a time when Russian consumers are ramping up spending for the long New Year's and Christmas holidays.

It's also pinching migrant workers, many of whom hail from Central Asia and send much of their Russian wages back home to support families. The current drop means less money to send.

"If you have to live in Russia, then it makes no difference," one Uzbek man who works as a taxi driver told RFE/RL. "But if you have to work here and send money back to Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, then there's no point in working here. Better just to go home."

Few experts are predicting outright economic collapse anytime soon. More likely the flashing warning lights are pointing to a cooling off, which is what the Central Bank director Elvira Nabiullina has said is the goal of the recent rate hikes. The IMF predicts that the economy will slow to around 1.3 percent growth next year.

"Economic growth has to slow down," Laura Solanko, an expert on the Russian economy at the Bank of Finland's Institute for Economies in Transition, told RFE/RL. "But cooling growth is no sign of economic collapse. Russia can sustain broadly [the] current level of household consumption and of warfare with broadly [the] current level of economic activity."

"It's becoming [all too clear] that there are no good remedies for the Russian economy's malaise apart from ending the war; the mother of Russia's problems," Alexander Kolyandr, a researcher with the Center for European Policy Analysis, wrote in an op-ed last month.

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President Boris Yeltsin, but also when it shut down the OSCE's humanitarian office in 2002 and when it successfully vetoed the OSCE's SMM's presence in Crimea, as it claimed that the Crimean Peninsula belonged to Russia.

"There was zero chance that Russia would accept the presence of the OSCE – or any international monitors in [the Azov Sea or] the Kerch Strait," Mr. Socor explained. "Nor would the Kremlin have accepted the image setback that would have resulted from such a presence."

Germany, he added, missed the repeated warning signals from Moscow, and failure remained likely if Germany and the E.U. continued to refrain from adding economic sanctions against Russia on the mistaken logic that more sanctions jeopardize a political solution. Sanctions, Mr. Socor suggested, could facilitate a solution on Western terms.

Source: "Lessons from Germany's failed proposal on the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait," by Vladimir Socor (*Eurasia Daily Monitor*), *The Ukrainian Weekly*, December 21, 2018.

U.S. Ukrainians in numbers

by Oleh Wolowyna



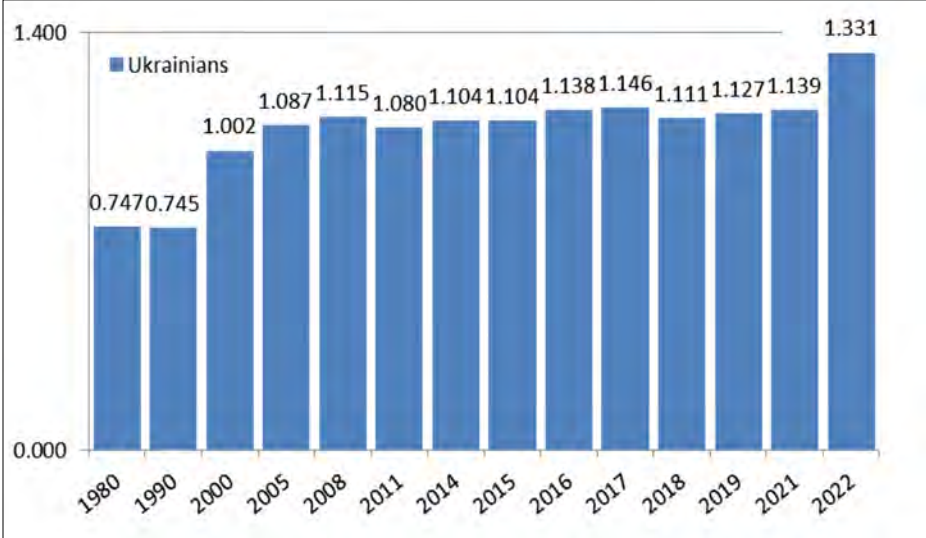
This column is the first installment of monthly notes with data, comments and interesting facts on Ukrainians in the U.S. The notes are based on the database constructed by the Center for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research of Ukrainians in the U.S. at the Shevchenko Scientific Society. The data is from U.S. censuses, surveys and immigration statistics. Comments, questions and suggestions for topics from readers may be emailed to the author at olehw@aol.com.

Why is the number of Ukrainians in the U.S. increasing?

The number of Ukrainians in the U.S. has been increasing steadily for the last 40 years; two years, 2000 and 2022, stand out for large increases (see graph). The reasons behind this dynamic are surprising. As we shall see, events in Ukraine are the driving force behind this increase, particularly those surrounding Ukrainian independence in 1991 and the Russian invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

ued in future censuses. Starting in 2005, this question is being asked in the yearly American Community Surveys (ACS).

The graph shows a slight decline in the number of Ukrainians between 1980 and 1990, and then an extraordinary increase in 2000, from 750,000 in 1990 to 1 million in 2000. This increase is due to the Fourth Wave of immigrants from Ukraine to the U.S., which started in 1988. Without the



Number of persons of Ukrainian ancestry: U.S., 1980–2024 (in millions).

The time series in the graph starts in 1980, the first year with data that allows researchers to estimate the number of Ukrainians in the U.S. The definition of Ukrainian in the U.S. is based on the 1980 census question, "What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?" One can provide one or two ancestries to account for descendants of ethnic intermarriages. Ukrainians in the U.S. are defined as persons who answered Ukrainian as their sole, first or second ancestry. Also included in this definition are persons born in Ukraine or who speak Ukrainian at home. The question on ancestry was repeated in the 1990 and 2000 censuses but discontin-

Fourth Wave, the number of Ukrainians in the U.S. would have experienced a steady decline caused by mortality and assimilation.

Thanks to the Fourth Wave, the number of Ukrainians has been growing steadily, with some fluctuations, since 1988 (see table 1). This growth experienced an acceleration in 2014. The yearly average increase of 2,500 persons between 2005 and 2013 jumped to an annual average of 5,000 persons between 2014 and 2021. This jump in the number of Ukrainians is a consequence of an increase in the number of immigrants from Ukraine, from a yearly average of 7,500 between 2005 and 2013 to 12,000 per year between 2014 and

Oleh Wolowyna may be reached at olehw@aol.com.

(Continued on page 13)

Table 1. Time series of persons of Ukrainian ancestry: U.S., 1980–2022.

Year	1980	1990	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Ukrainians	746,820	744,595	1,002,300	1,086,950	1,051,950	1,061,270	1,114,767
difference		-2,225	257,705	84,650	-35,000	9,320	53,497
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ukrainians	1,079,688	1,025,206	1,080,135	1,090,944	1,109,595	1,103,844	1,103,778
difference	-35,079	-54,482	54,929	10,809	18,651	-5,751	-66
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019*	2021	2022	
Ukrainians	1,138,468	1,146,031	1,110,829	1,126,870	1,138,779	1,330,821	
difference	34,690	7,563	-35,202	16,041	11,909	192,042	

* data for 2020 is not included due to poor quality during the Covid-19 epidemics.
Sources: 1980, 1990 and 2000 censuses and yearly American Community Survey, 2005–2022.



THE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FORUM

Young UNA'ers



Benjamin Oleksandr Darrah, son of Olha Polishchuk and Adam Darrah of Baltimore, Md., is a new member of UNA Branch 42. He was enrolled by Oksana Lobachevsky.



Roman Syzonenko, son of Beth and Peter Syzonenko of Easton, Pa., is a new member of UNA Branch 76. He was enrolled by his great grandmother, Valentina Syzonenko.

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Call the UNA Home Office, 973-292-9800, to find out how to enroll.

Russia closes...

(Continued from page 3)

Zelenskyy shot back, accusing Mr. Orban of putting self-promotion over European unity.

"Unity in Europe has always been key to achieving [success]. There can be no discussions about the war that Russia wages against Ukraine without Ukraine," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a reply to Mr. Orban's tweet.

The Hungarian leader punched back, calling it "sad" that Mr. Zelenskyy allegedly rejected a Christmas cease-fire and large-scale prisoner exchange.

Mr. Orban appeared to be referring to Mr. Zelenskyy's recent decree officially prohibiting Ukraine from engaging in peace talks with Russia.

Significant differences remain among Western diplomats over what a deal would look like, including whether to allow Russia to temporarily occupy Ukrainian territory, end sanctions on Russia and offer Ukraine security guarantees.

Fighting rages

Russia has stepped up its drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure at the onset of winter to cause maximum discomfort as outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces struggle to halt a grinding but steady Russian offensive in the east.

At least eight Ukrainians were killed when a Russian missile struck a clinic in the southern city of Zaporizhia. At least 22 others, including a child, were injured. Rescue operations were still underway.

Zaporizhia has been regularly targeted by Russian missile and drone strikes. On December 6, 10 people were killed in a strike on the city.

Mr. Zelenskyy on December 10 called on Kyiv's allies to provide 10-12 more Patriot air defense systems that he said are needed to fully protect Ukraine's skies.

(With reporting by Ukrayinska Pravda and TASS)

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Ukraine caught...

(Continued from page 3)

bling to source the items and set back shipments to its clients, which includes the U.S. military that in turn supplies Kyiv.

In search of new supply chains

For Kyiv, lessening its dependence on the Chinese supply chain to source drones for the battlefield has proved elusive, with many Ukrainian drone producers still relying on Chinese parts to make the cheap and

effective weapons.
China in July announced a ban on exports of drones for military use, and Beijing has claimed that it does not provide weapons to Russia or Ukraine.
But the continued flow of dual-use equipment from China to Russia has aided the Kremlin's full-scale war on Ukraine.
Now, the new restrictions by the Chinese government have made it more difficult for Ukraine to acquire drones and their parts.
In the case of Skydio, Beijing imposed sanctions before the company had secured alternative suppliers, but the firm is report-

edly in talks with several companies in Asia, including those in Japan and Taiwan.
Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, is looking to shore up its own drone supply chain given their growing importance in modern warfare and the specter of a potential conflict with Beijing that could see Taiwan cut off.
The self-governing island has stepped up its efforts and formed ties with European countries around drone technologies. Its foreign affairs minister led a delegation to discuss the topic in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in November and signed memoran-

dums of understanding to advance drone development with all three countries.
"These Chinese trade restrictions could lead to new supply drone chains popping up," said Mr. Webster of the Atlantic Council. "But expect China to also want to restrict their development."

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Donations to the Publications Endowment Fund and Soyuzivka Heritage Center received as part of the UNA's 2023 Christmas Cards Project

Name	City/State	Publications Endowment Fund	Soyuzivka Heritage Center	Name	City/State	Publications Endowment Fund	Soyuzivka Heritage Center
Andrushkiw, Pavlo	Whitehouse Sta., NJ		5.00	Martiuk, Rosemarie	Ramsey, NJ	100.00	100.00
Bachynsky, Maria	Newtown, PA	60.00	55.00	Maruszczak Halen, Irena	Midland Park, NJ	62.50	62.50
Baltarowich, Lydia	Warren, MI	100.00		Matkowsky, Stephen	Rochester, NY	25.00	
Baltarowich, Oksana; Hud, George	Huntington Valley, PA	50.00	50.00	Mazuryk, Joseph & Martha	Danville, CA		15.00
Balynsky, George & Christine	Monroe, NJ	15.00		McGrath, Michael	Franklin Square, NY	75.00	50.00
Baran, Andrij & Elizabeth	Saratoga Spring, NY	50.00	50.00	Melnyk, Kathy	New Hartford, NY		100.00
Bekersky, Lesia	Whitesboro, NY	50.00		Melnyk, Luba	Elmhurst, NY		100.00
Bekesewycz, Daria	Newark, NJ	300.00		Mirchuk, Ihor	Easton, PA	65.00	
Beregulko, Pavlo	Columbia, SC	100.00		Mizach, Bohdan	Philadelphia, PA	15.00	
Berestiansky, Larisa	Chicago, IL	25.00		Movchan Novak, Ola	Warren, MI	5.00	10.00
Bodnar, Ulana	Alexandria, VA		100.00	Mykytiuk, Stefan	Scarborough, ON	75.00	
Bonacorsa, Christine	Belleville, NJ	35.00		Mysyshyn, Maryann	Springfield, MA		100.00
Bubniak, Jaroslaw	Easton, PA	50.00	50.00	Nachesty, Stephen	Northampton, PA		100.00
Bybel, John	Yonkers, NY	20.00		Nedilsky, Nancy	Lima, OH	65.00	
Chelak, Karen & Yaroslav	Highlands, NJ		100.00	Nesterczuk, George & Oksana	Vienna, VA	15.00	
Chornodolsky, Luba	Phoenixville, PA	25.00	25.00	Obuszcak, Vera	Philadelphia, PA	20.00	
Chuchra, Bohdanna & Alex	Arnold, MD		25.00	Ohara, Roma & Michael	Astoria, NY	15.00	
Clebowicz, Walter	Las Vegas, NV	100.00		Onufreiczuk Kathryn	Gulfport, FL	40.00	30.00
Clem Zweneslava	Jacksonville, FL	15.00		Pawluk, Borys	Lansdale, PA	20.00	
Czarnecky, Bryan	Linden, NJ		25.00	Pereyma, Marta	Arlington, VA	115.00	100.00
Czartorysky, Victor	Brooklyn, NY	65.00	100.00	Petrenko, Anya	Ashton, MD		100.00
Czuczman, Myron & Christine	Randolph, NJ	100.00	100.00	Petrina, Bohdan & Dagmar	Yonkers, NY	15.00	
Danczuk, Basil	River Edge, NJ	32.50	32.50	Petryk, Olga	Southgate, MI	25.00	25.00
Danyliw, Roman	Pittsburgh, PA	150.00		Pikolycky, Jaroslaw	La Jolla, CA	20.00	20.00
Decyk, Viktor & Betsy	Culver City, CA	7.50	7.50	Platosz, Adam	New Britain, CT	5.00	5.00
Diaczuk, Zenko	Boonton, NJ	107.50	107.50	Poletz, Alexander	St. Anthony, MN	15.00	
Dicky, John	Warren, MI	165.00		Polon, Lavro	Pittsford, NY	75.00	
Doll, Irene & Ronald	Morristown, NJ	65.00		Polowczak, Walter	Naperville, IL	50.00	50.00
Drozd, Taras	Chicago, IL	50.00	50.00	Pranpat, Roy & Roma	Verona, NJ	50.00	50.00
Dubno, Luba	New Haven, CT	65.00		Prokop, Lydia	Yorktown Hts., NY		40.00
Durbak, Marie	Chicago, IL	15.00		Prokopowych, Irynej	Calabasas, CA	15.00	
Dykyj, Daria	Forest Hill, NY	100.00	100.00	Prytula-Kuzmowych, Chrystyna	Great Falls, VA	50.00	30.00
Gamota, Christine & Daniel	San Jose, CA	1,000.00		Pylyp, Romana	Cedar Grove, NJ	50.00	50.00
Gudz, Myron	Hartford, CT	105.00	105.00	Pyptyk, Helen	Pittsburgh, PA		100.00
Guertler, Vera	Lancaster, PA	82.50	82.50	Rakowsky, George & Alexandra	Westbrook, CT		65.00
Hadzewych, Romana	Morristown, NJ	100.00		Rasiak, Ruslan	Leesburg, VA	30.00	35.00
Harbuziuk, Alex	Land O'Lakes, FL	5.00		Rittendale, Valerie	Roscoe, NY		20.00
Hawrylko, Tom	Clifton, NJ	25.00		Rychtycky, Nestor	Warren, MI	100.00	
Hayuk, Hlib	Lakewood, CO	15.00		Serba, Eugene	Wilmington, DE	10.00	
Herman, Larissa	Rutherford, NJ	250.00	250.00	Shcheglov, Yaroslav & Larisa	East Elmhurst, NY	7.50	7.50
Hogan, Larissa	Marinette, WI	25.00	25.00	Singura, Zenon & Lydia	Carteret, NJ	100.00	100.00
Holowiak, Paula	Sugarloaf, PA	25.00		Skirka, Nicholas	Yonkers, NY	35.00	30.00
Holowsky, Yuriy	Meryville, TN	40.00		Skyba, Andrij	Harwood Hts., IL	40.00	
Hoshowsky, Christine	Rochester, NY	32.50	32.50	Sluzar, Natalie	North Port, FL		100.00
Hron, Ihor	Osprey, FL		100.00	Slysh, Roman	Raleigh, NC		15.00
Husak, Anna	Newark, NJ	5.00		Smyk, Rostyslaw	Lake Bluff, IL	15.00	
Ivanonko, Zenon	Vestal, NY	50.00	50.00	Sos, Lydia	The Woodlands, TX		50.00
Ivanyshyn, Mariya	Milburn, NJ	15.00		Stanko, George & Oksana	Basking Ridge, NJ	15.00	
Iwanyckyj, Michaelene	Big Pine Key, FL	65.00		Swiatkiwsky, Stephan	Wheatfield, NY	15.00	
Jablonskyj, Alexandra	Brooklyn, NY	50.00	50.00	Swyrydenko, Walter	Broadview Hts., OH	50.00	
Jakubowycz, Alexander & Daria	Brecksville, OH	50.00	50.00	Sydor, Ihor & Olga	Cos Cob, CT	50.00	
Jawny, Maria	Florham Park, NJ		50.00	Szafranski, Joseph	West Bloomfield, MI	50.00	
Kaczaj, Roman	Pittsgrove, NJ	25.00		Terkun, Walter	Chantilly, VA	25.00	
Kaczor, Sofia	Middletown, RI	100.00		Torielli, Marta & Robert	Blue Bell, PA	50.00	
Karawan, Oleh & Ivanka	Inverness, IL		25.00	Treszniewsky, Orysia	Wilmington, DE	65.00	
Karmazyn, Olga	Aliquippa, PA	15.00		Trotch, Myron	Canal Westchester, OH	32.50	32.50
Kebalo, Orest	Briarwood, NY	50.00	50.00	Truchly, Lidia	Chicago, IL	7.50	7.50
Kiebuzinski, George	Montgomery Village, MD		100.00	Turula, Theodora	Morton Grove, IL	50.00	
Kihiczak, Maria	Sherman Oaks, CA	75.00	25.00	Tymkiw, Tamara & Stephan	Millersville, MD	100.00	
Klien, Oksana	E Brunswick, NJ	15.00		Tyrol, Thomas	Saugertis, NY	50.00	
Komichak, Jaroslawa	Pittsburgh, PA		40.00	Tysowsky, George	East Amherst, NY	32.50	32.50
Kowal-Vern, Areta	Scottsdale, AZ	20.00		Ukrainian Sitch Society	Naugatuck, CT	100.00	
Krawciw-Skalsky, Zdanna	Montgomery Village, MD	50.00		Wakulowska, Marianna & Victoria	Philadelphia, PA	50.00	
Kraynyk, Bohdan	Kenmore, NY	100.00	65.00	Walchuk, Maria	Annandale, NJ	100.00	
Kropelnicky, Nestor & Christine	Warren, MI	10.00		Werchniak, Andrew	Concord, NH	250.00	250.00
Krucylak, Catherine	Baldwin, MO	65.00		Wesely, Orest	Stockton, CA	32.50	32.50
Kuchta, Eugene	Houston, TX	70.00		Wight, Anna	Seattle, WA	32.50	32.50
Kuncio, Zenovia	Whitestone, NY	50.00	50.00	Wojtowycz, Myron	Madison, WI	65.00	
Kushnir, Andrew	Bethesda, MD	15.00		Woloschak, Gayle	Chicago, IL	15.00	
Leshko, Alla & Jaroslaw	Northampton, MA	100.00		Woloszyn, Gregory & Marianne	Forest Hills, NY		100.00
Logusz, Orest	Fair Haven, NY		15.00	Wyhinny, George	S. Barrington, IL	100.00	
Lutwiniak, Patricia	Sunrise, FL		50.00	Zalucky, Donald & Catherine	Gulford, CT	20.00	
Lyktey, Kristine	Utica, NY		50.00	Zastawsky, Roman	Newington, CT	25.00	25.00
Majuk, Zenowij	Capitola, CA	100.00	100.00	Zobniw, Lubomyr	Binghamton, NY	150.00	150.00
Maksimowich, Roman	Warren, MI		15.00				
				TOTAL		7,545.00	4,635.00

Resilience...

(Continued from page 1)

Bandinelli, who improved the post office that had existed here before. From here, horse-drawn couriers carried out postal transfers across the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Thus, it was the first regular post office in the city, which opened in 1629. In 2008, the Post Museum opened that spot. To this day, one of the Ukrposhta branches operates on the ground floor of the building.

A unique exhibition of Christmas cards will be on display at the Christmas post office during the holiday season. Two halls will feature expositions of collectible Christmas cards with various religious and secular themes. Among them are postcards by prominent graphic artists Leopold Levytskyi and Bohdan Soroka. Lviv resi-

dents also provided postcards from their private collections for the museum's exhibitions.

For the opening of the Christmas post office, the Lviv Tourism Office announced the initiative "Gift a Postcard to Lviv." Artists, designers and photographers from Ukraine and abroad were invited to participate. In total, about 100 unique postcards were submitted by 50 individuals. Among them are both professional artists and amateurs.

Among the printed postcards are works by Yulia Kurylyak.

"I drew the card thinking about our defenders. It took me a while to draw it because I wanted to make it exactly like this. It depicts the baby Jesus on the hay, Mary and Joseph, and a star that rose in the sky. I signed the postcard for our defenders so that victory would come to Ukraine as soon as possible and they could return to



Roman Baluk/Lviv City Council

Children pen Christmas postcards to send from Lviv's Christmas post office.



The city's main Christmas tree was symbolically lit near Lviv's Opera House on December 5.

their homes," the artist said.

These and other postcards can be purchased at and sent exclusively from the post office. All the proceeds from the sale of the cards will go to the fundraising campaign for the Ukrainian army, which the city of Lviv is holding in cooperation with the Come Back Alive Foundation.

One of the first people to visit the Christmas post office was a young girl named Sofia, who bought three cards with her mother.

"I chose a card for my grandmother, my parents and for St. Nicholas. I sign them myself. I chose this card because it shows the whole family. The other one has funny children on it. They are very beautiful," the girl said.

Also, a presentation of a unique Ukrposhta stamp was held during the post office's opening. It is symbolic that on St. Nicholas Day, Ukrposhta presented a "Letter to St. Nicholas" stamp designed by

artist Kost Lavro. The stamp has a circulation of 300,000.

On December 5, the eve of St. Nicholas Day, the city Christmas tree was lit near the Opera House. The event began with a minute of remembrance to honor all those who gave their lives defending Ukraine. Lviv's First Lady Kateryna Kit-Sadova thanked the Pidvirnykh family, who donated their Christmas tree to the city this year, and symbolically presented the family with a new Christmas tree seedling from the Lviv community.

"For 10 years we have been forming a new tradition for our Christmas. Because Christmas is not only about gifts and excitement, but it is about where we get the strength to withstand all the suffering that falls on us, all the pain we experience. It is about believing that we have this strength and that God gives us this strength. It's

(Continued on page 11)



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Resilience...

(Continued from page 10)

about our hope, and, despite everything, in the darkest of times, we hope. And it is about love. Love for our neighbors, everyone around us, the boys and girls fighting on the frontline, and the volunteers," Ms. Kit-Sadova said.

At the top of the tree is a symbol of the Ukrainians' fight against Russia – an anti-tank hedgehog welded in 2022.

Traditionally, the city does not buy a tree; it is donated. This year, the Pidvirnyi family from the village of Birky in the city's Yavoriv district donated their Christmas tree to Lviv, as they wanted it to bring joy to Lviv residents and guests.

The 59-foot fir tree is 20 years old. In 2004, Hanna Pidvirna accidentally found a broken sapling with a root on the road, so her husband Yaroslav and their 2-year-old grandson decided to plant the tree in their yard. In the first years, the tree was tiny and grew poorly, but the family took good care of it and fed it, and for the next 10 years it grew rapidly.

"At first, my grandson and I used to decorate our tree every New Year's Eve, creating a Christmas atmosphere for us. And then it became so tall that I could no longer climb it. Now it poses a danger in the yard: its coarse roots have raised the pavement, the gate does not close, the garden nearby does not produce anything, and the worst part is that there are electric wires between the branches of the tree, which is very dangerous, especially when the wind is strong. We offered Lviv our Christmas tree two years ago, but it was not our turn, and this year it was taken to the city center. I am very happy about this because if I had just cut it down, it would have been firewood. But this way, it will delight children and adults. I want it to bring a little joy to our defenders, to lift their spirits and mood," Mr. Pidvirnyi said.

"I am very happy, really very happy. The last time I was in the center of Lviv was 10 years ago. I thought that my Christmas tree would get lost here because I have a small yard and this is such a large square, but it didn't. Now, I don't recognize my yard without that tree. We will come to Lviv city center again with our family for the holidays to see the tree with our daughter and grandson," Mr. Pidvirnyi said.

Yuriy Zhukovets, a Hero of Ukraine and a commander of the reconnaissance unit of the 103rd separate territorial defense brigade named after Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, and his family also joined the tree lighting ceremony, thanking the Pidvirnyi family and emphasizing the importance of preserving Ukrainian traditions.

"The Christmas tree is huge and very impressive. We hope that this Christmas tree will shine so brightly that it will be seen by every one of our defenders, warm their souls and be special to everyone in their own way. I like that Lviv has such a tradition of lighting the Christmas tree. It shows that we follow traditions, and nothing can break us and crush our spirit," said serviceman Yuriy Zhukovets.

After all the greetings, the city Christmas tree was solemnly lit while individuals sang carols.

The tree will stay on the square for about a month. No mass entertainment, such as fairs or a city skating rink, is planned for the center of Lviv. Instead, the Lviv community will host several events to preserve and support Ukrainian traditions.

Traditionally, on Christmas Eve, the main Didukh of Lviv will be installed on Angels Square near the Garrison Church. The Didukh is a traditional Ukrainian Christmas decoration made from the last sheaf of the harvest, symbolizing prosperity, family unity and honoring ancestors.

The 13-foot-high Christmas symbol is updated annually by artisans of the Lviv Skansen to delight Lviv residents and visitors during the holidays. The opening of the Didukh in Lviv traditionally starts with a procession from City Hall. Representatives of the authorities and clergy, defenders of Ukraine, young carolers and others will join the event.

A new feature this year will be a large Christmas tour. For the holidays, Lviv guides have created a new tour route that is themed around the city's central streets. Christmas tours of Lviv are scheduled for December 26-27.

Remembering those who gave their lives for Ukraine, a mournful carol will be performed at Lychakiv Cemetery this year. Together with the families of the fallen defenders of Ukraine, on the last Saturday of December, citizens will thank those who made it possible to celebrate Christmas at home at the cost of their own lives.

The festive period will end on the penultimate day of the year, December 30, with an event that Lviv residents have already missed – the traditional Flash of the Christmas Star festival. As part of the festival, a procession of star-bearers will be held in the city center.

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THE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION SEEKS CANDIDATES FOR AN OPEN SEAT ON ITS CORPORATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pursuant to the provisions found in Article VI, Section 10 of its By-Laws, the Ukrainian National Association is undertaking the process of filling a one-seat vacancy on its Corporate Board of Directors. At their meeting on December 10, 2024, Board members will elect the most qualified candidate to serve on the Board, until the next Convention in 2026.

Candidates should possess proven governance and executive leadership skills and experience. Desired qualities and talents include executive leadership, experience in business management and an ability to think across all disciplines relevant to the UNA.

All candidates must be UNA members in good standing. A full position profile and instructions for applying are on-line at <https://unainc.org/una/leadership-position-openings/>.

The completed forms, a copy of the nominee's detailed Resume and a short statement as to why the nominee would be an excellent candidate must be sent via certified mail on or before December 31, 2024 to:

Ukrainian National Association, Inc.
Attn: Mr. Andrij Cade, Chairman
2200 Route 10
PO Box 280
Parsippany, NJ 07054

Hryhorczuk's 'Dark Night of the Soul' offers a 'thrilling narrative' set amid pandemic and war in Ukraine

by **Ulane Mazurkevich**

CHICAGO – A standing-room-only event on November 30 at the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago saw the launch of Daniel Hryhorczuk's new novel, "The Dark Night of the Soul." The event featured a presentation by the author, readings by the author's son, Nicholas, and a presentation by Damian Kozbur, the Ukrainian American artist who created the hauntingly beautiful portrayal of the Slavic goddess, Mara, on the book's front cover.

Dr. Hryhorczuk is a Ukrainian American

physician and author who has received commendations from the White House and the Ukrainian government for his work on social and health issues in Ukraine. His first novel, "Caught in the Current," revisited the world of his youth: ethnic America and off-beat Europe during the psychedelic sixties.

His second novel, "Myth and Madness," retells the story of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity through the eyes of a magical storyteller. It was translated into Ukrainian by Ihor Poshyvailo, the director of the Museum of the Maidan, and distributed to all libraries in Ukraine by the Ukrainian

government. In 2023, "Myth and Madness" was banned in Russia and the occupied territories.

His third novel, "Amerikana," explores the country of his birth and what it truly means to be an American, while his most recent novel, "The Dark Night of the Soul," is about a Ukrainian writer in Venice who embarks on a spiritual journey to reconcile with his Russian daughter and seek redemption amid the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Prof. John Serio, the honorary editor of The Wallace Stevens Journal, said the book "is a brilliant novel that will make your head spin with questions and theories about the meaning of life (and even of death) embedded in a thrilling narrative."

The novel works on several levels, from the main character's personal quest for redemption, to his Russian daughter's coming to terms with her estranged Ukrainian father, to a more subtle, metaphorical treatment that is also about war-torn Ukraine's "dark night of the soul." The book is dedicated to his granddaughter, Maria Zoriana.

The artist, Mr. Kozbur, spoke about the deep symbolism embedded in his portrayal of Mara and how he was able to capture the beauty and terror of a betrayed goddess who seeks revenge on the world by keeping it in perpetual winter.

Dr. Kozbur, who is a professor at the University of Zurich, explained that the geometric shapes that compose her por-



Ulane Mazurkevich

Author Daniel Hryhorczuk discusses his newest book at the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago on November 30.

trait are derived from the mathematics of quantum physics, which is an important theme in the novel. The symbol in her eye is from ancient Slavic iconography. Her lips are ice blue and she is surrounded by black chrysanthemums, the symbol of death.

The very interesting presentation of the book launch ended with the attendees mingling with the author while sharing a glass of wine and looking forward to reading his latest book, "The Dark Night of the Soul."



Ulane Mazurkevich

A standing-room-only event on November 30 at the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago saw the launch of Daniel Hryhorczuk's new novel "The Dark Night of the Soul."

Plast Cleveland boys take first place at 60th Orlykiada

by **Sofia Shyprykevych**

KERHONKSON, N.Y. – Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the United States held its 60th Orlykiada at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center on November 9-10, with the 17th troop of boys from Cleveland winning the overall competition.

This year's theme, "Smachnoho! Ukrainian Cuisine," celebrated food as a key part of Ukrainian identity, just as significant as language, music or dance. Seventeen teams traveling from Philadelphia; Cleveland; New York; Chicago; Lindenhurst, N.Y.; Washington, D.C.; Detroit; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Toronto, Boston, Newark and Passaic, N.J., participated in the competition, which consisted of three components: an academic contest, a diorama and an artistic skit.

In the academic contest, teams were tested on the history of Ukrainian cuisine,



Alexandra Nirschl

Participants of the 60th Orlykiada held at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center on November 9-10 gather in front of the Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church in Kerhonkson, N.Y.

including dishes linked to family traditions and holidays. The 28th troop of girls from Cleveland won the event, while the 17th troop of boys from Cleveland took second place and the 10th troop of girls from Detroit took third.

In the diorama competition, the 3rd troop of boys from New York won first place, the 2nd troop of girls from New York took second, and the 10th troop of girls from Detroit took third. In the artistic skit category, the 2nd troop of girls from New York placed first place, while the 17th troop of boys from Cleveland took second, and the 6th and 7th mixed troop of boys and girls from Chicago took third.

The 17th troop of boys from Cleveland won the overall team competition, with the 2nd troop of girls from New York taking second place and the 28th troop of girls from Cleveland taking third place. The 4th troop of girls from Philadelphia took fourth place and the 3rd troop of boys from New York took fifth place.

This year, participants also had the opportunity to vote for their favorite costumes, music, exhibits and performances, with results announced on Saturday evening.

In addition to the team competition, Orlykiada features individual contests for the titles of "hetmanych" and "hetmanivna." Candidates for those titles discuss their leadership skills, Plast achievements, knowledge of Hryhor Orlyk's life, and they demonstrate their ability to speak in front of an audience. This year, Daryna Koziy and Julian Navorynskyi, both from New York, won the hetmanivna and hetmanych titles, respectively.

Since 1970, Orlykiada has been held annually at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center amid the mountains in peak autumn colors. This year's opening ceremony was led by last year's hetmanivna, Milla Pastushak, and hetmanych, Yuriy Kryvoruchko, who both traveled long distances – from Toronto and the U.S. Naval Academy, respectively – to participate in the event. Included in

this ceremony was a moment of silence to honor 26 Plast members who had lost their lives fighting, on the front or in civilian circumstances, for Ukraine this year.

First organized in 1962 by the Orlykivtsi Plast fraternity in Hempstead, N.Y., this annual event encourages Plast members to learn about and reflect on Ukraine's history and culture. The competition is named after the son and father duo, Hryhor and Pylyp Orlyk. The former was a prominent Ukrainian diplomat and advocate for Ukrainian interests abroad who inspired Orlykivtsi's founding members to be role models for Plast members in serving their communities, environment and homeland. The event is held in November in honor of Hryhor Orlyk, who was born November 21, 1702, and died on November 14, 1759.

After announcing the competition results, the event's organizers announced the theme for the 61st Orlykiada will be "svit kazky," which will explore the world of Ukrainian fairy tales.



Lyubomyr Koziy

Daryna Koziy (left) and Julian Navorynskyi, both from New York, won the Hetmanivna and Hetmanych titles, respectively, at the 60th Orlykiada.

Why is the number...

(Continued from page 7)

2021. This increase was triggered by the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

A second large increase took place in 2022. The number of Ukrainians increased from 1.139 million in 2021 to 1.331 million in 2022, a jump of 192,000 in one year. What accounts for this large and sudden increase? The number of immigrants from Ukraine was 33,000 in 2022. This leaves a difference of 159,000 that needs to be explained. An analysis of the distribution of Ukrainians in the different types of ancestry in 2021 and 2022 provides the answer.

The ancestry question allows us to classify Ukrainians in the U.S. into four categories: single, only Ukrainian; first ancestry, two ancestries with Ukrainian first; second ancestry, two ancestries and Ukrainian second; none, no declared ancestry and born in Ukraine or speaks Ukrainian at home (see table 2). For reasons described below, only U.S.-born Ukrainians are shown in table 2. There were 644,000 U.S.-born Ukrainians in 2021 and 782,000 in 2022, an increase of 139,000. This increase was due to the effect of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on the identity of persons of Ukrainian ancestry in the U. S. These 139,000 additional Ukrainians are persons who previously reported a non-Ukrainian ancestry and decided in 2022 to acknowledge their Ukrainian origin (the remaining 20,000 are foreign-born persons of Ukrainian ancestry who also switched their reported ancestry to Ukrainian). Two facts support this conclusion. First, the 139,000 are already assimilated U.S.-born individuals of Ukrainian ancestry who would have been lost forever had there been no invasion. Second, the largest 2021-2022 increases are among persons of mixed ancestry. The effect of the Russian invasion was strongest on persons with the weakest sense of Ukrainian identity.

The 2023 ACS data will be available in early 2025. Two results from the 2023 survey are expected. First, the survey will likely capture more immigrants from Ukraine in 2022 and a significant number in 2023. Second, more persons of Ukrainian ancestry who, until recently, forgot or decided to ignore their Ukrainian ancestry will report Ukrainian as their ancestry.

Table 2. Number of U.S.-born Ukrainians in 2021 and 2022 by type ancestry.

Type of ancestry	2021	2022	2022-2021
Single	213,151	233,752	20,601
1st Ancestry	166,041	219,419	53,378
2nd Ancestry	250,374	312,639	62,265
None	14,103	16,722	2,619
Sum	643,669	782,532	138,863

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

assets, part of a \$50 billion Group of Seven (G-7) support package agreed to this summer. The Biden administration had promised to distribute the loan before the end of the year amid concern over whether President-elect Donald Trump would continue U.S. support for Ukraine. Mr. Trump, who enters office on January 20, has repeatedly criticized the amount of U.S. aid to Ukraine but also said he would support a lend-lease program. Ukraine is heavily dependent on U.S. and European military and financial aid as it seeks to stop Russia's invasion, now in its third year. A \$61 billion U.S. aid package for Ukraine passed in April – the fifth since the war started in February 2022 – but that money will likely run out by early next year. That means the \$50 billion G-7 loan is crucial to ensuring Ukraine has enough funds and weapons to defend itself through the first part of 2025 should Mr. Trump halt further support. “These funds – paid for by the windfall proceeds earned from Russia's own immobilized assets – will provide Ukraine a critical infusion of support as it defends its country against an unprovoked war of aggression,” U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a December 10 statement. The G-7's loans “will help ensure Ukraine has the resources

it needs to sustain emergency services, hospitals and other foundations of its brave resistance,” Ms. Yellen said, adding that Washington's support would help Kyiv “defend its sovereignty and achieve a just peace.” The loan announcement follows many months of talks between the United States and its allies – including the European Union – about the best way to use frozen Russian assets worth hundreds of billions of dollars to help Ukraine without breaking international law. The treasury said Washington had transferred \$20 billion to a World Bank fund, which will make the money available to Ukraine. (RFE/RL)

Plans for Russian missile deployment in Belarus

Belarus's authoritarian ruler Alyaksandr Lukashenka said “several dozen” Russian nuclear warheads are now deployed in his country and that about 30 sites are being considered as potential locations for the Oreshnik missile system, which was recently combat-tested in a massive strike on Ukraine. Mr. Lukashenka made the comments on December 10 when visiting the Belarusian city of Barysau. They came four days after Russian President Vladimir Putin said Oreshnik missile systems would be deployed in Belarus in parallel with their introduction into Russia's Strategic Missile Forces. Putin said the deployment of Oreshniks in Belarus could happen as soon as the second half of 2025. “Many have said,

‘It's a joke; no one has deployed anything.’ Yet we did. Saying it's a joke means they have missed it. They didn't even notice how we brought them here,” the state-run news agency BelTA quoted Mr. Lukashenka as saying about Russian tactical nuclear warheads inside Belarus. The developments open a new phase in the military strategy and development of relations between Russia and Belarus. They also underscore a further deepening of military integration

between the two countries and Russia's increasing military footprint in Eastern Europe. The Oreshnik missile was launched for the first time by Russia last month during an attack against Ukraine's city of Dnipro. Putin has said it is part of Moscow's response to Ukrainian attacks on Russian soil with U.S.-supplied Army Tactical Missile Systems, known as ATACMS, and

(Continued on page 15)

Ukrainian Action...

(Continued from page 5)

Ukrainian Action does in the support, care and rehabilitation of wounded Ukrainian veterans.”

Mr. Hartman acknowledged Mr. Lopresti's “wealth of experience, passion and dedication to our charity.”

Mr. Lopresti is a former veteran who served with the Territorial Army during the war in Afghanistan (2008-2009). He has helped repurpose vehicles taken off the roads due to London's emission standards for use as ambulances and command vehicles in Ukraine. He's also served as a volunteer driver taking trips from London to Kyiv with Ukrainian Action in August.

Describing the aim of the Ukrainian Action Heroes rehabilitation program, Mr. Hartman said, “The primary goal is to help veterans and their families overcome stress and psychological trauma through participation in a variety of therapeutic, physical and recreation activities, including learning to ski and snowboard. The program also emphasizes reconnecting with nature in the scenic and serene Carpathian Mountains, to find inner resources for recovery.”

Fundraising events are ongoing, with much of the money raised going to the energy needs of the people of Ukraine. The organization has sent generators, solar batteries, power banks, as well as emergency support equipment. The organization's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@Ukrainian-Action>, provides a glimpse of the routine deliveries made to those in need.

On June 19, an agreement was signed by Deputy Minister for Ukraine's Ministry of Veterans Affairs Maksym Kushnir and Mr. Hartman.

During the meeting, representatives of Ukrainian Action and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs agreed on specific points of cooperation. The Heroes of Ukrainian Action program processes requests from Ukraine's veterans seeking respite at one of the resorts in the Carpathian Mountains, where they engage in skiing and snowboarding, among other sporting activities, as part of their rehabilitation. The soldiers receive professional psychological support and group therapy with a focus on developing personal wellness in a natural setting.

In the winter of 2024, three groups of six to seven veterans were selected for the inaugural program, which included paid travel expenses, food and lodging, informal sporting activities, services of professional psychologists, as well as discussions on reinforcing healthy practices toward rehabilitation.

Ukraine's Ministry of Veterans Affairs will help with organizational issues, recommend certified psychologists for the rehabilitation program, as well as incorporate the experiences of global experts in the psychological and physical rehabilitation of war veterans.

“Sports and physical activity are one of the most effective tools for returning our defenders to a healthy and fulfilling life. This is one of the main areas of work of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs team. After all, what life will be like for each and every one

who defended the country and continues to defend it, who is already returning from the war today, depends on each of us: the central and local authorities, institutions of civil society, international partners and society in general. Therefore, we are happy to cooperate with your organization in the direction of psychological and physical rehabilitation of veterans. Thank you for your contribution to an important cause,” said Mr. Kushnir.

Mr. Hartman explained how, in the winter of 2023-2024, the rehabilitation program's inaugural group of veterans included 19 individuals, and much was learned from that initial experience. Working with Ukraine's Ministry of Veterans Affairs will help not only Heroes of Ukrainian Action but rehabilitation efforts for veterans across Ukraine.

Loss prevention and safeguards against theft are also in place to protect the humanitarian aid the organization delivers, including maintaining personal connections for deliveries, transparency for aid requests, a logistics team to ensure there are no hangups along the way, as well as a legal and financial team to ensure accountability. There is a vetting process in place to confirm both requests and deliveries – with thank you messages received from the recipients. The organization regularly visits hospitals, orphanages and schools to learn about their needs as well.

“We hand-deliver items to Ukraine from Lviv, to Kyiv, central to eastern Ukraine, all under full control by our volunteers,” Mr. Hartman added. Since February 2022, the organization has raised more than \$4 million and directs money to four areas: emergency support, humanitarian aid, recovery and reconstruction.

Mr. Hartman also described to The Weekly his experience during “sheltering in place” moments in Kharkiv 2022, when he hid in the metro stations, as well as in Lviv and Dnipro. But, he says, life goes on for Ukrainians.

“Fatigued civilians,” he said, “do not get much press coverage, but are a major component of understanding the war in Ukraine. Being on the ground, you really get a geographic sense of locations, such as being in Pokrovsk [in Donetsk Oblast] versus Kyiv.”

The organization continues to identify communities in need, and seeks to understand exactly what kind of aid would best help them. In the east and south of Ukraine, Mr. Hartman said, efforts toward green energy are underway, providing a sustainable energy solution for those communities.

Ukrainian Action is a U.S. tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity. All donations by U.S. taxpayers are tax-deductible. The organization is a charitable incorporated organization registered with the U.K. Charity Commission.

Mr. Hartman invites readers to visit Ukrainian Action's social media pages, including Facebook (www.facebook.com/UkrainianActionNow), Instagram (www.instagram.com/ukrainianaction), and YouTube to learn more. Individuals interested in helping as a volunteer driver for Ukrainian Action or donating to the organization can learn more by visiting the charity's website at www.ukrainianaction.com.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles. The specific technical details of the Oreshnik remain classified, but it is reportedly designed to increase the survivability and effectiveness of Russia's nuclear arsenal, particularly in the context of evolving global security challenges. Mr. Lukashenko, Putin's closest ally since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has allowed his neighbor to use Belarusian territory as a staging area for a full-scale war on Ukraine. Belarus's growing military integration with Russia started to gain momentum in the early 2010s. That alliance was institutionalized between the two countries in the 1990s through the Union State agreement and one that has only grown deeper since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and the outbreak of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. With Belarusian soil a base for Russian missiles, the strategic value of Belarus has become even more pronounced. The country borders North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, making it a crucial spot for Russian military deployments, especially given the heightened tensions with the West over Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine. Mr. Lukashenko also suggested, without providing evidence, that Belarus would retain control over the selection of targets the Oreshniks would hit. "The targets will be determined by us in Belarus, not by the Russians," he said but underlined that the two sides would collaborate in the event of military need. (RFE/RL's Belarus Service, with reporting by BelTA)

Kyiv: No Russian breakthrough in Sumy region

Ukraine has rejected reports of a Russian breakthrough into the northeastern region of Sumy, characterizing them as part of Moscow's disinformation campaign while Russia again struck civilian areas in the northeast and south. Social media reports with a link to the DeepState open-source intelligence resource alleged on December 10 that Russian troops had entered Myropillya in the Sumy region from the Kursk region through the border village of Oleksandria. "Currently, there is no information from the military about a change in the situation on the border. The situation is under control," regional Gov.

Volodymyr Artyukh said on Telegram. The reports come as Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a vocal supporter of Kyiv in its battle against Russia's full-scale invasion, said peace talks could start "in the winter," as Warsaw prepares to assume the European Union's rotating presidency on January 1. "Our presidency will have, among others, joint responsibility for the shape of the political landscape, for what the situation will look like probably during the negotiations that, perhaps – there are still question marks here – will begin in the winter of this year," Mr. Tusk said. Meanwhile, Ukraine's border service spokesman Andriy Demchenko told KYIV24 television that the information about the alleged breach of the border in Sumy region by Russian forces was false. "Ukrainian border units did not record any attempts to enter or any attempts at opening hostilities," Mr. Demchenko said, adding that it would be difficult for Russian forces to cross through the swampy area in the border region. In the Kherson region, a 74-year-old woman was killed and several other people were wounded in a Russian drone strike in the village of Odradokamyanka. Separately, Russian troops launched two missile strikes at the city of Zhatopil in the Kharkiv region, wounding 10 people, eight of whom were women, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said on Telegram. Russia's Defense Ministry claimed on December 10 that it had captured the village of Zhovte near the Ukrainian-held supply hub of Pokrovsk in the eastern region of Donetsk. Ukraine has not commented on the Russian claim, which could not be independently confirmed. Both Ukraine and Russia have been seeking to strengthen their negotiating position ahead of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump beginning his second term in January. Mr. Trump's claim that he would stop the nearly three-year war in "24 hours" once in the White House has raised alarm in Kyiv that it will be pushed to cede large swaths of territory in exchange for peace. Mr. Trump on December 9 hosted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has echoed many of his Russian-friendly comments. The Hungarian leader has called for peace talks and has opposed military aid to Kyiv and related sanctions against Moscow. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), meanwhile, said on December 10 that it had detained a dual Russian-German citizen on suspicion of preparing an act of sabotage on a railroad in Nizhny Novgorod. Ukrainian officials have not

commented on the Russian claim. Western officials have accused Russia of detaining foreign nationals and dual citizens for politically motivated reasons, saying such individuals are being arrested to be used as bargaining chips in future prisoner swaps. In addition, human rights groups say nearly 900 Russians have been convicted of treason, espionage or collaboration with foreign governments since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Ex-warden of Donetsk prison reportedly killed

A car bomb in Ukraine's Russia-occupied eastern region of Donetsk has reportedly killed the head of a prison where dozens of Ukrainian soldiers captured by Russian forces were killed in 2022. According to unconfirmed social media reports, Sergei Yevsyukov was killed and his wife seriously injured when their car exploded in the Russian-occupied town of Olenivka on December 9. The reports said Mr. Yevsyukov died on the spot while his wife was severely injured and taken to hospital in serious condition. No one has claimed responsibility for the car bombing. Mr. Yevsyukov was the warden when the prison in Olenivka made headlines in July 2022 when more than 50 Ukrainian soldiers held there were killed in a missile strike. Another 150 people were injured in the explosion. Russia accused Kyiv of killing its own soldiers in Russian captivity by striking the prison with U.S.-provided HIMARS missiles. Ukraine rejected Russia's claims, insisting Moscow was responsible for the deadly attack. United Nations experts conducted an investigation and subsequently rejected the Russian version of the presence of HIMARS in the attack. A July report by the U.N. also accused Russia of subjecting Ukrainian prisoners of war to "deplorable conditions of detention." In 2023,

Ukrainian authorities charged Mr. Yevsyukov in absentia with the "mass torture of Ukrainian soldiers" held in the penitentiary. In July, Ukraine additionally charged Mr. Yevsyukov with failure to provide captured Ukrainian soldiers with timely medical assistance. Mr. Yevsyukov, a former Ukrainian police officer, joined Russian-backed separatist forces fighting against Ukrainian soldiers in the Donetsk region in 2014. Russian military personnel and Russian-installed officials have been targeted several times in Ukraine's Russia-occupied territories. In many cases, the attacks have been deadly. Ukrainian officials usually say "guerilla forces" are behind such attacks. Russia accuses Ukraine's secret services of masterminding and implementing the attacks. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Kerch Bridge traffic halted

Explosions were reported early on December 6 in the Crimean city of Kerch, and the bridge connecting the Moscow-occupied peninsula with Russia was closed, local Telegram channels reported. According to the channel Krymskiy Veter, explosions were heard in the area of the Zaliv shipyard. The first blasts were reported around 7 a.m. local time, witnesses told RFE/RL. The Russian Defense Ministry said the Kerch region was being attacked by Ukrainian aerial and seaborne surface drones. It said that Russian forces downed one aerial drone and sank two naval drones. Ukraine has not commented. Attacks on Crimea occur regularly, particularly near the bridge. A powerful explosion in October 2022 on the bridge caused the collapse of a road section and a major fire on the railway section of the bridge. According to Russian data, three people were killed in that incident. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)



With a heavy heart we share that our dearest mother, grandmother, aunt and sister

Martha Stasiuk

passed away on November 4, 2024 at the age of 88.

Martha was born in Lviv, Ukraine on September 17, 1936. In 1942, escaping the advancing Bolshevik army, Martha left Ukraine with her family, ultimately arriving in Vienna, Austria, where she briefly attended school.

In 1946, Martha and her parents continued their journey westward, eventually settling in a Displaced Persons camp in Bissenhofen, Germany. In 1949, with the help of a US Relief Organization they were able to immigrate to the United States.

In 1959 Martha married Marian Stasiuk who passed away in 2019. They were blessed with three sons; three daughter-in-laws; seven grandchildren; and an unlimited number of family and friends in the Ukrainian community. Martha was a long-time active member of Plast Ukrainian scouting organization, and a member of the Verchovynky Plast sorority, Plast recognized her in "Silver" for her outstanding service to the Ukrainian community. Martha was also a proud member of the Ukrainian Women's League and served as president for a number of years.

A memorial service was held November 8, 2024, at Greco Funeral Home in Kenmore, NY. The Holy Rite of Burial was held on November 9, 2024, at St. John the Baptist Church in Kenmore with entombment at Holy Cross Cemetery in Lackawanna.

The following remain in deep sadness:

- sons: Andrew Stasiuk and wife Irene
Myron Stasiuk and wife Lesia
Adrian Stasiuk and wife Christine
- brother: Roman Shchurowsky and wife Joyce
- grandchildren: Adrianna Stasiuk, Paul Stasiuk, Olivia Stasiuk,
Sonya Stasiuk, Alyssa Stasiuk, Andrew Stasiuk,
Stephan Stasiuk
- extended family in Ukraine

May she rest in peace.

To honor the memory of Martha, those who wish may donate to the needs of the Church of St. John the Baptist, or Plast, Novyi Sokil, c/o Myron Stasiuk, 206 W. Ridge Avenue, Prospect Heights, IL 60070.



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ЧОРНОМОРСЬКІ ХВИЛІ

Notre Dame Fighting Irish win recruiting battle for Ukrainian Koval

by Ihor N. Stelmach

For many athletes, sports serve as a sanctuary from trouble, worry and the stress of everyday life. For Kateryna (Kate) Koval, thinking about the war in her homeland is temporarily put on hold when she's on the basketball court. The 6-foot-5 center emigrated from Ukraine in 2021 to pursue her sport in hopes of a college and possibly professional career.

Her first year away from home was difficult after Russia's invasion in February 2022. These days it's a little better with her mother, Natalia, living in Canada, and her two brothers, Mykola (24) and Oleksii (16), attending school in the United States. However, father Oleksandr remains in Kyiv, where he works as a pharmacist and helps protect his neighborhood. A grandmother is also back in Ukraine, unwilling to leave her life behind and relocate to a foreign land.

Koval ended up at Long Island Lutheran High School in Brookville, N.Y., preferring the calmness of Long Island over the hustle and bustle of New York City. She currently plays under Long Island Lutheran High School girl's basketball coach Christina Raiti. One of Raiti's basketball connections sent her film of some potential prospects, and Koval made an immediate impression on the Long Island Lutheran coach.

Basketball was not Koval's first love. She started out in ballet and was forced into basketball by her father. It helped that she was always the tallest girl and she quickly got good at it and thought it was easy. Her ballet training is evident in Koval's agile footwork, which helps her flow smoothly in offensive sets.

She fit in perfectly in high school, blossoming into the No. 1 post-player in high school in the country. The decision to come to America for the higher level of competition and better recruiting opportunities proved to be a wise one.

Her three years of experience in an American high school taught her a great deal, including developing a strong mental toughness and a healthy perspective on life. On the court, she was named Gatorade Player of the Year in New York for the 2022-2023 season and, as a senior, she was named a McDonald's All-American and a SLAM All-American as the No. 5 player in the country.

Koval's stellar play earned her a long list of college offers, including from perennial women's basketball powers Louisiana State University (LSU), Stanford and Notre Dame. Ultimately, she chose the University of Notre Dame Fighting Irish and coach Niele Ivey. The draw was Notre Dame's combination of academic and athletic success plus their electric in-game atmosphere.

Her success on the basketball court has not solved Koval's concerns off the court. She still worries about her family back in Ukraine, is adjusting to a new culture and is challenged to learn English. She tries to call her father every day.

Koval's connection to her native land remains strong. She continues to represent Ukraine on the international stage, having played for the national team for almost six years. She averaged 26 points and 14 rebounds per game at the FIBA U-16 Women's European Challengers in 2021.

Her commitment to representing her homeland is greater than just basketball –



Kateryna (Kate) Koval, No. 13 for the University of Notre Dame's women's basketball team (2024-2025), is a forward in her freshman year with the Fighting Irish.

it is her opportunity to return home, see her family and friends, and feel proud suiting up in Ukraine's national colors of blue and yellow. She says that it's a different feeling playing for one's country with the national flag on her chest and her name on the back of the Ukraine jersey.

The Ukraine-Russia war added a challenge for Koval. As difficult as it is worrying about her father, grandmother and friends she grew up with, the war also serves as an inspiration for her to keep going and constantly improve herself. It serves as added motivation as she strives to play basketball while never losing sight of how fortunate

she is to be in America, attending school, going to the gym, working toward a bright future.

Notre Dame is used to admitting international athletes to its student body. At the recent Summer Olympics in Paris, the school sent 17 athletes to the Games, six of whom represented five countries other than the United States. The combination of academics and athletics makes Notre Dame a global brand.

Koval admitted that she chose the Irish not only for academics but also because she is hoping for a chance to win a national championship as part of a powerhouse collegiate basketball program.

On National Signing Day, Coach Ivey spoke about her new addition and her potential impact on the team as a freshman.

"She's skilled, versatile and extremely competitive. Kate has the ability to dominate on the block, but also step out and shoot from the perimeter. Her excellent passing and very high IQ and motor will complement our style of play and identity perfectly. The impact she will make on our program will be immediate and massive," the coach said.

That immediate and massive impact will come on a team full of former 5-star recruits and Gatorade players of the year. Notre Dame returns a lot of talent on a team that won the Atlantic Coast Conference last season but lost in the Sweet 16 to Oregon State. If they can avoid the injuries that stymied them in 2023-2024, a healthy Irish squad could be playing for another national championship in March 2025.

(Continued on page 18)

Ukraine's cycling losing stars, but helping war effort

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Most of those who knew Oleksandr Onoshko called him a kind man, a real professional. He was a famous cyclist who had lived in Odesa, Ukraine, and a former professional who competed across Europe. His career highlight was winning a stage of the Tour of Turkey in 2005.

Before Russia launched its full-scale war against Ukraine, Odesa was a cycling center with two professional teams, seven amateur clubs and a café known as the cyclist's hub. Odesa breathed bicycle racing.

After giving up competitive racing, Onoshko first established a coaching business in Odesa, before relocating back home to Mariupol, Ukraine, where he was head coach of the Athletic Cycling Club, a club he co-founded. At that point in his life, he wanted to develop cycling in Mariupol by introducing the sport to more children.

He reasoned and hoped that life post-COVID-19 in 2022 would be a boom year for cycling in Mariupol. Not only would Onoshko race across Ukraine and Europe again, but he would passionately promote his club and help Ukrainian youth.

Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine changed everything as Mariupol found itself under constant attack. Onoshko's young cyclists were forced to flee for safer parts of Ukraine and Europe, but he stayed put.

Only a few weeks into the war, Onoshko lost his life, the victim of Russian shelling in his devastated and now-occupied city. He was only 40 years old.

Since Russia's invasion, cycling in Ukraine has been shattered. For the most part, races have been banned since emer-



Courtesy of Yaroslav Popovych via Instagram

Former professional Yaroslav Popovych, a Tour de France stage winner and current sporting director at the Trek-Segafredo cycling team, knows some 20 cyclists who are currently serving on the frontlines. Popovych was in the headlines early in the war when he made six trips from Italy to deliver clothes, food, medicine and sleeping bags to those in need in Ukraine.

gency services are required at battlefields and cyclists in or near war zones do not go far for fear of setting off landmines. To a large extent, competitive cycling in Ukraine now barely exists.

In the past year, most of the bicycles and their riders have joined the armed forces to defend Ukraine. These decisions, unfortunately, result in more tragic endings like Onoshko's.

Back in Odesa, Palmyra Cycling Team amateur rider Sergiy Kalchenko was easily recognizable for his wide smile. Never the strongest, he wasn't out to set records, but simply to enjoy racing his bike. Last August, Kalchenko and some friends drove to Mykolayiv in southern Ukraine to deliver food and water only to be fatally struck by a Russian rocket.

Kalchenko was 39 years old, and he was simply trying to do a good deed for the people of his homeland.

Ukraine's losses in cycling in the past 24-plus months are far more than Onoshko and Kalchenko. Only one week into the war, former pro and respected coach Oleksandr Kulyk was killed by Russian artillery while trying to rescue people from his hometown of Sumy in northern Ukraine.

Maxim Semenov was the head honcho of Dnipro's cycling community, where he served as president of the cycling association, organized hundreds of competitions and even raced himself. A few days after his last birthday in May 2022, Semenov was shot dead in a battle with the Russian army. He was not yet 45.

Many amateur and professional cyclists have left their families to join Ukraine's defense. Former professional Yaroslav Popovych, a Tour de France stage winner and current sporting director at the Trek-Segafredo cycling team, knows some 20 cyclists who are currently serving on the frontlines. He also knows several who have perished.

Popovych was in the headlines early in the war when he made six trips from Italy to deliver clothes, food, medicine and sleeping bags. His desire to join the fight was negated by his lack of military experi-

ence. He still has a ready-to-go backpack with a bullet-proof vest and would join his nation's defense should Russia launch an offensive in the future.

Popovych is from Lviv, a safer Ukrainian city located in the far west where there are fewer restrictions to organizing races, and quite a few have taken place. Even here, the war rears its ugly head every now and then, with one race interrupted by missile attacks some 50 miles away causing a three-hour delay.

In February and March 2022 with the Russians on the outskirts of Kyiv, the capital city's 109-year-old velodrome (an arena for track cycling), which was re-opened in 2017 after being closed for 13 years, was used to defend the city. Barricades and blockades were installed with the promise to rebuild the facility if it was destroyed.

The velodrome's CEO Volodymyr Melnyk and some 50 cyclists from Kyiv organized a medicine delivery service on bicycles. The city's velodrome was utilized as a social lifeline for many people at a dire time of need.

When Russian forces retreated six weeks later, the velodrome was used to organize training sessions, but with a huge drop-off in numbers as some 80 percent of young Ukrainian cyclists had fled the country.

As the war continues into its third year, some cyclists are protecting their country from the trenches while others help the war effort in many other ways. The sport of cycling has been severely impacted in Ukraine, yet it has not been eliminated. There is hope that in the future competitive cycling in Ukraine will rise again.

(Based on reporting by Cycling World.)

Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine first in medals at junior diving championships

At the World Aquatics Junior Diving Championships, held on November 24 through December 1, more than 250 up-and-coming elite divers aged 14-18 representing over 40 countries competed in the Brazilian seaside city of Rio de Janeiro.

Ukrainian divers finished in third place in the medal tables, winning a total of nine medals including two gold, three silver and four bronze medals. Their nine total medals placed them first among the 13 countries winning medals at the competition.

Gold medalists were Mark Hrytsenko (boys 10-meter platform, 14-15) and the duo of Kseniia Bochek and Diana Karnafel (girls 3-meter synchronized, 14-18).

Ukraine tops medal table in para dance sport

Ukrainian athletes finished on top of the medal table and won the most overall medals at the Prague 2024 Para Dance Sport European Championship held on November 22-24 in Prague, Czech Republic. The fourth edition of the wheelchair dance competition had 16 European countries participating. Eleven of Ukraine's 13 competitors won medals, including eight gold and five bronze medals.

Ukraine's top performers were Snizhana Kernychna (three gold medals and one bronze), Volodymyr Kernychnyi (three gold), Ivan Sivak (three gold) and Olena Chynka (two gold). Four gold medals were won in individual competitions and four were captured in duet dance events.

Usyk to get bigger purse in Fury rematch

The boxing world is anticipating the rematch between Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury on December 21 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Fury hopes to avenge his first professional defeat at the hands of the Ukrainian champion after losing to Usyk in the showdown for the undisputed heavyweight world title last May.

The massive financial resources invested into the bout by Saudi Minister for Sport Turki Al-Sheikh will see both fighters receive a bigger purse this time around. Usyk reportedly earned \$38 million last fight, far less than Fury's take of \$107-plus million. Reports have noted that the combined purse for the rematch will be \$190 million, with champion Usyk getting a much larger share of the winnings.

Ukrainian Fencing Federation outraged at Usmanov's election

The Ukrainian Fencing Federation (UFF) and the entire Ukrainian fencing community expressed outrage at the recent election of Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov as president of the International Fencing Federation (FIE) by its congress. The UFF emphasized that the choice of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Usmanov's homeland, as the



Satiro Sodre/Saltos Brasil/World Aquatics

Kseniia Bochek and Diana Karnafel (center) came out on top in a fierce girls 3-meter synchro (14-18) diving contest at the Junior Diving Championships in Rio de Janeiro on November 24 through December 1. Italy's Rebecca Ciancaglini and Giorgia De Sanctis (left) won silver medals and Germany's Zoe Marie Schneider and Aliana Reihs (right) won bronze medals.

venue for the congress and the FIE executive board's advance distribution of a letter supporting Usmanov from some 100 national federations indicated a prearranged outcome.

An official statement by the UFF said it "has long understood that appeals to conscience and humanity make no impression on foreign sports officials. Therefore, in addition to protesting, the UFF responds to all illegal and immoral actions in terms of law and will continue to do so. These actions ensured the participation of our fencers in the Olympics and the absence of Russians there."

The UFF held an emergency meeting and consulted with fencers, coaches, Ukraine's National Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine. "The UFF will continue to fight for truth, justice and every Ukrainian fencer," their statement said on November 30.

Usmanov received 120 votes, while his only opponent, Swede Otto Drakenberg, received 26 votes. Usmanov resigned as president of FIE following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 after being sanctioned by the European Union and the U.K. He led the organization since 2008, was president of the Russian Fencing Federation from 2001 to 2009 and president of the European Fencing Confederation from 2005-2009.

On December 4, Usmanov voluntarily suspended his duties as president of the International Fencing Federation, saying

the move was done "in favor of the organization." The Russian oligarch added that he was stepping aside to ensure the stable operation of the governing body.

Sport Shorts

- Ukrainian Kateryna Sadorska set a new world record in diving without fins at 82 meters on November 26 near the Caribbean island of Dominica. She broke her record of 80 meters set in Kalamata, Greece, at the World Championships in October.

- Ukrainian Greco-Roman wrestlers Zhan Beleniuk (87 kilograms) and Parviz Nasibov (67 kilograms) were both ranked third in the United World of Wrestling's final rankings for 2024. The two won medals in Paris at the 2024 Summer Olympics with Nasibov winning silver and Beleniuk claiming a bronze.

- Shakhtar head coach Marino Pushic plans to renegotiate his contract with the club over the upcoming winter break, saying that he wants to stay with the team as long as possible.

- Ukrainian Artem Stepanov became the youngest Ukrainian (17 years, 3 months) to make his debut in the Champions League on November 26 when he entered the match in the 73rd minute as a substitute for Bayer Leverkusen. Stepanov surpassed the record held by Dmitry Chygrinsky (18 years, 1 month).

- The Ukrainian duo of Maryna Hladun and Tetiana Lazarenko won their first-ever

Challenge-level gold on the Volleyball World Beach Pro Tour on November 24 in Chennai, India.

- On November 28, the International Biathlon Union clarified that Russia and Belarus are to remain banned from participation in international competitions until the war on Ukraine comes to an end. This includes competing as neutral athletes, as the IBU Event and Competition rules currently do not provide a rule for neutral athletes.

- The twosome of Anastasia Maloshenko and Elizaveta Timofeeva won silver medals in freestyle duet at the International Cheer Union's 2024 World Cup in Seoul, South Korea, on November 22-24.

- Ukraine's Soul team won gold in the junior girls formation event at the World Championship in acrobatic rock 'n roll in Prague, Czechia, on November 23.

- Ukraine won third place at the Eastern European U-16 Women's Volleyball Championship held in Debica, Poland, on November 20-23. Seven national federations competed at the event.

- Tennis star Marta Kostyuk's Porsche was broken into while she and her husband were on a trip to Milan, Italy.

- Olena Shevchenko won a silver medal at the Soochow International Ultra-Marathon in Taiwan on November 30, covering 151 miles in one day.

- Newcastle United emerged as the frontrunner for Mykhailo Mudryk's soccer services in the upcoming transfer window, with Crystal Palace and Barcelona also in the mix.

- Ukrainian athletes won 56 medals (23 gold) at the Pole and Aerial Sport World Championship 2024 held in Cesenatico, Italy, on November 27 through December 1. Forty-four medals were won in aerial sports and 12 in pole.

- Ukraine's youth national football team (U-21) was placed in Group D at Euro 2025 where it will play group-stage games against Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands. Its first match will take place on June 6, 2025, against Denmark.

- The Ukrainian national women's football team lost their final two matches to Belgium in the playoffs and failed to qualify for the women's Euro 2025.

- Russian President Vladimir Putin has officially delayed his so-called World Friendship Games, initially scheduled for September. The International Olympic Committee had urged the cancellation of the games and asked countries to abstain from participating. The event was to be Putin's version of an Olympic competition.

(With reporting by the Daily Record, Ukrayinska Pravda, Inside the Games and UNN.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at ihor@sbcbglobal.net.

Notre Dame...

(Continued from page 17)

Koval was a member of the starting five on opening night. Her presence in the paint and ability to move around the key adds even more to a program ranked in the top 10. The Fighting Irish were looking for a dominant presence in the paint, something that has been missing for several seasons.

This could be a pressure-packed position for the young freshman, although

Koval appears to very mature for her age. Certainly, her maturity was impacted by the war in her homeland while she was thousands of miles away.

Through eight games of the 2024-2025 season, Koval is averaging 7.9 points, 9.1 rebounds and an impressive 3.9 blocks in 29.5 minutes per game.

(Based on reporting by The Springfield Student, MaxPreps and SB Nation.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at ihor@sbcbglobal.net.

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OUT & ABOUT

December 17 Lancaster, PA	Christmas trip, "Joy to the World," Ukrainian American Senior Citizens Association, American Music Theater, 215-699-6068	December 21 Cambridge, MA	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 18 Ottawa	Film screening, "Bucha," Mayfair Theater, www.eventbrite.ca	December 22 Ottawa	Christmas Concert, Ottawa Ukrainian Children's Choir, Ukrainian Banquet Hall, www.eventbrite.ca
December 19 New York	Christmas concert, with Valeria Vovk and Firma Chupakhin, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	December 22 Ottawa	Spider (pavuk) Workshop, Ukrainian Banquet Hall, www.ukrainianorthodox.info or 613-728-0856
December 21 Philadelphia	Performance, "The Ukrainian Nutcracker," featuring Voloshky School of Ukrainian Dance, Syzokryli Ukrainian Dance Ensemble and other guests and performers, Abington Friends School, https://31129.danceticketing.com	December 22 Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX	Christmas Bake Sale, St. Sophia Ukrainian Catholic Church, daria1215@verizon.net
December 21 Somerset, NJ	Concert celebration, "Christmas at the Seminary," St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary, https://stsuoats.edu or 732-469-7555	<i>Entries in "Out and About" are listed free of charge. Priority is given to events advertised in The Ukrainian Weekly. However, we also welcome submissions from all our readers. Items will be published at the discretion of the editors and as space allows. Please send e-mail to mdubas@ukrweekly.com.</i>	

Zelenskyy hails... (Continued from page 1)

Russian invasion that began in February 2022, arrived in the French capital at mid-day as more than three dozen global dignitaries gathered for the ceremonies, many of whom applauded the Ukrainian leader at the Notre Dame event.

Mr. Zelenskyy arrived at the Elysee Palace for the three-way talks at 5:30 p.m. Paris time. The three men posed for photos but made no public comments before the talks began.

Mr. Zelenskyy was expected to leave Paris immediately following the ceremonies at Notre Dame, which was restored following a devastating 2019 fire, aided by some \$1 billion in donations from around the globe.

Mr. Trump, who will take office on January 20, has criticized the billions of dollars the United States has poured into Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion.

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

The two also have a long history, mainly through an infamous phone call.

During that July 2019 call, Mr. Trump asked Mr. Zelenskyy to look into the activities in Ukraine of Joe Biden and his son, Hunter. The elder Biden went on to defeat Mr. Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

The call led to accusations that Mr. Trump had conditioned the release of nearly \$400 million in military aid on an investigation into the Bidens, and Mr. Trump was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2019 on charges of

abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The Senate acquitted Mr. Trump on both charges in February 2020.

"We expect a good decision from today's meeting with [Mr.] Macron," a source within the Ukrainian delegation told the AFP news agency before the announcement of the three-way talks.

AFP also reported that Elon Musk, the world's richest man and one of Mr. Trump's closest allies, was expected to attend the ceremonies.

On social media, Mr. Zelenskyy earlier said that Ukraine had received a second shipment of sophisticated F-16 fighter jets from Denmark.

"The second batch of F-16s for Ukraine from Denmark is already in Ukraine. This is the leadership in protecting life that distinguishes Denmark," he wrote on Telegram.

"The planes provided by the Danes from the first batch are already shooting down Russian missiles and saving our people, our infrastructure. Now our air shield is additionally strengthened. If all partners were so determined, it would be possible to prevent Russian terror," he said.

In November, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced that Denmark would transfer two more batches of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine. Six had already been transferred, with a total of 19 aircraft earmarked for delivery by Copenhagen.

Separately, Washington said it is preparing a \$988 million package of arms and equipment to Ukraine, funds taken from the remaining \$2.21 billion available in the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative.

The funds will be used to buy ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and for drones, the Pentagon said, as the administration of President Joe Biden attempts to bolster

Kyiv before he leaves office.

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump later criticized the Biden administration for giving Ukraine permission to strike inside Russia with powerful U.S. missiles, claiming it is intensifying the war.

"I disagree very vehemently with sending missiles hundreds of miles into Russia. Why are we doing that? We're just escalating this war and making it worse. That should not have been allowed to be done," Mr. Trump said in an interview with Time magazine published on December 12.

After more than a year of hesitation, the Biden administration last month finally gave Ukraine the green light to strike military assets inside Russia with U.S.-made Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS). The powerful, precision missiles can strike targets as far away as 186 miles.

The Biden administration justified the decision by saying that Russia had escalated the war by deploying about 11,000 North Korean troops to the front.

Just days after Ukraine fired its first ATACMS into Russia, the Kremlin responded by striking Ukraine with a new, intermediate ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The use of the intermediate missile was meant to serve as a message to the West, the Kremlin said.

Mr. Trump did not say whether he would unilaterally withdraw Ukraine's permission to use ATACMS inside Russia upon entering the White House on January 20 or use it as a bargaining chip with the Kremlin.

Mr. Trump has said he could end the nearly three-year war between Russia and Ukraine in "24 hours," raising concern he could force Kyiv to cede land currently occupied by Moscow's forces. The United States is Ukraine's largest supplier of weapons, giving Washington significant influ-

ence over peace negotiations.

When asked if he would throw Ukraine under the bus to get a peace deal, Mr. Trump said, "The only way you're going to reach an agreement is not to abandon."

Mr. Zelenskyy has demanded Western security commitments to his country be part of any negotiated settlement. He – and most Ukrainians – want North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership, saying only that will prevent Russia from invading their country again.

Mr. Trump was not asked about NATO membership for Ukraine but has been critical of the U.S.-led military organization in the past, saying it is a drain on U.S. finances. The United States accounts for about 60 percent of NATO military spending.

In a speech on December 12, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte called on European members of NATO to step up spending, warning that the threat emanating from Moscow will not dissipate anytime soon.


"Russia is preparing for long-term confrontation, with Ukraine and with us," Mr. Rutte said in a speech in Brussels. "We are not ready for what is coming our way in four to five years. It is time to shift to a war-time mindset, and turbocharge our defense production and defense spending."

(With reporting by AFP and Reuters, and RFE/RL in Washington, D.C.)

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