

# RUSSIA MONITOR

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SOURCE: (@COMBINED2FORCES) / TWITTER

17 October 2022

## **RUSSIAN TROOPS RETREAT FROM UKRAINIAN FRONT LINE**

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**Russia's mass-scale guided and drone strikes have not changed the situation in Ukraine. The Russian military is exploiting its scarce stockpile of cruise and short-range missiles. The Ukrainian army has maintained the momentum on land since late August and Russian forces are unlikely to take the lead anytime soon.**

Russia unleashed a deluge of missile strikes against cities throughout Ukraine on October 10. The number of Russian missiles was equal to the country's yearly production capacity. More than eighty months into the war have yet wrecked depleted ammunition supplies. Western sanctions are also starting to hurt Russia's ability to make advanced weaponry for its war in Ukraine. Russia has already depleted much of its precision-guided munition so its forces are unlikely to rain Ukraine with strikes as they did on October

10. Yet Ukrainian soldiers can shoot down up to half of the missiles fired at Ukraine. Perhaps Russia will fail to shut down Ukrainian critical infrastructure facilities for a long time to deprive civilians of power and water supplies. How the Russian propaganda apparatus referred to the October 10 explosion makes it clear: it was a political decision, rather than a military one. Top Kremlin officials sought to convince fellow citizens, including those in favor of the war, that Russia was not fighting a losing battle, in particular amid the destruction

of the Kerch Bridge and a series of mishaps in Ukraine. The Kremlin has no choice but to launch a mass-scale missile and drop attacks, aware of its inability to tip the scale on land. Ukrainian forces continued to advance east of the Oskil River in the direction of Luhansk Oblast. Here, Russian troops carry out a weeks-long offensive operation towards Bakhmut, but

in vain. In the south, the Ukrainian military is liberating more territory in the Kherson region. On October 11, Ukrainian forces recaptured five more settlements in the Beryslav district and are now advancing down the Dnieper River towards Nova Kakhovka, a strategically important town. ■

20 October 2022

## RUSSIA SUSPENDS PARTIAL MOBILIZATION

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Russia would fail to complete two tasks, by going ahead with the “partial mobilization” and drafting new conscripts later this fall. Thus, the mobilization was suspended temporarily. A total of 420,000 people were drafted over one month.

SOURCE: МИНИСТР ОБОРОНЫ РОССИИ ПРОВЕРИЛ ХОД ПОДГОТОВКИ И УСЛОВИЯ РАЗМЕЩЕНИЯ МОБИЛИЗОВАННЫХ ГРАЖДАН В ПОДМОСКОВЬЕ : МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБОРОНЫ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ (XN--90ANLFBEBAR6I.XN--P1A1)



Army draft offices closed in Moscow on October 17 at 2:00 p.m., according to city officials. Whether the Kremlin's quotas for recruiting 16,000 reservists in Moscow to fight in Ukraine have been met in the capital remains unknown. This number is modest if to compare the number of reservists and that of potential soldiers. Russia's mobilization focused essentially on ethnic minorities as remote non-Russian regions traditionally produce more troops. Shortly after, the Moscow region reached its draft quotas. But as in other Russian regions, mobilization drives that ended might be easily resumed upon a defense ministry order. In some regions across Russia that reached draft quotas, army draft offices were asked to add more soldiers. The one who might announce the end of mobilization is Vladimir Putin, who had declared it nationwide. The Russian leader said on October 14 that 222,000 people out of a target of 300,000 had already been mobilized, promising to complete the drive by the end of this month. As Putin signed a decree that postponed Russia's routine fall conscription

to November 1, a suspended mobilization campaign means army draft offices would be unable to engage reservists and troops at the same time. Putin's "partial mobilization" could be resumed at any time, though. The decree is open-ended, not specifying an end date for the mobilization. As long as a new decree is not adopted, Russia's partial mobilization is suspended, and not completed. A suspended mobilization campaign gives some time to fix the way how reservists are called up, trained, and sent to Ukraine. In a nutshell, Moscow seeks to fix some shortcomings in its mobilization system. Through the nationwide mobilization, Russian officials somewhat tested the system in practice. Russia has not seen any mobilization since the Great Patriotic War. Now it is pushing back the enlistment of 120,000 conscripts this fall. Russian troops are generally prohibited from being deployed abroad. But as Russia annexed the Ukrainian regions of Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya, and Kherson, Moscow considers them all Russian territory, now eligible to dispatch troops. ■

25 October 2022

## **RUSSIAN, UKRAINIAN TROOPS BRACE FOR BATTLE IN KHERSON**

**Russia seems unlikely to expose thousands of its troops on the western bank of the Dnieper River and thus will possibly exit the right bank of the Dnieper River in the southern Kherson region. In the past few weeks, Ukrainian forces have won a considerable advantage in the region, where the occupier is doomed to fail whatever its military will do next. Sergey Surovikin, who commands the southern group of Russian troops in the war against Ukraine, told Vladimir Putin that the defense of Kherson could deliver a severe blow to Russian forces.**



SOURCE: TWITTER (@COMBINED2FORCES)

Following a Ukrainian attack in the north of the Russian-occupied right bank of the Dnieper River around Kherson, Russian forces speeded up their pullback. By the evening of October 22, Russian troops abandoned some towns, including Charivne and Chkalov. Senior officers and medical staff left the city of Beryslav that mattered for a fight in the right-bank Kherson region. Russia also withdrew its administrative services from the city while Ukrainian citizens accused of collaborating are also leaving the area. Ukrainian forces are advancing southwards along the Dnieper River. Since early October, a ferry has been used as part of an ongoing Russian pullback of soldiers and equipment from the right bank of the Dnieper River nearby Nova Kakhovka, a town north of Kherson. Russian forces also completed a makeshift ferry crossing to compensate for the destroyed Antonivskiy Bridge in Kherson. In recent days, amid the Ukrainian advances, there have been mounting signs that Russian

forces might launch urban fighting in Kherson. The occupier has evacuated most city residents. Those Russian troops who will stay will be tasked with inflicting great damage to Kherson and delaying a Ukrainian offensive. Russian forces will not quit entirely the right bank of the Dnieper River as this would expose the entire Dnieper area in the Kherson region to a Ukrainian offensive. There are neither natural defense lines nor urban areas around there—with the closest ones being Melitopol and cities in Crimea. Once its military equipment is pulled back, some Russian forces will stay on the other side of the river. Perhaps Russian troops will quit the western part of the Kherson region while seeking to maintain its foothold through its crossings and the town of Nova Kakhovka. If Russia builds up its foothold in the region and dispatches more troops—including fresh reservists—it could halt the Ukrainian advance towards the eastern bank of the river and this the offensive. ■



SOURCE: (KREMLIN.RU)

26 October 2022

## RUSSIA'S SHOIGU WARNS OF “DIRTY BOMB” PROVOCATION

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**Russia has again waved the nuclear blackmail, a strategy that the Kremlin has followed since it invaded Ukraine. The Kremlin now claims that Ukraine could stage a false flag operation by detonating a dirty bomb.**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu spoke with four counterparts from NATO members on October 23. In those three calls, Shoigu conveyed “concerns about possible provocations by Ukraine with the use of a ‘dirty bomb.’” Shoigu also held phone calls with Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace, French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. Before these calls, the

Kremlin-controlled RIA Novosti news agency had claimed that Ukraine could detonate a low-yield nuclear bomb on its own territory in order to blame it on Russia. Kyiv categorically denies the presence of a dirty bomb in Ukraine and the intention to use it. Ukrainian officials said they would invite international observers to the country. Western states have delivered a joint response to the Russian claims. The Foreign Ministers of the UK, USA, and France

have issued a statement rejecting Russia's transparently false allegations about Ukraine. Russia should not use false claims as a pretext to escalate its war in Ukraine, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Moscow. John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said, "obviously, we're concerned about these allegations that the Russians raised," adding they are simply not true. After Shoigu's initiative, General Valery Gerasimov, the Russian military chief, held phone talks with his U.S. and UK counterpart--General Mark Miller and Admiral Tony Redakin-- to echo Shoigu's words. The "dirty bomb" allegation was also

raised by the Kremlin spokesman, the Russian foreign ministry, and the Russian ambassador to the UN. Russia has waved its threats to intimidate Western allies of Ukraine so they stopped sending weapons to the war-torn country to prevent further escalations. Shoigu's messages to defense ministries sometimes did not overlap. The chief Russian military issued the most powerful warning to France, as the Western European nation is known for its calls for negotiations. In the phone call with Austin, Shoigu made no mention of the "dirty bomb," as he would have anticipated a sharp response from Washington. ■

26 October 2022

## MOLDOVA FACES POWER BLACKOUT: WILL RUSSIA TOPPLE THE COUNTRY'S PRO-WESTERN GOVERNMENT?

**Russia has sought to destabilize Moldova through street protests staged by a pro-Russian left-wing opposition party, rising separatist sentiments in Gagauzia, and gas blackmail. In the last scenario, Russia has used its loyal separatists in the Moldovan breakaway republic of Transnistria.**

Some 70 percent of Moldova's electricity needs are covered by the Cuciurgan TPP. The problem is that the facility is located in the Moscow-controlled separatist entity of Transnistria. The power plant in Transnistria is controlled by the Russian group Inter RAO JES. The energy is produced with Russian gas, for which Tiraspol pays nothing, billing it to a decades-old debt that has risen to almost \$9 billion. The pro-Russian government of Transnistria said the power plant would meet just 27 percent of electricity demand from October 24 on amid reduced gas supplies

from Gazprom. Russia cut gas supplies by 30 percent in October while this figure is likely to grow to 40 percent in November. The Moldovan government said Energocom, a state-run energy company, submitted a request to the Transnistria power plant to meet its commitments. Energocom bought 18 million cubic meters of gas to replenish resources, it added. Russia's Gazprom cut natural gas supplies to Moldova by around 30 percent since early October. Moldova relies entirely on Russian commodities for its gas needs. Romania has also announced its availability to deliver up



SOURCE: 18.03.2021 ȘEDINȚA PLENARĂ A PARLAMENTULUI (51048601346)  
– PARLAMENTUL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA – WIKIPEDIA

to 150 million cubic meters of gas per month. The damage caused by Russian bombings in recent days has led to a massive reduction in Ukraine's energy exports to Moldova and European Union markets. Romania also said it might supply 235 MW of electricity lower than the price on the spot market. The Moldovan government urged people to save energy at home and work. Households in Moldova may soon face power outages. Moldova's energy crisis is likely to aggravate the country's political turmoil. The Shor Party, a populist party in Moldova, is exploiting social discontent amid rising gas and energy prices and high inflation and has staged protests for a couple of weeks now. Some protesters are being paid to participate. The party is led by Ilan Shor,

a Moldovan fugitive businessman currently operating from Israel. Shor, who holds Moldovan, Russian, and Israeli citizenships, was sentenced in a first-instance verdict for bank fraud. The pro-Kremlin oligarch is spearheading the regime-change effort in Moldova. His party now ranks second in popularity polls. His advocates urge Moldovan President Maia Sandu and the center-right PAS government—with ties to the incumbent leader—to step down. The grouping holds a majority in the parliament, which makes it unlikely to hold snap elections only now. Moldova's pro-Russian politicians, including Shor, but also Dodon's Socialist party and the Voronin-led Communist party, will spearhead efforts to destabilize the state amid crisis to take power. ■



SOURCE: SHEVCHENKO DENIES FLEEING UKRAINE AND DENOUNCES' CAMPAIGN 'AGAINST HIM – CENTRAL BANKING (SOURCE: PHOTO NBU)

26 October 2022

## UKRAINE'S FORMER CENTRAL BANK CHIEF DECLARED WANTED

**The true reason behind the resignation of the chairman of Ukraine's national bank is an old embezzlement case—and not his conflict with the finance ministry. Kyrylo Shevchenko was allegedly involved in an embezzlement scheme while serving as the chairman of one of the country's state banks.**

Ukraine's national anti-corruption agency declared former central bank governor Kyrylo Shevchenko a wanted man along with two employees of the Ukgazbank lender in 2014–2019, on suspicion of embezzling more

than 200 million hryvnia. The Supreme Anti-Corruption Court has ordered to detain one of the suspects. Shevchenko abruptly resigned on October, 4 citing health problems. Two days later, an old embezzlement case reemerged,

dating back to the time when Shevchenko worked in Ukgazbank. Investigators found that top central bank managers had paid extra money to some “agents” for their bogus services. Back then, Shevchenko served as the chief of the National Bank of Ukraine. He got conflicted with the finance ministry over the hryvnia issue. Former Oschadbank bank executive

Andriy Pyshnyi was appointed chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine. Shevchenko referred to the investigation as biased, saying he left the country to receive medical treatment abroad. Shevchenko has long worked in Ukraine’s financial sector. In addition, he briefly served as an aide to Yulia Tymoshenko, former prime minister of Ukraine. ■

27 October 2022

## RUSSIA’S SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL COULD PROMPT ISRAELI HELP FOR UKRAINE

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**Israeli missiles hit targets near the Syrian capital Damascus in a rare daytime attack on October 24. Some of the missiles were shot down by the Damascus air defense. Israeli strikes usually take place under the cover of darkness. Perhaps Israel is less concerned over the Russian-backed air-defense systems in Syria as Russian forces withdrew from some positions in the country.**

As Russia is struggling on the front line in Ukraine, it is little surprising that the country has shipped a battery of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles and some 1,200–1,600 troops from Syria to Ukraine. Amid the invasion of Ukraine, Russia reduced the number of its troops in Syria. Several Russian commanders had been redeployed from Syria to Ukraine, while Russia’s military leadership in Moscow has become less involved in day-to-day management of operations in Syria. What matters most is the fact that Russia has relocated its long-range S-300 missile systems from inside Syria. Consequently, Israel could feel encouraged to conduct a daring aerial campaign to strike targets in Syria or offer military assistance to Kyiv. Moscow’s military presence and Syria and Iranian drones—and

ballistic missiles sometime soon—supplies could prompt a shift in Israel’s stance on the Russian-Ukrainian war. Despite many appeals from Ukrainian officials, Israel has long denied selling weapons to Ukraine amid the Russian invasion of the European country. What Yair Lapid, the Israeli prime minister, told The Jerusalem Post was particularly interesting. He expressed deep concern over Russia and Iran’s military ties in a conversation with Ukraine’s foreign minister, after Moscow allegedly used Iran-made drones to attack Ukraine. Asked what is holding Israel back from providing Ukraine with missile-defense systems, Lapid said he was balancing two considerations. “One is we are on Ukraine’s side,” he said. The other consideration “is making sure Israel’s national security interests are being protected



SOURCE: VLADIMIR PUTIN VISITED KHMEIMIM AIR BASE IN SYRIA • PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA (KREMLIN.RU)

at all times.” By saying this, he meant the situation in Syria, where Iranian forces are increasingly present. Russia has let Israeli jets bomb Iran-linked targets said to be weapons caches destined for Israel’s enemies. Israel has intensified strikes on Syrian airports to disrupt Tehran’s increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms. The Israeli military has destroyed most of Iran’s military infrastructure in Syria and Iraqi arms supply routes into the

war-torn country. Israel has stayed largely on the sidelines since Russia invaded Ukraine, fearing possible retaliation in Syria. As Russia is gradually leaving Syria, Israel could offer more help to Ukraine. The threat of the S-300 system to Israeli operations in Syria was a key reason that Israel has turned down Ukrainian requests for air defense systems, according to New York Times, citing a source in the U.S. administration.. ■



SOURCE: NIKOL PASHINYAN (@NIKOLPASHINYAN) / TWITTER

31 October 2022

## WILL ARMENIA ACCEPT RUSSIAN PEACE PROPOSALS?

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**Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that the country agreed to work with Russian proposals to establish relations with longtime rival Azerbaijan. The leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia are expected to meet in Sochi. The Kremlin has responded to Western diplomatic efforts in the South Caucasus, where the European Union remains strongly engaged in mediating a peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.**

“**I**n early September, Armenia agreed to work on the basis of the main principles and parameters on establishing interstate relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan that were presented by the Russian Federation

and is ready to confirm it in Sochi. We hope that Russia will retain its proposals,” Nikol Pashinyan tweeted on October 28. A few days earlier, Alen Simonyan, chairman of the Armenian parliament, confirmed the

forthcoming meeting of the leaders of Armenia, Russia, and Azerbaijan on October 31 in Sochi. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova earlier reported that Putin had invited Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to Russia for another trilateral summit to discuss the full range of trilateral and bilateral issues. Russia has acted as a chief mediator in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. The fighting ended with a Russian-brokered agreement in November 2020. Under the armistice deal, Azerbaijan seized control of what is referred to as “the security belt” around Nagorno-Karabakh while Armenia claimed the strategically important city of Shusha. The deal also provided for creating a transport corridor linking Azerbaijan’s mainland and its exclave of Nakhchivan. However, Azerbaijan accused Armenia of being too sluggish in implementing the November 2020 agreement. As Russia invaded Ukraine, Azerbaijan caused some border clashes, attacking its neighbor. Azerbaijan keeps claiming some territorial gains, forcing Yerevan into more concessions on peace talks. Aliyev

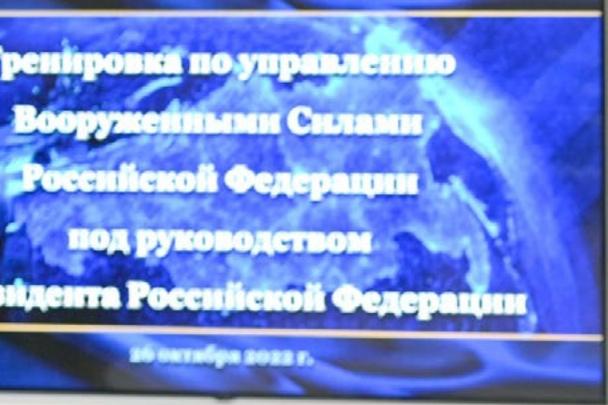
and Pashinyan both hope to reach a sustainable peace deal in the region later this year. The European Union has also remained engaged in helping both states and has dispatched a mission to Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan. Armenia’s Pashinyan is hoping to strike a deal with Turkey while France has been engaged in supporting Armenia. The U.S. has also entered the game—Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, made an official trip to Armenia. Russia is losing its tight grip on the South Caucasus amid its invasion of Ukraine and mounting tensions with Western nations. Through the forthcoming meeting in Sochi, the Kremlin is seeking to save its influence in the Caucasus and keep its mediating role in the region. Whether Moscow notches up any success remains unclear. Azerbaijan is sure of its advantageous position while Armenia—despite the fact of being an ally of Russia—is looking for some options outside the Kremlin. What Pashinyan said is not binding yet—as no one knows what Putin will propose during the Sochi meeting. ■

## 31 October 2022

# **RUSSIA INTIMIDATES WEST WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

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**Russia’s nuclear drills are part of the country’s effort of scaring Western states off with possible nukes to be used in the Russia-Ukraine war. The Ukrainian government has said it suspects Russia is planning its own false flag operation. Russia has also waved the nuclear blackmail, a strategy that the Kremlin has followed since it invaded Ukraine. Moscow is aware that it will not intimidate Ukraine. Instead, it hopes to send a message to Western states, mostly Germany and France, that a nuclear option is still on the table.**



SOURCE:KREMLIN.RU

The Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin on October 26 remotely observed exercises codenamed Grom-2022 by his nation's strategic nuclear forces. Russian state television showed a video of Putin observing the drills on a huge television screen, with comments from military leaders. In the broadcast, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the drills involved a nuclear submarine, long-range aircraft, and multiple practice launches of ballistic and cruise missiles. Russia conducted nuclear exercises, working out a "massive" nuclear strike at the Kura test site in Kamchatka. A Yars land-based intercontinental ballistic missile was test-fired from the northern Plesetsk launch site. A Sineva intercontinental ballistic missile was launched from a submarine in the Barents Sea. As part of the exercise, Tu-95 strategic bombers also launched cruise missiles at practice targets. In the past, Russia would usually stage its nuclear drills at this time of the

year. The Russian nuclear exercise comes amid Moscow's warnings of a purported Ukrainian plot to detonate a radioactive device commonly known as a "dirty bomb" in a false flag attack to blame Russia. The Kremlin has one goal: to escalate its nuclear threats further in the West. Interestingly, Russia staged a nuclear drill on February 19, just five days before invading Ukraine. Moscow saw a two-year hiatus in staging nuclear exercises. Not incidentally, having watched a video feed of the launch, Putin attended a meeting with the intelligence chiefs of several former Soviet countries, claiming the West was "pumping" Ukraine with weapons. Putin himself repeated the dirty bomb claim. "We know about the plans to use the so-called dirty bomb for provocations," he said. If Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine the United States has warned Putin there will be "catastrophic" consequences. The West has delivered a firm response to the Russian strategic nuclear drills. ■



SOURCE:KREMLIN.RU

31 October 2022

## ROSNEFT CEO SECHIN CLAIMS EU GAS PRICE CAPS UNREASONABLE

**A statement from the CEO of Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil company, at a business forum in Azerbaijan confirms that Western sanctions on Russian energy were simply a reasonable step. What Sechin told the meeting had little to do with reality, but depicted Moscow's biggest nightmare of energy sanctions. Moscow has revived its longtime desire to drive a wedge between the European Union and the United States.**

**E**urope's refusal to supply energy resources from Russia puts 6.5–11.5 percent of Europe's GDP and around 16 million jobs in danger, according to the CEO of Rosneft.

Speaking on October 27 at an international economic forum in Baku, previously held in Italy's Verona, Sechin said that any oil and gas price caps delivered a blow to the market

while stripping countries of their right to claim resources. One of Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest allies, oil chief Igor Sechin, has depicted a gloomy view of the economic situation in EU states. The metallurgy, chemical, pulp, and paper, as well as the agricultural industries, are among the key sectors of the European industry in crisis, he claimed. "The potential output reduction is projected at 20–45 percent for the chemical industry and 30–60 percent for metallurgy. In Europe, 70 percent of the capacities for the production of nitrogen fertilizers have already been suspended while aluminum production fell by 25 percent," he added. "The United States has to fight to maintain its hegemony at any cost and it just cannot afford a defeat," Sechin blamed the United States for the current situation. Europe

is now a "number one victim of the U.S. policy" as its states are "no longer able to diversify energy supplies," he claimed. Naturally, what Sechin said in Baku corroborates his vexation. If the EU is a victim of anyone, it suffers from a Russian policy. The situation now is conducive to diversifying energy supplies more than ever before while some European states are even forced to look for energy elsewhere--like Germany--as they are unable to buy energy commodities from Russia. EU proposals to cap Russian energy prices have indeed irked Sechin as this will deliver a blow to Russian businesses, including Rosneft. This explains why Sechin said at the core of that is to deprive sovereign states of their resources--as "right" countries, which are now short of them, need resources more than those little rightful ones. ■

31 October 2022

## PUTIN SEEKS TO DESTROY UKRAINE, FIGHT WESTERN STATES

**What Russian President Vladimir Putin said in recent days meant no change in his policy that indeed exacerbated since mid-September. In just three days, Russian President Vladimir Putin had a flurry of activities: he observed exercises by his nation's strategic nuclear forces, attended meeting with heads of security services of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), held an operational meeting of the Russian Security Council, delivered a speech at the Valdai Discussion Club summit, took part in an emergency meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Collective Security Council, and received Sergei Shoigu, the defense minister, for talks. They all have one common--the Kremlin flexes its muscles, claiming it could further escalate the war in Ukraine and ignite tensions with Western states.**



SOURCE: KREMLIN.RU

All eyes were on Putin’s speech at the conference organized by Valdai Discussion Club, a Kremlin-sponsored think tank, and the security conference of the CIS countries, the latter of which comes as a channel of communication with most post-Soviet republics. The Russian leader keeps denying Ukraine’s legitimacy as a sovereign nation. With his tailored messages, Putin sought to find an excuse for invading Ukraine in what he referred to as an aggressive policy of Western countries. “We are in for probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and at the same time most important decade since the end of World War II,” according to Putin. “Now this historical period of boundless Western domination in world affairs is coming to an end,” he was quoted as saying. Speaking at the Valdai Club discussion forum in Moscow on October 27, Putin blamed Western nations for a fragile situation worldwide, accusing them of throwing aside all rules to maintain dominance and block countries they look upon as “second-

rate people”. Putin cast the conflict in Ukraine as a battle between the West and Russia for the fate of the second-largest Eastern Slav country. “Russians and Ukrainians are one people historically. It’s almost like civil war happening right now,” he continued. The speech Putin delivered at the Valdai Club meeting resembles what he said in late September while annexing four Ukrainian regions. While many recognize the war in Ukraine as a top issue, Putin ranted about Western culture. At the October 27 meeting, Putin reiterated the claims he had delivered back on September 30, saying Western states simply have nothing to offer the world, except “perpetuating their dominance”. Russia’s efforts served as an excuse to justify its right to take decisions in all domains ranging from energy policy to same-sex marriages. “Russia, as a country that made Ukraine, is the real guarantee of its sovereignty,” Putin added. This echoes Putin’s narrative of the Ukrainian state as a gift from Lenin—earlier the president had claimed the annexation of

Crimea was a legacy of Khrushchev. What Putin said means that now he is not eager to sit at the negotiating table with Ukrainian officials. Despite many setbacks along the front line, the Kremlin has not revised its grandiose plans to defeat Ukraine and install a Moscow-obedient puppet government in Kyiv. Speaking via videoconference at a meeting with heads of security services of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Putin said Ukraine was turned into “a tool of the U.S. policy” used in an attempt to preserve global domination. Russian State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav

Volodin amplified this narrative, stating that Ukraine is occupied by NATO and it has lost the ability to exist as a state. Perhaps the Kremlin has stiffened its already radical policy and—in addition to installing a Moscow-loyal government in Kyiv and grabbing swathes of land in Ukraine’s south and southeast—its officials seek to wipe out Ukrainian identity and culture. Undoubtedly, the Kremlin gave Volodin the green light to state this, as he is a hawkish politician siding with the Russian “party of war”. ■

31 October 2022

## RUSSIA, IRAN FORGE ENERGY COOPERATION

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**Iran is wading into Russia’s war on Ukraine with alleged reports to sell weapons to Moscow. Through military and political deals, Iran faces new sanctions. Despite that, Iran’s ayatollahs and the country’s president insist on forging closer ties with Russia.**

Russia and Iran are stepping up trade and economic cooperation amid sanctions. Between January and July 2022, bilateral trade turnover rose by 45 percent from last year, to \$2.8 billion. Iran’s export figure into Russia went up by 70 percent in the past six months. What is of particular importance is energy cooperation between the two countries, which has flourished in recent months. Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov and Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji have discussed cooperation on the supply of oil and petroleum products, as well as preparations for the bilateral meeting of the intergovernmental commission during the Gas Exporting Countries Forum

(GECF), the Russian energy ministry said on October 26. Shulginov and Owji also discussed the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation between Gazprom and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). The counterparts also touched upon issues of cooperation in the electric power industry, including the participation of Russian companies in the construction of a number of power generation facilities in Iran. “Work on the exploration of the possibility of combining the energy systems of Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran continues. The first stage should be the development of a feasibility study of the project,” Shulginov said. Russia and



SOURCE: KREMLIN.RU

Iran continue working out an option of oil and gas swaps, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Alexander Novak told reporters back in October. The Russian officials said that a swap deal with Iran may initially include 5 million tonnes of oil and 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year. Iran sees prospects for the first supplies of Russian gas through Turkmenistan also later this year, according to Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Ahmad Asadzadeh. Its capacity could range up to 50 million cubic meters per day.

Iran was also waiting for a Russia-Turkmenistan swap deal. In early October, Russia and Iran signed a \$4 billion worth of memorandum of understanding to develop the gas industry and build \$40 billion worth of pipelines and liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities. In July, The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Russian state-controlled energy giant Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding to develop Kish and North Pars gas fields. ■



SOURCE: SOVCOMFLOT.RU

31 October 2022

# RUSSIA RESPONDS TO EU PRICE CAPS BY REORIENTING OIL EXPORTS

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**The Kremlin said that Russia would stop selling oil to countries that impose price caps on Russia's energy resources. But now Moscow has to sell these gigantic supplies elsewhere. Russia is now facing a challenge to find new outlets for its oil supplies and create storage capacity.**

**T**he World Bank said Russia's oil exports could drop by as much as 2 million barrels per day due to a European Union embargo on Russian oil and gas products, coupled with restrictions on insurance and shipping. Seeking to regulate oil prices, Russia needs a

far greater storage capacity than it now has. The authorities of Russia, and before those of the Soviet Union, neglected storage facilities, believing they could be stocked in deposits. The Kremlin has long claimed only oil-importing states need to create a storage system for crude

oil. But the U.S. example shows that a major oil producer reaps some benefits from releasing oil reserves as such a move affects prices across the world. Perhaps Moscow has come to a similar conclusion. Russia is seeking to create a national storage system for crude oil in Krasnoyarsk Krai, Siberia. Speaking the Russian Energy Week, Igor Shpurov, the head of Russia's Mineral Resources Agency, told reporters that Moscow may set up storage facilities as the feasibility study has been carried out. These facilities might have considerable storage capacity. "It depends whether these are temporary or permanent facilities," according to the official. Shpurov said storage capacity could be created in salt caverns, with storage capacity ranging between 2 million and 5 million tons. Russia has the potential to build huge underground oil storage facilities in eastern Siberia and the Urals-Volga regions. The new oil storage facilities will be what Russia needs soon. In early September Group of Seven

finance ministers agreed to impose a price cap on Russian oil aimed at slashing revenues for Moscow's war in Ukraine. The price cap will take effect on December 5, 2022 for crude oil and February 5, 2023 for petroleum products. Some top Russian officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, said Russia would stop selling gas to countries that impose price caps on Russian-sourced oil. Russia would be forced to stock some of its supplies in facilities before eyeing new clients. All the more so if the EU imposes price caps on Russian oil. Alexander Novak said his country was making efforts to divert supplies from Europe to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Russia is planning to expand the export capacities of Ust-Luga, Novorossiysk, and Primorsky Region's ports by 40 million tons. It is a necessary condition--new clients can claim oil supplies by sea only while Russia would send most of its oil to European customers through a Soviet-era network of pipelines. ■

31 October 2022

## RUSSIA SUSPENDS PARTICIPATION IN GRAIN EXPORT DEAL

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**The Russian Federation's decision to temporarily suspend its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative is little surprising. Moscow has been bracing for this since at least mid-October. This fits into the Russian war strategy that involves targeting civilians to cripple the economy and create a humanitarian catastrophe.**

Russia on October 29 suspended its participation in a landmark agreement that allowed vital grain exports from Ukraine, blaming drone attacks on Russian ships in Crimea. Indeed, an alleged drone attack

took place on October 29 against a Kalibr-capable Grigorovich-class frigate of the Black Sea Fleet near Sevastopol. Russia has used Kalibr missiles, whose range is up to 2,500 km, to target the whole of Ukraine. Ukrainian



SOURCE: STRUCTURE.MIL.RU

President Volodymyr Zelensky urged a strong international response against Russia from the UN and the intergovernmental G20 forum. The Turkey and UN-brokered deal to unlock grain exports signed between Russia and Ukraine in July is critical to easing the global food crisis caused by the conflict. The deal was due to be renewed on November 19. A day before Moscow suspended the deal, Russia's UN ambassador said the July agreement facilitated the transfer of more than 9 million tons of grain and other food products from Ukraine enough food to feed 100 million people. The UN also urged the deal's preservation. Authorities in Kyiv said Russia had begun to halt vessels carrying agricultural products. Russian inspectors have added more controls on grain ships that either left Ukrainian ports or headed to them. Russia's actions had effectively blocked the passage of ships with many vessels stuck in the agreed

grain corridor. They all carry enough food to feed seven million people, according to Zelensky. Russia's suspended participation in the deal was labeled a "false pretext". Grain vessels were halted almost at the same time when Russia launched a fresh barrage of missile strikes on key infrastructure facilities across Ukraine. What do these two have in common? Russian forces attack civilian targets, and not military ones, to unleash a humanitarian disaster in Ukraine and the world's poorest regions. Putin got another tool of blackmail--perhaps Russia will ask for concessions to ease the grain blockade. The question is what Turkey will do next. The country's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who brokered the deal, saw it as his biggest accomplishment. The agreement was central to his country's ties with other nations dependent on Ukrainian grain in the Middle East and North Africa. ■



SOURCE: FACEBOOK(GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE)

31 October 2022

## **ARTILLERY AND RAIN: SITUATION ALONG FRONT LINE IN UKRAINE**

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Russia failed to draw any conclusions from the uneasy situation that Ukrainian forces were in while in Kherson Oblast due to rainy weather. An advance towards Vuhledar and Pavlivka in the south of Donetsk Oblast was hampered by muddy weather. The bottom line is that the daily Russian death toll stood at a record number. The chilly, wet weather is making conditions particularly difficult, slowing the Russian and Ukrainian offensive over the next two months.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported the country's military killed 950 Russian soldiers on October 29, mostly in Donbas. Elsewhere along the front line, Russia has started a defensive campaign. Russian forces have mined bridges, roads, and river banks near Svatove and Kreminna in the western part of the Luhansk region. Despite that, a strategic road linking Svatove and Kreminna remains under the control of Ukrainian forces. The R-66 motorway runs southwards linking Kreminna and Rubizhne and is a key supply route for Russian forces. Just east of it, there is the swampy Krasna River. There is also a critical train line further east. If Ukrainian forces managed to go through these three, they would pave their way toward the north of Luhansk province while complicating the Russian posture in Severodonetsk and Bakhmut in the south. It is around Bakhmut where Russia has made any territorial gains in the past two months. There, Russian troops followed the same strategy as in Severodonetsk—they first unleash heavy artillery barrages and then launch an offensive on the ground, where Wagner Group mercenaries are usually deployed. Authorities in Kyiv believe Russian forces started a targeted campaign to seize Bakhmut as the Kremlin had allegedly made an order to claim the city by the end of October. Having captured Bakhmut,

Russian forces could advance further towards Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, or the two biggest Ukraine-controlled cities in the Donetsk region. However, as Russia amassed its artillery towards Bakhmut, Ukraine won the advantage elsewhere, notably in the south where Ukrainian troops outmastered the Russians in precise artillery strikes. With this and a weeks-long effort to strike key Russian targets with Himars launchers, the Ukrainian military could continue to advance toward Kherson. The operation to liberate Kherson is likely to last until the end of November, according to Ukrainian military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov. Russia deployed its finest troops to defend Kherson, including airborne troops, Spetsnaz, and naval infantry. Those forces are reinforced with freshly mobilized recruits. According to the Ukrainian military intelligence outlet, some 40,000 Russian troops are now in Kherson Oblast, some of them in Kherson while others are stationed on the western and eastern banks of the Dnieper River. Russian forces are bracing for a Ukrainian offensive on the outskirts of Kherson. Russia will seek to stage a fierce campaign to defend Kherson, as forces loyal to Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of Chechnya, were deployed to Kherson province. Chechen soldiers are akin to the infamous barrier troops to prevent retreat and execute deserters. ■



SOURCE: MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF GUINEA-BISSAU IN KYIV — OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

31 October 2022

## UKRAINE LAUNCHES DIPLOMATIC COUNTEROFFENSIVE IN AFRICA

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African nations are closely watching what is taking place in Ukraine as they depend heavily on grain supplies from the two warring sides. Shortly after the war broke out, many either remained neutral or sided with Russia. Now it has started to change. It is largely due to tremendous diplomatic efforts Ukraine has made in Africa—the continent where Kyiv has never had much political interest. Russia is doing differently—seeking to rebuild its Cold War influence by sending Wagner Group mercenaries and weapons to the continent.

The first African president to visit Kyiv since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Sissoco Embalo of Guinea-Bissau, met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on October 26 a day after a visit to Russia where he also met President Vladimir Putin. At a joint press conference, Zelensky said Umaro Sissoco Embalo told him Russia sought to “build a dialogue” with Ukraine. The Ukrainian leader said a prerequisite for talks would be Russia’s recognition of Ukraine’s territory, borders, and sovereignty. The Kremlin denied later the leader of the African state did not convey any special message from his Russian counterpart. The mere fact of this trip matters for African countries and their importance for Kyiv and Moscow. Many African countries rely heavily upon Ukrainian and Russian grains, which now poses a particular challenge amid a maritime blockade. Slowly but steadily, African countries are now embarking on a distinct stance on Russia, a sign of that being the UN vote or the visit of the leader of Guinea-Bissau to Ukraine. Perhaps it came after China and India renewed calls for an end to the fighting. Beijing and New Delhi have robust trade ties with many African nations. The UN General Assembly on October 12 overwhelmingly condemned Russia’s proclaimed annexation of four Ukrainian regions in eastern and southern Ukraine. Some 143 countries voted in favor of a resolution that called Moscow’s move illegal, thirty-five abstained, while five voted against it. None of them was an African

country. Some African states that had either abstained or voted against condemning Russia now cast their ballot against Putin’s regime. Gabon, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, abstained from the vote in the Russia-blocked resolution but condemned Russia’s aggression in the General Assembly vote. Other African countries that voted in favor of the resolution included Eritrea and Senegal, the latter now chairing the African Union. Some nations indeed abstained from voting but they now rethink their attitude following the March resolution condemning Russia’s attack on Ukraine. A major event was a visit that the Ukrainian foreign minister made to African states, somewhat in a response to the African tour of his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. In early October, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba made a tour of the African countries of Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. The chief diplomat of Ukraine cut short his tour of the African continent as Russia escalated its bombings of key Ukrainian cities. While on tour to African states, Kuleba urged the Kremlin to cease its influence across the continent as it involves “destruction, subversion, and hunger.” Seeking to win support from some African countries, Ukraine has focused on the Russian role in curbing grain exports as Russia repeatedly targets Ukrainian ports, fields, or silo. Ukraine put it shortly, claiming that Russia is weaponizing global hunger to further its political aims in Africa. ■



SOURCE: FACEBOOK

31 October 2022

## **RUSSIA DESTROYS POWER, ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS UKRAINE**

**Russian military strategy in Ukraine specifically calls for strategic operations to destroy critical infrastructure, bringing the country to the verge of a humanitarian crisis. Since the invasion began, Russian forces targeted critical infrastructure facilities, including power plants, energy grids, and oil and gas pipelines. A mass-scale campaign began on October 10. Russian drone strikes have damaged at least 40 percent of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, raising concerns about the coming winter.**

So what is now Moscow's tactical purpose? Russia is betting it can use a cold winter to gain a new bargaining chip. The Kremlin hopes to retain most of its gains so far, using freshly recruited reservists. Meanwhile, it is waging a war to enfeeble Ukraine and Western nations. Russia is using energy supplies as a bargaining chip in its relations with European states, hoping to force them into concessions amid the upcoming energy crisis. In Ukraine, Moscow stepped up a pre-winter campaign to strike infrastructure in a calculated attempt to disrupt and demoralize. The goal of Russia is to deprive people of light and heat as Ukraine is now bracing for winter. Russia on October 10 launched a campaign of targeted airstrikes against Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure. Russian forces spend costly missiles to damage civilian infrastructure. On October 31, a

Russian missile strike left some 80 percent of the capital's consumers without water supply. Authorities in Kyiv grew aware of the Kremlin's goals. Indeed, Ukrainian forces build up efforts to shield its critical infrastructure facilities, but it is not enough. Ukrainian law enforcement and security forces are working to identify among personnel of Ukraine's critical infrastructure facilities, including energy objects, those inclined to cooperate with the enemy. It is not about sabotage, but collecting data on the exact location of energy facilities. What delivered a serious blow to Ukraine was when Russian forces occupied the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. More than half (55 percent) of Ukraine's electricity is produced with nuclear power, followed by coal and hydropower (29 percent). ■

31 October 2022

## RUSSIA'S ENERGY SALES SUFFER AMID MILD WEATHER AND CHINESE LOCKDOWN MEASURES

**Vladimir Putin is playing the energy crisis to force Western states and Ukraine into peace concessions. But the weather is not that much to the liking of the Kremlin as unusually mild temperatures tame European demand for gas. For its part, Chinese oil demand has shrunk amid new Covid lockdown measures across the country. Russia struggles to sell its energy, also amid the decline in prices.**

As October saw summer-like temperatures across Europe, a tendency to continue in November, many countries throughout the continent filled their gas storages. There is a

lower prospect of an energy crisis while gas prices fell by two-thirds compared to its record figures back in August. The unseasonably mild weather has curbed demand for heating.



SOURCE: USTLUGAOIL.RU

European countries have reached a November 1 target to fill natural gas storage sites by 93 percent compared to 77 percent last year. Germany's gas reserves have reached 99 percent of full capacity. Overall gas use in the European Union plunged by 14 percent in August and by 15 percent in September. German gas consumption last week was about 30 percent lower than last year due to warmer-than-usual weather. What also influences the decrease in prices is more liquefied natural gas volumes being supplied into Europe. By late 2022, Europe's share in global LNG imports will amount to 32 percent versus just 21 percent in 2021. Yet its prices tripled compared to 2021. Prices of gas supplies to be used in January and February 2023 have risen sharply due to a

possibly harsh winter or high LNG prices. Oil market forecasts all look grim for Russia amid the EU price caps for Russian energy. China's Covid lockdowns affect oil prices worldwide as a tighter grip on restrictions looms over economic growth. Slim growth in China means lower demand for oil in China thus more to distribute along other markets, which affects the price. Another price-reducing factor is the Russian policy as the country is seeking to sell as much of its oil before the EU energy embargo enters into force. About 1.1 million tons of high-sulfur fuel oil were being stored on vessels near Singapore and Malaysia in the week through October 24, according to Vortex Ltd. as cited by Bloomberg. This is more than double the level a year ago. ■



SOURCE:WIKIPEDIA.ORG

31 October 2022

## WHO'S ACTUALLY INTERESTED IN BLOWING UP UKRAINIAN DAM?

**It started with a Russian claim blaming Ukraine for staging a plot to blow up a Dnieper dam, which yet would make no sense as its destruction would slow down a Ukrainian offensive and cause a large-scale disaster affecting towns and cities. Ukrainian officials accused Russia of plotting to blow up the dam. For the Kremlin, it is a matter of honor to launch a fierce campaign to defend Kherson, and blowing up the dam suits neither side.**

Sergei Surovikin, the commander of Russian forces, said on October 18 he had information that Ukrainian forces were preparing a massive strike on the dam. Kyiv has expressed concern as such steps from Russia usually hint at a Moscow-staged false flag operation. Ukraine's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak on October 20 said Russia was mining the dam and transformers at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told the EU summit via a video link that the Kakhovka dam on the Dnieper river had been mined by Russian forces. The Ukrainian leader says 80 settlements—including Kherson—could be hit by rapid flooding because of Russia's planned attack. But such a step makes no sense for Russia as it obstructs its military strategy. Russia will slow Ukrainian troops' advance in the south by just two weeks if it blows up the vast Kakhovka dam, but such a

move would flood the left bank of the Dnieper River, where Russian troops would possibly move from the west side. In addition, once the dam is destroyed, Crimea will face a freshwater shortage, causing problems for the Russian-controlled Zaporizhia nuclear power plant. A Ukrainian narrative changed significantly on October 26. Russian forces do not have the ability as of now to blow up the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam in occupied Kherson Oblast, according to Ukrainian Defense Intelligence (GUR) spokesman Andriy Yusov. Russian troops placed explosives under the Kakhovka power plant as early as April. Kyrylo Budanov, the chief officer of the Ukrainian military intelligence, said Russia might partly blow up the dam as it provides the only road that allows safe passage for Ukrainian military equipment. Russian forces might also destroy the locks, according to the head of Ukraine's military intelligence. ■

31 October 2022

## NOT ONLY DISPUTED KURIL ISLANDS: TIES BETWEEN RUSSIA, JAPAN SOURED CONSIDERABLY

**First, the FSB detained a Japanese consul, then Moscow suspended a visa-free regime to travel off the Kuril Islands while Japan responded with a fresh batch of sanctions. Tensions have run high between Moscow and Tokyo. Both have a very slim chance to improve ties as Japan is aware of the Chinese threat and the Russian aggressive policy being two sides of the same coin.**

Japan is in the final stages of negotiations with the United States to buy U.S.-made Tomahawk cruise missiles, whose range could cover both China and the Russian Far

East, the Yomiuri daily reported. The Japanese government declined to comment on the matter yet earlier it had made it clear its biggest military purchases since World War II came in



SOURCE:DUMA.GOV.RU

response to the growing military threat from China. With the policy of the Kremlin, such a move could be a response to the Russian threat. Relations between Japan and Russia further soured amid Japanese sanctions on Russia. Japan and Russia traded tit-for-tat moves by expelling some diplomats while Moscow suspended negotiations for a post-war peace treaty with Japan. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that Japan strongly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and vowed to work with the international community on further sanctions. In early October the Japanese foreign ministry ordered a Russian diplomat based in Sapporo to leave the country in a tit-for-tat move. Russia's FSB security agency said it had detained a Japanese consul in Russia's port city of Vladivostok for allegedly obtaining classified information. Tatsunori Motoki was declared persona non grata and has been ordered to leave Russia. Tokyo earlier lodged a protest about the detention to Moscow's foreign ministry, saying it was a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Ukrainian parliament on October 7

accepted some islands in the Kuril Islands chain, disputed between Russia and Japan, as Japanese territory. A statement by Ukraine's parliament also called on the international community to take "all possible measures" to legally formalize the status of the islands, known in Japanese as the Northern Territories. Japan also announced additional sanctions on Russia for annexing four regions of Ukraine. The country sanctioned 80 individuals and nine Russian-based organizations, including the families of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev, or Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. The new sanctions also target Sputnik and RT Editor-In-Chief Margarita Simonyan, and retired Olympic gymnast Alina Kabaeva. The restrictions also apply to arms manufacturers, shipbuilders, and Russia's Rostech. Japan's government earlier banned the export of materials that may be used for chemical weapons. Russia has scrapped an agreement with Japan to allow Japanese former residents to visit disputed islands without visas. ■

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