

# RUSSIA MONITOR

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SOURCE: ((6) ГЕНЕРАЛЬНИЙ ШТАБ ЗСУ (@GENERALSTAFFUA) / TWITTER)

9 November 2022

## NO BATTLE OF KHERSON AS RUSSIA ORDERED TROOP WITHDRAWAL

**Ukrainian forces swept into the key city of Kherson as Russian troops retreated to the east. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said by the evening of November 12 Ukraine's defense forces had liberated more than 60 cities, towns, and villages in Kherson Oblast. Russia has suffered a major defeat in the south of Ukraine, withdrawing from the western Kherson region--far more painful than in Kyiv and Chernihiv back in March.**

Russia withdrew from some 25 percent of a region alongside the capital it had formally recognized as a Russian region back in late September. The city of Kherson was the only capital of the region that Russia claimed to have since the invasion started.

Russian forces withdrew in a somewhat organized manner as they pulled out most of its military personnel and equipment before November 9. Russia decided to keep most of its troops on the western bank of the Dnieper River--these include essentially fresh recruits

who pose no real threat. Elite airborne troops have been evacuated in recent weeks. Russian forces redeployed south of the Dnieper River. Russian-installed officials in Ukraine's Kherson region said they would start evacuating citizens from the eastern bank of the river along the 15-kilometer buffer zone. Withdrawing to the eastern bank of the Dnieper River was the right decision as Russia could no longer keep a group of 20,000–30,000 troops in the area between Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Kryvyi Rih. Ukrainian forces have patiently followed a strategy of destroying supply routes through the Dnieper River and firing artillery to target Russian ammunition depots. The problem is that efforts to save thousands of troops and pieces of military hardware might end up in a political and military failure. Russia's troop withdrawal from Kherson showed its military faces real problems. Once the Russians reached the western bank of the Dnieper River—at a higher altitude—Ukrainian forces used the long-range HIMARS deep in the Russian-controlled area, thus targeting northern Crimea and supply chains linking the peninsula and Russia, through a land corridor through Melitopol and Mariupol. This matters most after the Crimean Bridge was badly damaged. In addition, reaching the Dnieper River allows the Ukrainian command to redeploy the most skilled military personnel—who fought in western Kherson—elsewhere along the frontline. These include thousands of highly skilled and high-morale troops in Donbas and Zaporizhzhia. Ukrainian

forces are thus unlikely to advance through the Dnieper River as Russian troops have solidified their positions on the eastern bank. Instead, they will keep a few thousand soldiers along the river and scramble the rest to target the Russians east of the Dnieper River, perhaps to the south. The Ukrainians do not have to advance through the Dnieper River to push the Russians towards Crimea and Donbas. Redeploying troops from Kherson could speed up Ukrainian offensive movements between Kharkiv and Luhansk Oblasts. After a successful military operation in Iziurm, Ukrainian forces got stuck while advancing toward Svatove and Kreminna. As there are more Ukrainian troops, they will prevent the Russians from trying to attack from Bakhmut and Vuhledar (Donetsk Oblast). Indeed, Russia has an extra 30,000 troops, but the Ukrainians have a psychological advantage and many more soldiers who could be easily redeployed behind the front line. As Russia suffered a setback in Kherson, it is no longer able to block ports and estuaries—not to mention its bold plans to capture Mykolaiv and Odesa to cut Ukraine off the Black Sea. There is also a clear political dimension to the Russian defeat. Russia made a forced pullout from Kherson, the provincial capital Moscow had captured only recently, which marked another Russian setback in Ukraine. Russia hopes to see a weather-induced pause in major offensive movements. The priority now is to keep control of southern Zaporizhzhia which links Crimea to Donbas and further to Russia. ■



SOURCE: ОЛЕКСІЙ ЧЕРНИШОВ ОЧОЛИВ НАФТОГАЗ | НАФТОГАЗ (NAFTOGAZ.COM)

10 November 2022

## UKRAINE'S NAFTOGAZ NAMES NEW CEO

The Ukrainian government accepted the resignation of Yuriy Vitrenko as chief executive of the state energy company Naftogaz. Former government minister for communities and territorial development Oleksiy Chernyshov on November 3 took over as chief executive of Naftogaz, facing some challenges including government personnel reshuffles and the ongoing war with Russia.

Yuriy Vitrenko had been the chief executive of Naftogaz since April 2021. Yet he got involved in the Ukrainian state gas company much earlier, back in 2014. His career took off when Volodymyr Zelensky came to power.

Vitrenko was acting energy minister from December 2020. He got on well with the Ukrainian president and Andriy Yermak, his top aide. He resumed legal pressure on Gazprom, winning an international arbitration claim.



He also helped pass a number of gas-related reforms. He often referred to political issues, including Nord Stream 2. One reason for the conflict between Shmyhal and Vitrenko was some political ambitions of the former CEO of Naftogaz. The incumbent prime minister believed Vitrenko might seek to take his post. Furthermore, Vitrenko has been critical of Ukraine's richest man Rinat Akhmetov. Shmyhal once worked as an executive at DTEK, an energy holding owned by Akhmetov. Vitrenko and Shmyhal argued over the policies of Naftogaz amid the war and the soaring energy crisis. The Ukrainian prime minister requested that Naftogaz increase its gas stocks while the CEO of the company claimed these were sufficient. In consequence, Naftogaz recorded some decreases in solvency while tensions ran high amid some personnel-related issues. Shmyhal asked to introduce some new staff--mostly people from his inner circle--to the corporate management, a move strongly opposed by

Vitrenko. While Shmyhal managed to find a job for his associate, Vitrenko undermined the latter's decision, one example being the CEO of Ukrtransnafta, a state-run company that manages oil transportation operations through the Ukrainian pipeline network. Vitrenko was thus fighting an uphill battle, struggling to remain the CEO of the state-run gas company. In consequence, he stepped down. Chernyshov had been Ukraine's minister for communities and territorial development since March 2020. A successful IT and real estate businessperson from the northeastern Kharkiv region, he had also served as governor of the Kyiv region since 2019. Like his predecessor, he has friendly relations with Zelensky and Yermak. His earlier post as a minister in the Denis Shmyhal cabinet might be beneficial for cooperation between Naftogaz and the government. What it seems is that the state-run gas firm will stick to the government's guidelines. ■

14 November 2022

## UKRAINE LAUNCHES ASSAULT ON THE STRATEGIC KINBURN PENINSULA

**Ukrainian troops are now fighting to liberate the Kinburn Peninsula to dislodge Russian troops from their stronghold. Located on the western bank of the Dnieper River, both the peninsula and its spit are of key strategic importance.**

The narrow hook-shaped Kinburn Peninsula is a strategic chokepoint for both the Dnipro and South Bug rivers, separating these two from the sea. It is 40 kilometers long while its width ranges between four and twelve kilometers. The Kinburn Spit is the narrow eight-kilometer long curving tail in the western

peninsula. It is also located just four kilometers from the port of Ochakiv, controlling access to the key ports of Kherson and Mykolaiv. Russian forces launched an artillery attack at Ukrainian positions in Ochakiv, southern Mykolaiv Oblast, and other Ukrainian-controlled areas along the Black Sea coast. The Russians probably



SOURCE: FLICKR.COM

believed that a Ukrainian offensive on the peninsula would begin from the mainland, thus the east. To their surprise, Ukrainian forces attacked from the west, towards the rear of Russian positions. Reports on the Ukrainian assault appeared in the media more than a week ago. Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, on November 14 said that a Ukrainian attack destroyed Russian artillery units and radio-electronic warfare equipment, adding that some airborne troops present in the area were killed. However, Ukraine is being careful in how much information it is providing about the operation. A spokesperson for Ukraine's Operational Command South on November 15 told journalists that "the operation continues." On November 19, Ukraine reported some further losses in Russian military personnel while adding that the operation continued just two days later. On November 22, Vitaliy Kim, the governor of Mykolaiv Oblast, said that there are three settlements on the spit still to be liberated. The peninsula is a strategic stronghold due to its geographical location. It is a foothold for Russian attacks on the Ukrainian-

controlled coast on the western bank of the Dnieper River. There are just four kilometers between the spit and the mainland shore so the invaders fired Grad multiple rocket launch systems at Ochakiv. In addition, they could use their kamikaze and reconnaissance drones just 60 kilometers away from Odesa. It was the westernmost territory Russia had occupied in Ukraine. Regaining control of the Kinburn Spit is likely to mitigate the threat from Russian artillery attacks at the coast west of the mouth of the Dnieper, boost naval forces, and build up a solid military posture before possibly crossing to the eastern bank of the Dnieper River. In addition, Ukrainian forces could safeguard what is known as a grain corridor running from the port of Mykolaiv. Having claimed control of the entire peninsula, could Ukrainian troops advance towards Russian fortifications south of the lower Dnieper? Probably not. Due to the natural topography of the peninsula and its being within the reach of Russian artillery, Ukrainian forces will not risk any major movements. The peninsula is flat, with much of it covered in sand, salt marshes, and forests. ■



SOURCE: KAITSEPOLITSEI

18 November 2022

## FORMER RUSSIAN SPY SEEKS ASYLUM IN ESTONIA

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**The story behind a Russian spy is a blow to the reputation of Russian spy agencies. The former GRU officer was convicted in Estonia, where he later returned because he disagreed with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.**

Before seeking asylum in Estonia, Zinchenko, 35, lived in St. Petersburg with his wife and three sons. Little is known about what happened in his life since February 2018 when Zinchenko was pardoned, released from prison in Estonia, and exchanged for Raivo Susi, an Estonian businessman charged with espionage in Russia. Zinchenko was recruited in 2009. He

began spying in Estonia upon short training. In 2012 he started a company that produced baby strollers—he shortly began exporting them to the Russian region of Leningrad. In 2013 Zinchenko received a residency permit in Estonia. Since it was oriented toward the Russian market, he had a valid reason to travel frequently between Estonia and Russia.



Zinchenko delivered materials to GRU officials. The fake businessman collected intelligence on the Estonian armed forces and those of other fellow NATO countries. He was active until January 2017 when he might have been identified by an Estonian counterintelligence outlet. In May 2017 Zinchenko was sentenced to five years in prison for spying. He was released only in February 2018. He claimed that Russian military intelligence officers had abandoned him. He said he greatly admired Alexei Navalny, the now incarcerated Russian opposition leader. Zinchenko fled to Estonia because of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. He first send his

family to Estonia, sold the apartment in Russia, and rejoined his loved ones in the early fall. He claimed he had not escaped shortly after Putin's mobilization order. How come a valuable intelligence asset was able to send the family outside Russia, sell the apartment, and flee Russia? Certainly, Zinchenko must have been closely watched by Russia's FSB. Zinchenko said Russian intelligence had no time for his case once the war broke out. Although the whole story looks somewhat mysterious, it surely has compromised the reputation of Russian intelligence agencies. ■

23 November 2022

## LESS GAS AND ELECTRICITY: MOSCOW SETS STAGE FOR MOLDOVA COUP

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**The energy crisis has hit Moldova especially hard, with Russian state energy giant Gazprom threatening to cut gas supplies and Moscow's attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure that trigger blackouts throughout the country.**

**T**he energy crisis will exacerbate the country's fragile economic posture and poses a greater risk of a coup. To make matters worse, pro-Russian political forces in Moldova have stirred unrest in Moldova for weeks. Russia's Gazprom has long used energy supplies to destabilize Moldova but the situation for the country might still get worse, according to the government. Gazprom, which has traditionally supplied all of Moldova's gas, said it would slash flows by 56.6 percent in early December. Russia's Gazprom first cut natural gas supplies to Moldova in early October by around 30 percent. Now the gas flows to the

country have seen a 40 percent decrease. In addition, what makes the biggest problem is that Moldova has faced rolling blackouts as Russian missile strikes target the Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Back on November 23, Moscow's attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure triggered massive blackouts in several cities in Moldova. The country's systems remain interconnected with Ukraine, which is why the missile barrages set off the automatic shutdown of a supply line. Ukraine has reduced its energy supply export to Moldova to just a few percent since mid-October. In early November Moldova made an electricity supply



**SOURCE: PESTE 65 DE MII DE OAMENI AU PROTESTAT ÎN DATA DE 30 OCTOMBRIE ÎMPOTRIVA REGIMULUI MAIEI SANDU – PARTIDUL ȘOR (PARTIDULSOR.MD)**

deal with neighboring Romania that supplies Moldova with 90 percent of its electricity needs. However, supplies are delivered through a transit line in Ukraine, also targeted by Russian missiles. With energy prices and inflation already high, social discontent is on the rise. The country's pro-Russian forces are seeking to exploit these vulnerabilities. Since September, protests have been organized by the Shor Party, a populist Moldovan political party, whose founder and leader, Ilan Shor, is a fugitive oligarch who now lives in Israel. He

might be seeking to destabilize the country to remove the pro-Western president Maia Sandu from power and install a Russian-loyal socialist government including former Moldovan leader Igor Dodon. The ex-president was placed under house arrest on suspicion of treason. According to a Moldovan state security agency, Shor is alleged to be on the payroll of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), which is eager to stir up unrest in Moldova. Moldova also faces a double challenge that also includes pro-Russian separatists in Transnistria and Gagauzia. ■



SOURCE: СОВЕТ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ (SCRF.GOV.RU)

23 November 2022

## RUSSIA, IRAN PLEDGE CLOSER MILITARY TIES

**Iran has not shifted its policy towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine by supplying Russia with a batch of mostly kamikaze drones and perhaps also ballistic missiles. This might have been on the agenda of the meeting between Putin's top aide and Iranian leaders.**

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev met Iranian leaders on November 8 in Tehran to discuss cooperation between the two countries. The topics might have included more supplies of drones and perhaps ballistic missiles from Iran to Russia and also Russian support to suppress the ongoing protests in

Iran. Patrushev arrived in Iran amid some claims that the Iranian regime needed some help in cracking down on nationwide rallies that have been taking place all over Iran since mid-September. Perhaps it was one of many topics discussed by Patrushev and Iran's top security official, Ali Shamkhani. Shamkhani



also called for deeper ties with Russia in the energy, transportation, agriculture, trade, and banking sectors. The two officials discussed the situation in Ukraine and measures to combat what they called “Western interference” in their internal affairs. Patrushev also met Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Officially, Iran says it welcomes and supports any initiative that leads to a ceasefire and peace between Russia and Ukraine, but it supplies Russia with

Shahed drones for its invasion of Ukraine. Patrushev flew to Iran to show Russia was not an isolated country worldwide. Why does not Iran equivocate about supporting Russia? The country’s ayatollahs are aware of the fact that the Russian defeat combined with a likely fall of the Putin regime could topple the Iranian regime. The defeat of Russian could embolden both domestic opposition forces and some foreign ones, notably in the United States. ■

24 November 2022

## RUSSIA’S TERRORIST STRATEGY THREATENS UKRAINE’S UTILITIES

**All of Ukraine’s operating nuclear power plants were automatically disconnected from the power grid for the first time in the country’s history following a barrage of Russian missile attacks. Since early October the Russian military has destroyed enough of Ukraine’s infrastructure to make life intolerable.**

**SOURCE: ГЕНЕРАЛЬНИЙ ШТАБ ЗСУ ON TWITTER: «А ТАКОЖ 5 ДРОНІВ-КАМІКАДЗЕ ТИПУ «ЛАНЦЕТ». ТІЛЬКИ, 20 – ЗНИЩЕНО. – ДЯКУЮ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦЯМ, ЧИЙ ПРОФЕСІОНАЛІЗМ РЯТУ. ВИ Є ВЗІРЦЕМ ДЛЯ ВСЬОГО СВІТУ. ТЕ, ЩО ВИ РОБИТЕ В УМОВАХ ПОСТІЙНОЇ НЕСТАЧІ ОЗБРОЄННЯ, ТЕХНІКИ, БОЄПРИПАСІВ, – НА МЕЖІ [HTTPS://T.CO/CMMGZEBESX](https://t.co/CMMGZEBESX)” / TWITTER**



As the war became bogged down in months of grinding stalemate, Russia seeks to plunge Ukraine into darkness and cold. They exploit missiles as the only advantage over Ukraine forces. Russia has been carrying out massive missile bombardments roughly weekly, making it more difficult for the Ukrainians to restore power across the country. Moscow launched its largest missile attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure on November 15, causing emergency power outages across the country. Russian forces fired more than 90 Ch-101 and Kalibr cruise missiles, targeting residential areas and utilities all over Ukraine. Ukraine said it destroyed more than two-thirds of these incoming Russian missiles. The most severe blow to Ukraine's infrastructure was delivered on November 23. Consequently, many Ukrainian facilities were temporarily disconnected from the grid. Ukraine's armed forces estimated that on November 23 Russia launched 67 cruise missiles and ten strike drones. Ukrainian defense forces have shot down 51 cruise missiles and five drones. Russia's latest barrage of missile strikes has

forced a total blackout in Kyiv while knocking out electricity supplies to large parts of Ukraine, including Kharkiv, Dnieper, Odesa, and Lviv. As water pumping stations were cut off from electricity, this shut down boiler houses, depriving many residents of heating. Most thermal and hydroelectric power plants have been shut down. Russian missiles target mostly transmission infrastructure rather than power plants. Missiles target mostly autotransformers, which are expensive and usually specially made devices. The very installation is not difficult to be targeted again. Ukraine's energy systems are teetering on the brink of collapse amid winter weather. Russia is also pushing for a spillover refugee crisis in neighboring European countries. Currently, the World Health Organization warns that between two and three million Ukrainians will leave their homes for warmth and safety this winter while more than 10 million people in Ukraine are without electricity. Most of them will be internally displaced, possibly not eager to leave the country. ■

## 25 November 2022

# UKRAINE SEIZES CONTROL OF COMPANIES, DELIVERING BLOW TO OLIGARCHS

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**The process of deoligarchization, as it has become known, was already one of the biggest issues in Ukrainian politics long before the Russian invasion. It was, however, somewhat of a losing battle. Then came the war. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared a fightback against oligarchs and claimed their assets under the pretense of the ongoing war.**

Since early November, five strategic companies have been taken over by the

state, including airplane turbine and helicopter engine maker Motor Sich and Ukrnafta, which





SOURCE: УЧАСТЬ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ У ЦЕРЕМОНІЇ ВРУЧЕННЯ ДЕРЖАВНИХ НАГОРОД З НАГОДИ ДНЯ ГІДНОСТІ ТА СВОБОДИ І ДНЯ ДЕСАНТНО-ШТУРМОВИХ ВІЙСЬК — ОФІЦІЙНЕ ІНТЕРНЕТ-ПРЕДСТАВНИЦТВО ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ (PRESIDENT.GOV.UA)

is Ukraine's biggest oil producer. Companies are now under the control of the defense ministry while the owners would either see the assets returned to them or receive compensation after the war. Top Ukrainian officials argue the measures were not nationalizations because state control would be temporary and is designed to support the wartime economy battered by Russia's military assaults. Ukraine's National Securities and Stock Market Commission issued an order to seize corporate assets under September legislation on the forceful takeover of companies during martial law or the state of emergency, as issued by President Volodymyr Zelensky, who also serves as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Those who held

majority stakes in these companies were Ihor Kolomoisky, Hennadiy Boholubov, Vyacheslav Boguslayev, and Kostyantyn Zhevago. "Such steps, necessary for our state in times of war, are carried out in accordance with current laws and will help meet the urgent needs of our defense sector," according to President Volodymyr Zelensky. German Galushchenko, Ukraine's energy minister, told Financial Times that Kyiv would take more companies under state control if they did not fully back the war effort. Ukrainian parliament extended martial law and mobilization in Ukraine until February 19, 2023. This provides the government with an additional asset in favor of further corporate takeovers. ■





SOURCE: ВСТРЕЧА С МАТЕРЯМИ ВОЕННОСЛУЖАЩИХ – УЧАСТНИКОВ  
СВО • ПРЕЗИДЕНТ РОССИИ (KREMLIN.RU)

26 November 2022

## RUSSIAN ARMY INCURS HEAVY LOSSES IN UKRAINE

**It is now known why back in September Putin announced a partial mobilization throughout Russia. He planned to add new soldiers just to stabilize the front somehow. The Russian military turned those forcefully deployed into “cannon fodder” to either hinder Ukrainian assaults or cripple their defensive positions.**

Putin seems to be approaching the Ukraine war with a mindset like Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, accepting mass casualties to win the war. What adds up is propaganda and cynicism—just like during the last world war.

An independent Russian outlet published an estimate of Russian losses next year. By the summer of next year, the number of killed in Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could be around 100,000, according to iStories. According to

the sources close to the FSB and the Russian army's General Staff, Russia's political and military leaders are under no illusions about the fact that their plan will entail heavy losses. By the spring of the next year, the number of soldiers killed and wounded could be around 120,000. Russian prisoners of war do not know any rules of the war. The Ukrainian army's General Staff released footage explaining to Russian soldiers how to surrender. The number of killed Russian soldiers is not surprising given who these mobilized troops were over the last two months. Some of them never served in the military, while others deemed unfit for duty. Many of the mobilized soldiers died in fighting near Svatove in the Luhansk region and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region. Desperate

families of conscripts complain about the poor conditions facing their loved ones. As anger over the drawn-out invasion simmers in Russia, President Vladimir Putin met with a handpicked cadre of mothers of soldiers fighting in Ukraine for a carefully staged meeting. To what extent might the two following issues damage the whole propaganda message? First, it is about Putin's behavior. At the meeting quite unexpectedly, Putin told the women that everyone would die eventually. Approximately 30,000 people die in traffic accidents, and roughly the same from alcohol every year, he told mourning mothers. But these were not mourning mothers but Russian officials and clerks, carefully chosen for the meeting. ■

26 November 2022

## RUSSIA ENCOUNTERS SOME SETBACKS IN SYRIA

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**The Russian military situation in Syria has become far more tense and complex due to three reasons. Firstly, Russia ordered the withdrawal of some of its troops despite its promise to back the al-Assad regime. Secondly, Turkey began targeting positions in the Russian-controlled region of Syria. Thirdly, Israeli forces have launched a bold campaign to target Syrian facilities linked to both Iran and Russia.**

Turkey launched a series of deadly airstrikes across Iraq and northern Syria in retaliation for last week's bomb attack in Istanbul. Yet it seemed that the authorities in Ankara had to bear Moscow's opinion in mind. Turkish military forces have repeatedly

attacked Kurdish groups such as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara considers terrorist organizations. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told his Russian counterpart in a call on November 24 that Ankara would continue



SOURCE: VLADIMIR PUTIN VISITED SYRIA • PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA (KREMLIN.RU)

attacking Kurdish positions throughout Syria. Earlier Russian officials had urged Turkey to limit the duration and scale of its cross-border military incursion into Syria. Russia has been against the Turkish invasion on the ground. However, Erdogan has for months threatened a fresh ground offensive against the YPG. In recent weeks Russia has increased military activity in Syria. Russia has recently escalated its attacks in areas of Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, which is the last major stronghold controlled by forces opposed to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. This is not yet a Syrian and Russian

offensive against Idlib rebels, but rather a clear signal to Moscow. What further complicates the Russian military posture in Syria is the heightened military activity of Israel. Israeli air strikes killed two Syrian soldiers and wounded three, slamming into the Shayrat Air Base close to the western city of Homs, often used by Russian air forces. It featured a warehouse for Iranian militias and Hezbollah. Israel has intensified strikes on Syrian airports to disrupt Tehran's increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms to allies in Syria and Lebanon including Hezbollah. ■





SOURCE: ROSNEFT.RU [HTTPS://WWW.ROSNEFT.RU/PRESS/PHOTOGALLERY/PERERABOTKA\\_I\\_SBIT/BUNKEROVKA/](https://www.rosneft.ru/press/photogallery/pererabotka_i_sbit/bunkeroverka/)

27 November 2022

## **RUSSIA, WEST LOCKED IN CRUDE WAR AMID PRICE CAP AND SANCTIONS**

The Kremlin is drafting a presidential decree that will prohibit Russian companies and any traders buying the nation's oil from selling it to anyone that participates in a price cap, according to Bloomberg. The decree will forbid dealings with both companies and countries that join the price-cap mechanism. Meanwhile, a new date for EU talks is yet to be set even though the price cap mechanism is due to enter into force on December 5.

A few months ago, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen suggested that her European counterparts embrace measures designed to enforce a price cap on Russian seaborne oil shipments. The U.S., the EU, and other nations seek to trim the oil income available to the Kremlin that funds its war in Ukraine. At the same time, they make efforts not to boost global oil prices. European Union states debated what a price cap a barrel should be set on exports of Russian crude oil, as reported by Politico and Bloomberg on November 24. The EU's executive arm proposed a level of \$65 a barrel, which some nations rejected as being too generous to Moscow, failing to take a final decision on November 23. Poland and the Baltic states urged that a price cap on Russian seaborne oil be set at \$30 per barrel. Greece, which gains substantial profits from handling oil, says the cost of Russian seaborne oil should be capped at more than \$70 per barrel. Initially, the discussed price cap ranged between \$40 and \$60 per barrel. Yet in late October, as reported by Bloomberg, U.S. officials debated whether to set a price cap for Russian oil exports above \$60 a barrel. According to The Wall Street Journal, the EU considered imposing a price cap ranging between \$60 and \$70. The bloc needs a unanimous agreement on the price for it to take effect. The G-7 and Australia are aiming

to approve the cap soon after the EU. A new EU sanctions package will enter into force on December 5 to introduce price caps on Russian seaborne oil shipments. If EU nations fail to strike a deal, from December 5 on, the bloc will ban banks from financing the purchase and sale of Russian oil, insurance companies from insuring shipments, and ports from unloading oil transported by tanker. Consequently, global oil prices might soar rapidly. The sanctions will ban seaborne imports of Russian crude oil as of December 5, while pipelines are exempt from sanctions. Meanwhile, Poland pledged to stop buying Russian oil by the end of this year. That presents a problem for Polish refiner PKN Orlen that has a long-term deal to purchase Russian oil via the pipeline and would need to pay penalties to break the contract. According to Reuters, Poland is seeking German support to slap EU sanctions on the Polish-German section of the Druzhba crude pipeline so Warsaw can abandon a deal to buy Russian oil next year without paying penalties. Germany could have an interest in sanctioning the Polish-German section of the pipeline to unlock crude flows from Gdańsk to a refinery in Schwedt, and further to Berlin. In September, Germany put the refinery, which had been controlled by Russia's Rosneft, under a six-month trusteeship. ■





SOURCE: ГД МОЖЕТ ПЕРЕФОРМАТИРОВАТЬ ПРОВЕДЕНИЕ «ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫХ ЧАСОВ»  
(DUMA.GOV.RU)

27 November 2022

## RUSSIAN STATE DUMA APPROVES BILL TO BAN “LGBT PROPAGANDA”

Russian lawmakers passed a new law that bans what authorities call “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations.” The proposals prohibit sharing positive and even neutral information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and publicly displaying non-heterosexual orientations, referred to as “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, pedophilia, and sex change.” It is yet another element of the state narrative in which Moscow pushes conservative values.



Lawmakers say they are defending traditional values of the “Russian world” against a liberal West they say is determined to destroy them, an argument also increasingly being used by officials to convince some circles in the West. With the new law, the regime is continuing a years-long crackdown on the country’s embattled LGBT community. A similar law was adopted by the Kremlin in 2013 in an effort to promote “traditional values” in Russia. This year, lawmakers moved to ban spreading such information to people aged 18 and older. Lawyers and human rights campaigners say the law will criminalize any act or public mention of the LGBT community. Lawmakers rejected an amendment that provided for criminal liability for recidivism. The new bill outlaws all advertising, media, and online resources books, films and theater productions deemed to contain such “propaganda.” Individuals who spread or attempt to distribute what the bill calls “LGBT propaganda” will risk fines ranging between 50,000 and 400,000 rubles. Legal entities face fines ranging between 800,000 and 5 million rubles. Foreigners can be deported, according to the bill. The federal communications regulator Roskomnadzor now has the authority and responsibility to monitor all kinds of information in search of LGBT propaganda. Authorities will be able to block websites that contain prohibited information

and refuse to provide special certificates to films that mentioned LGBT topics. As it often happens in Putin’s Russia, the vagueness of the bill’s language gives room for law enforcers to interpret them as broadly as they wish. Some publishers say up to half of the books could be affected and thus removed from sale under the new legislation. The new legislation vaguely defines “propaganda”, which could prohibit any, also neutral, reference to the LGBT+ community. What makes the whole situation more unclear is the distinction between “propaganda” and “demonstration.” Lawmakers cited an example of pride parades. Advertising, books, and films with positive presentations of LGBT people will be the “demonstration” of LGBT behavior, and if not—these will be labeled as propaganda. “Non-traditional relationships” could be featured only in paid VOD platforms unless the user enters a special code to confirm their age. If not, such content will be prohibited. LGBT campaigners say the new legislation, just like the previous one that had outlawed only promotion of LGBT lifestyles aimed at children, would apply selectively. The controversial law was nicknamed the “Answer to Blinken” law, after the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken criticized it as a blow to freedom of expression on the eve of the third and final reading by the State Duma. ■



SOURCE: DUMA.GOV.RU

28 November 2022

# **WILL SANCTIONS FORCE RUSSIA TO RETHINK ITS OIL PRODUCTION MODEL?**

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Russian oil companies should invest more in developing smaller oil fields, according to Gennady Shmal, head of the Union of Russian Oil and Gas Producers. What might follow is a change in conditions for the benefit of small oil producers. Naturally, the Russian authorities did not become aware of their preferential treatment of large oil conglomerates, including tax breaks. Small companies were brought to the fore as the Russian energy sector is struggling amid sanctions imposed following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

“ Our task is to develop small and shallow oil fields. Our oil production now ranges between 45 and 50 million tons each year, while we should and we can produce up to 150 million tons,” Shmal told the conference on current challenges for the oil and gas sectors. He also added that the focus has shifted to small and shallow oilfields as Russia has recently discovered recoverable oil deposits that carry some 1 million tons. Shmal believes it is a task for small oil companies. To a great surprise, he added that the United States has followed the same production scheme. “Some 48 percent of U.S. oil is being produced by small companies. They also tackled the issue of shale gas and oil. No big company has managed to do that,” he said. Russian oil firms are well aware that there are no longer such rich oil deposits as the Samotlor oil field. Indeed, Russia has considerable deposits in the Arctic but Western sanctions are preventing it from extracting oil and gas from that area. Perhaps this is why Shmal urged petty oil producers to develop

smaller fields that attract no interest from large companies. Those small oil producers urge the government to improve their conditions by aligning mineral extraction tax to their total output. So far these have been essentially large corporations that reaped benefits. In his address, Shmal expressed what small producers actually think about. Whether this might affect the state’s energy policy remains unknown. In its annual World Oil Outlook report, OPEC said Russian oil and condensate output is likely to fall by 2027, followed by a slight increase by 2030. Russia will see a decrease in its oil output figures amid the Western embargo on oil, fears of possible sanctions, and a weak internal market. This is followed by a slight increase amid some Russian investments, including Vostok Oil, Russia’s major energy project in Siberia. But it is not known to what extent Vostok Oil, a brainchild of Rosneft’s Igor Sechin, will face setbacks without Western cash and imported technology as well as amid budget cuts for new infrastructure facilities in Russia’s Far North. ■

28 November 2022

## BULGARIA LETS RUSSIAN OIL REFINERY EXPORT DESPITE EU BAN

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**Bulgaria’s government and Lukoil Neftochim Bulgaria have agreed that the country’s Black Sea refinery continues operating and exporting oil products to the EU until the end of 2024. This should provide a major boost to the Bulgarian budget. The deal makes Bulgaria a base for partially avoiding the European oil embargo.**





SOURCE: LUKOIL – GENERAL INFORMATION

The Bulgarian government and the Russian owner of Lukoil Neftochim Bulgaria have agreed to change the company's business model and keep the profits from its operations in Bulgaria, which will seriously increase the taxes it pays. The government in Sofia intends to cancel a decree that prohibits the export of fuels produced by the Russian refinery in Bulgaria after December 5. The Balkan country's sole refinery is the main source of gasoline and diesel fuel sold on the Bulgarian market, but half of the production is for export. It contributes some 9 percent of the country's economic output and employs several thousand people. In 2021 Lukoil Neftochim Burgas paid some €1.75 million in tax to the Bulgarian budget. From January 1, 2023, Lukoil will transfer all production, revenues,

and taxes to be paid in Bulgaria. The deal will give an additional €350 million boost to Bulgaria's budget. The intermediary company in the oil trade for Bulgaria is the Swiss-registered company Litasco, which is a majority shareholder in Lukoil Neftochim Bulgaria. So far, it has paid taxes in the Netherlands and Switzerland, according to Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Hristo Alexiev. From now on, taxes will be paid in Bulgaria. The deal also benefits Lukoil, allowing its Bulgarian facility to partially avoid an upcoming EU embargo on most Russian oil products. Once the ban is lifted, the petrochemical output will be considered EU-made, which allows for its exportation. But for that consent from the Bulgarian government, Lukoil says it will shut down the refinery. ■



SOURCE: (3) ГЕНЕРАЛЬНИЙ ШТАБ ЗСУ (@GENERALSTAFFUA) / TWITTER

28 November 2022

## RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE AT A STANDSTILL

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**The nature and tempo of the Russian war have not changed in recent weeks. The last major operation was the retreat of Russian forces from the western bank of the Dnieper River. Now wintry warfare looms in Ukraine while soaked steppes prevent both sides from launching an assault. But as winter is approaching, where potential attacks could now take place?**

**T**he overall pace of operations along the frontline has slowed in recent days due to deteriorating weather conditions including torrential autumn rains that swamped large swaths of steppes in Ukraine's south and southeast. As winter edges ever closer, frozen

soil will foster more intense operations with the use of vehicles and heavy weapons. Fighting may intensify in the first week of December. Where exactly? Indeed, Ukrainian forces will continue the further effort to liberate more of the country's territory. More fighting is



expected to take place between Svatove and Kreminna in the Luhansk region. Once successful, this operation could force the Russians to retreat towards the east, pose a threat to fighting in the Donetsk region, and allow further efforts to liberate much of the Luhansk region, including the areas Russia has occupied since 2014 and 2015. Meanwhile, Russia seems to push toward territorial gains in the Donetsk region through more assaults in the direction of Bakhmut and Avdiivka. Russia is adding more forces in the direction of Lyman and Novopavlivka. Perhaps Russia is planning to unfold a bigger assault in the province of Donetsk to take the lead for the first time since summer, seeking to shut out

Ukraine's military success in Iziium, Lyman, or in the Kharkiv region. If Russia throws its top marine infantry and airborne troops there from Kherson, it could undermine other directions where Ukrainian forces either conduct offensive operations or might launch them. Some crucial fighting might take place in Zaporizhzhia. Ukraine might seek to cut Russia off Crimea by targeting Melitopol, which could be why Russia is in a rush to form a grouping there. The Russians could expect a Ukrainian assault in the province of Zaporizhzhia. The head of Ukraine's state-run nuclear energy firm said there were signs that Russian forces might be preparing to leave the vast Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. ■

## 29 November 2022

# CSTO SUMMIT IN YEREVAN WAS BITTER PILL FOR PUTIN

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**The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit in Yerevan ended sourly as Armenia refused to sign a draft declaration due to the absence of a political assessment of Azerbaijan's aggression against the territorial integrity of Armenia. This is yet another sign of Russia's loosening grip on former Soviet republics.**

Six countries – Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia – comprise the CSTO. The November 23–24 meeting also summed up the results of Armenia's chairmanship at CSTO. Belarus will be the next to chair the organization, which is highly unpopular in Armenia. Aleksandr Lukashenko has long leaned towards Azerbaijan and recently gained renewed notoriety for calling Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev “our man” and threatening Armenia if it does not sign a peace agreement soon with Azerbaijan.

It was announced at the summit that Kazakh politician Imanghali Tasmaghambetov would replace Belarusian politician Stanislau Zas at the post of secretary-general of the CSTO. The 65-year-old Tasmaghambetov, who has been known as one of the most loyal people to Kazakhstan's former President Nursultan Nazarbaev, used to serve as Kazakhstan's prime minister, deputy prime minister, mayor of the Kazakh capital, Astana, and the country's largest city, Almaty. His last official position was ambassador to Russia, the position he





SOURCE: САММИТ ОДКБ • ПРЕЗИДЕНТ РОССИИ (KREMLIN.RU)

held before he announced his retirement in 2019. However, Armenia's attitude at the summit overshadowed his appointment as the secretary general. Pashinian said during the summit that he was not ready to sign draft documents regarding "joint measures on providing assistance to Armenia" that he said did not address Yerevan's concerns regarding the CSTO's political position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. "Under these conditions, the lack of a clear political assessment of the situation and the failure to make the above decision may not only mean the CSTO's refusal from allied obligations but may also be interpreted by Azerbaijan as a green light from the CSTO for further aggression against Armenia," Pashinian said at the summit. Speaking at the CSTO summit in Yerevan, Pashinian called fellow countries to take political action against Azerbaijan's movements that Yerevan considered aggression. The Armenian prime minister argued other CSTO nations had to persuade Azerbaijan to withdraw troops from Armenia because otherwise

"it may mean that the CSTO withdraws from its allied commitments." The CSTO summit corroborated worsening ties between Russia and Armenia. The meeting was the Russian leader's first visit to Yerevan since 2019. During his meeting with Putin, Pashinian raised the issue of honoring agreements that Armenia and Azerbaijan have reached through the Russian president's mediation. In his remarks at the summit, the Russian leader said that a meeting between the leaders of Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in Sochi, Russia, on October 31 and their joint statement afterward created "a good basis for future compromises" between Yerevan and Baku. Putin said that only through the consistent implementation of agreements on border delimitation, unblocking of transport links, and solutions to humanitarian problems will it be possible to achieve normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. "We hope that this will eventually pave the way for a peace treaty between Yerevan and Baku," Putin said.. ■





SOURCE: GAZPROM [HTTPS://MEDIA.GAZPROM-NEFT.RU/PICTURES/PRODUCTION/CATEGORY534/CATEGORY1495/DJI\\_0259-NEBO2.JPG.HTM](https://media.gazprom-neft.ru/pictures/production/category534/category1495/dji_0259-nebo2.jpg.htm)

29 November 2022

## LUKOIL BECOMES GAZPROM NEFT'S PARTNER IN JOINT VENTURE WITH REPSOL

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The Russian energy market is seeing further reshuffles as Western companies quit the country, with domestic firms taking over their assets. Among those Russian companies is Lukoil, a privately run oil producer. Business decisions seem to have a political, rather than a financial background. Russia's oil giant Lukoil has taken over assets in joint ventures between Western firms and Russian state-run companies.

Since November 23, Meretoyakhaneftgaz, a joint venture between Gazprom Neft and Lukoil created back in February, has been the management company of Evrotek-Yugra, which develops the respective blocks in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous District. Evrotek-Yugra was a joint venture between Gazprom Neft and Spain's Repsol. The Spanish energy company quit the asset. Gazprom Neft purchased 50 percent of Evrotek-Yugra from Repsol at the end of 2021. Evrotek-Yugra was prospecting and appraisal licenses for the Sverdlovsky, Kileysky, Karabashsky-3, and Karabashsky-9 blocks, respectively; as well as holds two mining licenses for Karabashsky-1 and Karabashsky-2, where the project's key asset, the Ervie field, formerly Ourinskoye, with recoverable oil reserves of around 34 million tons, is located. Production has not begun, though Gazprom Neft is already preparing for development. Evrotek-Yugra is now a new enterprise among

Gazprom Neft's Russian assets to include Lukoil as a partner. In 2021, Gazprom Neft and Lukoil created the first 50-percent parity joint venture at Meretoyakhaneftgaz to develop the large Tazovskoye field in Yamal. Earlier Lukoil had seized other Western assets in Russia, which were Shell retail stations throughout Russia. The Federal Antimonopoly Service approved the sale of 99.9 percent shares of Shell Neft, the British energy giant's subsidiary in Russia, to Lukoil. The deal comes with a few caveats purportedly aimed at a fair competition. Some of the conditions are a regular sale of refined products by Lukoil at the commodity exchange and limiting the purchase of refined products to the exchange's main session of bidding. Shell Neft owns 411 retail stations that are mainly located in Russia's Central and Northwestern federal districts, as well as the Torzhok lubricants blending plant in the Twersk region. ■

## 30 November 2022

# RUSSIA, ALGERIA FORGE CLOSE MILITARY PARTNERSHIP

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**Algeria is forging ever-growing military ties with Russia through joint military drills and substantial arms supply deals. Moscow has many assets that attract Algeria while collaboration with Algeria solidifies Russian influence in northern Africa.**

The joint anti-terrorist drills dubbed Desert Shield were launched in late November at the Hammaguir testing ground in Bechar Province near the border with Morocco. According to the Algerian defense ministry, the exercises involved 200 soldiers from Russia and Algeria. Russian forces included mostly

airborne and motorized infantry troops. Algeria is one of Russia's most important military allies on the African continent and also one of the largest regional customers for its weapons. The 2023 finance bill drawn up by the Algerian government in early October provides for a 130 percent increase





SOURCE: УНИЧТОЖЕНИЕ УСЛОВНОГО ПРОТИВНИКА ВОЕННОСЛУЖАЩИМИ ЦВО НА УЧЕНИИ «КОБАЛТ-2021» В ТАДЖИКИСТАНЕ : МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБОРОНЫ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ (XN--90ANLFBEBAR6I.XN--P1AI)

in the country's military budget, to \$22.6 billion. The strategic rapprochement between Russia and Algeria has risen during Vladimir Putin's tenure, in particular after Abdelmadjid Tebboune came to power in Algeria. In early November, Algeria informed that it planned to secure a huge contract with Russia to get arms supplies worth \$12-17 billion in the next ten years. The agreement is set to be signed during an expected visit by Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to Moscow in December.

Algerian officers are especially keen to acquire submarines, Su-57 stealth aircraft, Su-34 bombers, and Su-30 fighters. Algeria also hopes to acquire new air defense systems, such as the S-400. This military transfer has made Algeria the third largest recipient of Russian arms in the world. In early November Algeria submitted an official application to join the emerging-market bloc of BRICS, which groups Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, a sign of the country's pro-Russian sympathies. ■



SOURCE: СЛУЖБА ВНЕШНЕЙ РАЗВЕДКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ (SVR.GOV.RU)

30 November 2022

## CIA CHIEF WARNS RUSSIA'S SVR DIRECTOR

Occasional high-level contacts between the United States and Russia are essentially due to Washington's concerns over Moscow's far-reaching movements in its war with Ukraine. The meeting between the director of the CIA and the head of the SVR foreign intelligence agency is part of the U.S. policy alongside the talks that took place beforehand between the U.S. national security advisor, the secretary of defense, and their Russian counterparts.

CIA Director Bill Burns met with his Russian intelligence counterpart, Sergey Naryshkin, in Ankara in mid-November. The meeting was hosted by Turkey's intelligence

agency, MIT. Burns also raised in his meeting the matter of Americans detained in Russia. According to The New York Times, the meeting was not an attempt to negotiate with Russia

over the end of the war as American officials have repeatedly insisted no peace talks will be conducted without the involvement of Ukraine's government. The United States had briefed Ukraine on the meeting in advance of Burns' trip. Burns then traveled to Kyiv to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his intelligence counterparts. The U.S. official made also a trip to Warsaw to meet Polish President Andrzej Duda. While in Kyiv, Burns reiterated U.S. support to Ukraine and passed some information on the meeting with Naryshkin. The U.S. foreign spy chief delivered a message to Russia's Naryshkin about the consequences of a potential Russian use of nuclear weapons. Burns' trip to Kyiv coincided with the biggest Russian missile attack on Ukraine since February 24. The meeting in

Ankara was the first known high-level face-to-face U.S.-Russian contact since Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The discussions are part of the Biden administration's efforts to step up its communications with senior Russian officials to convey concerns about the nuclear threat. Reports that Russian generals debated whether to deploy tactical nuclear weapons raised concerns in Washington back in October when the Kremlin accused Ukraine of planning to use a so-called dirty bomb. In October U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin had talks twice with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu about Russian threats to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan held some phone calls with his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev. ■

## 30 November 2022

# RUSSIA DOUBLED PIPED GAS SUPPLIES TO CHINA

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**From January to October 2022, Russia sent \$3.1 billion worth of piped natural gas to China, a 182 percent increase from 2021, the General Administration of Customs of China reported.**

**T**urkmenistan was the key supplier of natural gas to China—from January to October 2022, it delivered \$8.23 billion worth of gas, up 53 percent from last year. Russia came in second, followed by Myanmar (\$1.13 billion, down 2.6 percent). Kazakhstan ranked fourth (\$996.5 million, up 15.2 percent), while Uzbekistan closed the top five list, with \$916.7 million worth of gas, up 52.5 percent. Russian

pipeline gas supplies to China climbed 2.54-fold in 2021 to over 7.53 mln tons worth \$1.51 bln, marking a 2.37-fold increase. Back in September, China put into operation a new section of the pipeline to bring Russian gas flows through the Russia-to-China Power of Siberia natural gas pipeline. The Chinese section of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline linking Anping in the Hebei province and Taian in the Shandong





SOURCE: ЦЕРЕМОНИЯ СОЕДИНЕНИЯ ПЕРВОГО ЗВЕНА ГАЗОПРОВОДА «СИЛА СИБИРИ» (2014) – СИЛА СИБИРИ — ВИКИПЕДИЯ (WIKIPEDIA.ORG)

province was put into operation on September 16. The Anping-Taian section is an important part of the 320-kilometer natural gas pipeline connected to Russia's Power of Siberia pipeline. Its capacity is about 18.9 bcm of natural gas per year. Construction of the section started in

October 2020. Both Russia and Gazprom will make settlements in roubles and yuan. The two have signed additional contracts to the long-term gas sales agreement via the eastern route. Notably, both sides agreed to switch payments for gas supplies to China to yuan and roubles. ■

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The Warsaw Institute Foundation  
Wilcza 9 St., 00-538 Warsaw, Poland  
+48 22 417 63 15  
[office@warsawinstitute.org](mailto:office@warsawinstitute.org)

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