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SOURCE: ГЕНЕРАЛЬНИЙ ШТАБ ЗСУ (@GENERALSTAFFUA) / TWITTER

7 December 2022

THE BATTLE FOR BAKHMUT: RUSSIA DID NOT LEARN A LESSON

Russia has thrown many troops and matériel into battle for a mid-sized city in the Donetsk region, an effort that resembles its strategy a couple of months ago in Severodonetsk. Ukraine has seemingly put a lot of effort into defending Bakhmut to involve as many Russian troops as possible. Losing a strategically insignificant city could be worth further advances, also in the Zaporizhzhia region.

The eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut is now seeing a fierce Russian assault as Russian troops left the western bank of the Dnieper River while Ukrainian forces slowed down battlefield advance along Svatove and Kreminna in the Luhansk region. Bakhmur lies south of the Luhansk region and north of Avdiivka, a major Russian battlefield spot

west of Donetsk. Moscow has thrown masses of troops and matériel into battle to capture Bakhmut, a small city in the Donetsk region that had a population of 70,000 people before Russia's invasion. Since May, it has been targeted by a blizzard of Russian missiles. Yet Russian forces have made little progress in the embattled eastern city of Ukraine. The

eastern reaches of Bakhmut lie some 25 km away from the demarcation line between the Kyiv-controlled area and territories Russia seized back in 2014. Consequently, Russia failed to make considerable battlefield advances since February. The situation near Bakhmut is stably difficult for Ukraine as the numbers of Ukrainian wounded and dead are steep. But Russian troops are now far from encircling the city. Russian forces have managed to capture several villages to the south of Bakhmut. But their efforts to flank the city are somewhat futile as supply routes run north and west of Bakhmut. Russian troops stalled there despite their artillery advantage. Russia has also serious problems with its military personnel whose quality has not been high. The Russians have continued to throw formations from Wagner

Group, an infamous paramilitary organization with direct ties to the Kremlin, at Ukrainian trenches. Many of them die in frontal attacks, but the numerical advantage is slowly producing the desired result. Ukrainian forces will remain in Bakhmut as long as possible and then possibly withdraw as it was the case in Severodonetsk. Kyiv is now seeking to inflict severe losses on Russia near Bakhmut. Indeed, Russian forces are likely continuing to falsify claims of advances in the Bakhmut area to portray themselves as making gains that are yet of scarce strategic importance. Both Sloviansk and Kramatorsk seem safe as so does the right wing of the Ukrainian military that advances in the Luhansk region--the Russians are now unable to launch an assault at least until next April and May. ■

14 December 2022

TURKEY'S ERDOGAN PUTS PRESSURE ON PUTIN IN SYRIA

Turkey has taken advantage of Russia's uneasy situation amid its invasion of Ukraine, seeking to force Moscow into a pile of political and economic concessions. One example of that is Turkish efforts to block Russian oil tankers. The government in Ankara seems to prioritize its gains in Syria, notably in its clash with Syrian Kurds.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart, President Vladimir Putin, on Sunday, December 11. The two leaders discussed the war in Ukraine. Turkey, meanwhile, has acted as a mediator, refusing to take sides.

On the same day, Erdogan held a phone call with Volodymyr Zelensky, a move seeking to emphasize Turkey's symmetrical approach to the war. Putin and Erdogan also discussed an initiative to create a base in Turkey for exports of Russian natural gas, making Turkey a key gas



SOURCE: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OF TURKIYE RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN • PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA (KREMLIN.RU)

hub for Russian gas supplies to the EU. Alexei Miller, head of Russian energy giant Gazprom, held talks with Erdogan in Istanbul in the past week. Most importantly, the Turkish and Russian presidents discussed the situation in Syria. Turkey has renewed its threats of a new military offensive against Kurds, which is what both Russia and the United States denounce. Erdogan has called for a 30-kilometer “safe zone” to protect southern Turkey against cross-border attacks from Syrian territory. Through this corridor, Ankara would push away the Syrian Kurdish militia YPG, whom Turkey has designated a terrorist organization, from the border. At the same, the militia is the core of the SDF coalition involved in anti-Daesh operations with the support of the United States. What

Erdogan suggested could be an attempt to reverse Turkey’s retaliation efforts to conduct a land incursion after a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul back on November 13. Russia has for years sought to prevent Turkish ground incursions in Syria, positioning itself as an ally of both Kurds and the Damascus-based Assad regime. The rebel-held enclave of Idlib is critical in this game. Pressured by Turkey, Russian forces seek to stop a Syrian offensive there. Turkish threats yet seem idle now as forces loyal to Assad could launch an invasion of Idlib, which is possibly a Russian threat to Erdogan. What probably follows is more air strikes against Kurdish positions throughout Syria. ■



SOURCE: GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE
[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PHOTO?FBID=482144814098602&-
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16 December 2022

RUSSIA SEEKS TO PREVENT NEW UKRAINIAN ASSAULT

A new Ukrainian ground assault is just a matter of time. The coming winter may provide Ukraine with more opportunities to retake land from Russia, with more matériel to be sent to the front. Concerns are mounting that Belarusian troops could join Russia's forces in Ukraine from the north. But it is just a bluff, according to the United States, NATO, and Ukraine. Ukraine has more efficient air defense systems to shoot down Russian drones and missiles.

On December 14, Russia launched a failed drone assault on Kyiv. As a blizzard of Russian drone and missile strikes is damaging Ukraine, the country can strengthen its defense systems every single day. Since Washington is allegedly planning to deliver Patriot air defense missiles to Ukraine, Kyiv will benefit from more advanced and sophisticated weapons to protect the territory. Russian missile and drone attacks is the only advantage over Ukraine as Russian forces perform poorly on the ground. They stalled following successful Ukrainian assaults that pushed the Russians from Kharkiv and the right bank of the Dnieper River last summer and fall. Autumn rain, and resulting thick mud, have slowed the pace of battle and caused difficulties in moving military equipment. After Ukraine claimed Kherson and the western section of the region, both Russians and Ukrainians rushed to move their forces elsewhere along the front, notably to Donbas. Nothing has changed much there for the last two months. Battling mud and newly mobilized Russian reinforcements, Ukrainian forces are advancing slowly into occupied Luhansk. In the city of Bakhmut in the east, Russia continues to seize ground as it loses it elsewhere. Thus its forces are waging an intense campaign to dislodge Ukrainian troops from the city. Russia now focuses on “achieving the main goal, the liberation of Donbas,” or the two regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, where many troops were transferred from Kherson. It is a futile attempt as efforts

to seize Bakhmut might turn into lengthy bloodshed for Russia. Meanwhile, it appears that Ukraine may want to tie up as much of the enemy's forces and attention as possible in Donbas in order to carry out its next offensive quite elsewhere. Intensified artillery shelling in the Zaporizhzhya region suggests that it might soon see a Ukrainian assault. If this happens, Russian-controlled areas will be split in two, cutting off part of the Kherson region and Crimea, including supplies to these territories. A key objective for Kyiv in the region might be the southern city of Melitopol, strategically situated at the intersection of expressways and railway lines linking Russia to Crimea and Kherson. The Ukrainians already pursued a strategy of weakening Russian forces with artillery fire before launching a ground assault in Kherson. Geographical location is not to the Russian liking: there are neither rivers nor densely built-up areas as in Donbas. Fearing a Ukrainian assault within the next two months amid favorable weather conditions and poor performance of Russian troops, Moscow is making all possible efforts to delay such an offensive. Hence reports that Belarus' troops are on the move toward Ukraine. Their alleged strike on Volhynia is yet unlikely to crush Ukrainian defensive efforts. But this might be about involving the biggest Ukrainian battalion possible to distract it from the southern section of the front. ■



SOURCE: SOVCOMFLOT [HTTP://SOVCOMFLOT.RU/PRESS_OFFICE/GALLERY/PHOTO/12/](http://sovcomfлот.ru/press_office/gallery/photo/12/)

16 December 2022

RUSSIA TO SELL PETROLEUM PRODUCTS TO PAKISTAN AMID SAUDI FEARS

As the European Union introduced a ban on Russian oil, Moscow is diverting its crude from Europe to Asia. Now Russia will sell its crude to Pakistan. Moscow's recent moves have deepened Saudi Arabia's anxiety as the country has been the biggest oil supplier regionwide.

Pakistan said that Russia had decided to export crude oil, gasoline, and diesel to the South Asian nation at discounted prices. Deputy Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik shared the details at a news conference in Islamabad after visiting Moscow last week

where he met with his Russian counterparts. "The discounted rate will be the same as the rate being offered to other countries in the world," Malik asserted. Malik said Pakistan was also interested in buying liquefied natural gas, or LNG, but that Russian state-owned

companies' supplies of the product are tight at present. Russia is in the process of installing new production units and has invited Pakistan to initiate talks on long-term contracts to buy LNG. Pakistan is yet another Asian state to purchase Russian-sourced hydrocarbons. Moscow will need to find new markets if it is to remain an oil and gas superpower, but its options are limited and include mostly Asian nations--to the great concern of Saudi Arabia. In October, Russia became India's top oil supplier, edging past the traditionally dominant supplier Saudi Arabia. India has become the second most important market for Saudi oil exports – after China. In Europe, Saudi oil is filling Russia's void. Russia's fossil fuel exports to the EU have seen a consistent decrease since Moscow invaded Ukraine. In addition, the European Union banned all seaborne Russian crude imports from December 5 so Moscow had no choice but to redirect its oil flows to India, China, and Turkey. In a nutshell, Russia

and Saudi Arabia--top OPEC+ states--have traded places in the market. Riyadh seems to be making more money as EU nations are in a desperate situation and thus are ready to pay more for oil. Russia has been selling oil to Asian nations at a discounted rate. Eventually, Russian could reap benefits to the detriment of Saudi Arabia. Europe has vowed to cut its reliance on Russian fossil fuels, unlike emerging Asian markets. Saudi Arabia does not want to be losing market share in the big growth markets of Asia. Saudi Arabia cut its January selling price for oil in Asia, a sign of concern about weak demand in the market, but also the potential for increased competition with Russia and a decline in global oil prices. Saudi Arabia is right to frown upon Russia as Moscow has pledged to cut oil output under an OPEC+ deal, raising the ire of Washington. This gives Russia money for its war in Ukraine while slashing revenues to the Saudi budget. How long will Saudi Arabia keep quiet about lower Russian oil prices? ■

19 December 2022

WILL BELARUS JOIN RUSSIAN WAR IN UKRAINE? POSSIBLY IN A MONTH

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on December 13 announced a snap military inspection, the latest in a burst of exercises that have prompted concern from neighboring Ukraine. Yet this is unlikely to happen now. Such alarming reports have proliferated in recent months.

Russian and Belarusian military movements seem unlikely to launch an assault southwards--rather than an attack, it looks like an information game to drag some Ukrainian forces out of the war theater in the south. The Russian objective is to stretch the front line as

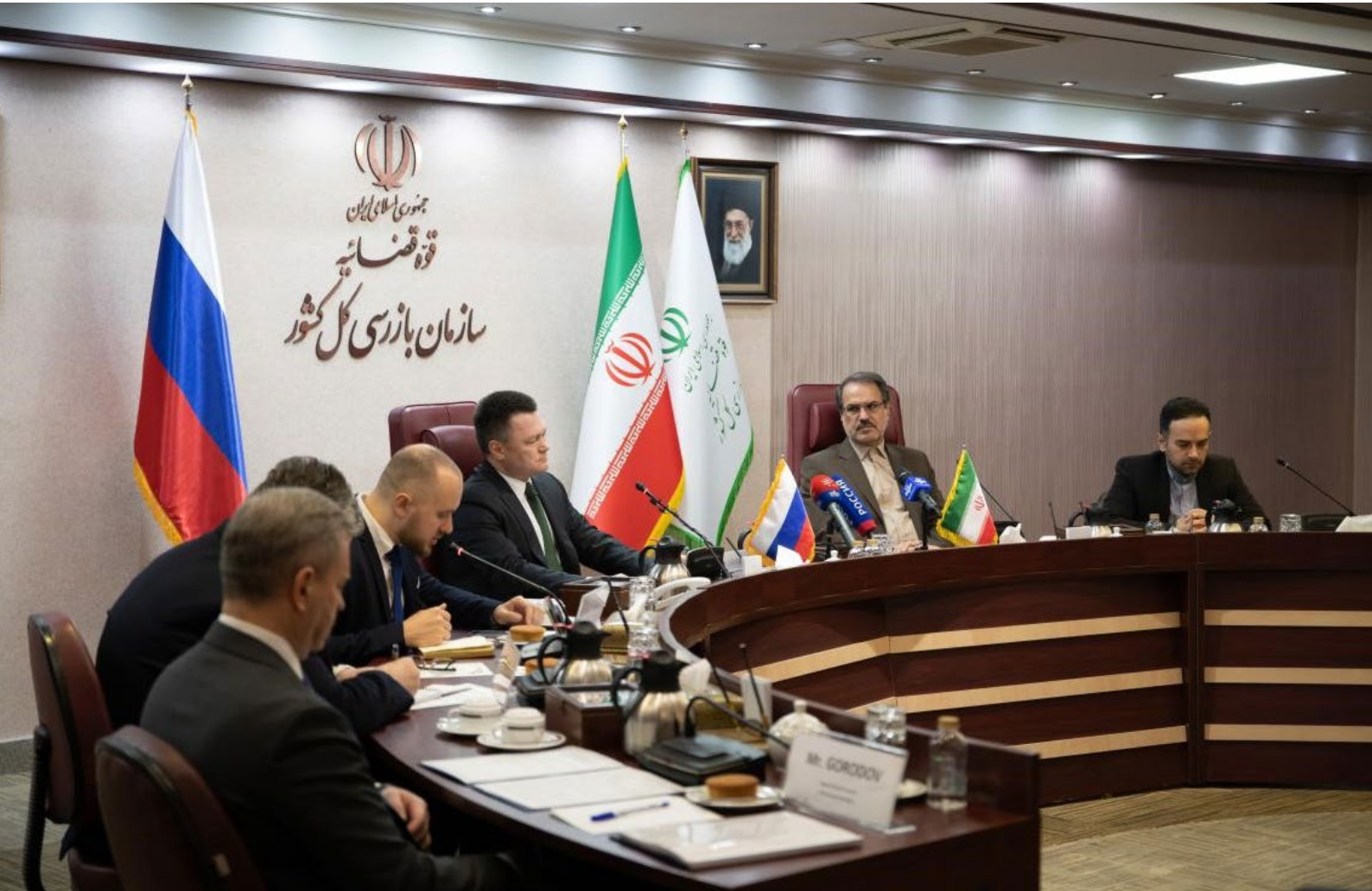
far as possible to prevent the Ukrainians from regrouping and launching a new assault. As Belarusian troops and some 12,000 Russian soldiers were moved to the Belarusian region of Brest, fears of a joint attack on western Ukraine mounted, with many claiming such



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION HT-TPS://XN-80AHCLCOGC6C14H.XN-90ANLFBEBAR6I.XN-P1AI/MULTIMEDIA/PHOTO/GALLERY.HTM?ID=119576@CMSPHOTOGALLERY

an assault could cut the country off Poland and related equipment supplies. Ukrainian and U.S. military officials commented on the matter immediately, saying a Russian attack from Belarus is not imminent at this time. The UK defense ministry said neither Belarusian troops that are now involved in drills nor mobilized troops sent to Belarus are capable of launching a successful attack on northern Ukraine. The head of the UK's armed forces said that Russia is losing in Ukraine as it faces a critical shortage of artillery munitions. However, Ukrainian officials began more urgently claiming there would be a renewed Russian assault from Belarus. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said

that at the turn of January and February it is possible for the enemy to launch a new large-scale offensive, the first in many months. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, head of Ukraine's armed forces, said that there will be a new offensive against Ukraine's capital by Russia in February or in March in a better-case scenario or even as soon as in January, worse enough for Kyiv. Perhaps enemy forces will enter from Belarus into Kyiv, Chief Commander Valerii Zaluzhnyi said in an interview with the Economist. But this incursion is not unlikely to happen as forces stationed north of Ukraine are far too modest. Yet thousands of freshly mobilized troops will be arriving in Ukraine and Belarus each day. ■



SOURCE: НОВОСТИ – ГЕНЕРАЛЬНАЯ ПРОКУРАТУРА РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ (GENPROC.GOV.RU)

20 December 2022

RUSSIA, IRAN FORGE SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Russia and Iran have stepped up their military and security cooperation. Moscow provides Tehran with training and anti-riot equipment in exchange for weapons and drones. Officials from both states hold working visits. After Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev had met with his Iranian counterpart, more senior Iranian and Russian military and law enforcement agencies officials have been involved in a whirlwind of meetings and talks.

Russia and Iran's relationship has warmed to a fully-fledged defense partnership, U.S. national security council spokesman John Kirby said on December 10. Iran and Russia are forging closer ties, united by a common

enemy and crackdown on their citizens. Russia's prosecutor general Igor Krasnov has made a trip to Iran, where he met the Iranian Judiciary's head Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei. Referring to the mechanisms being used in Russia to deal

with protests, Krasnov announced readiness to share these mechanisms with Tehran. Krasnov held talks with Zabihullah Khodaeian, the head of Iran's General Inspection Organization. Both officials signed a memorandum on judiciary cooperation between the two countries. Iran had asked Russia for help to quell the popular uprising by supplying anti-riot equipment and training. In addition, Tehran has supplied Russia with matériel for its war with Ukraine. Iran has for months sent combat drones to Russia and now is planning to equip Moscow with a Fateh-110 missile system. Britain's foreign

secretary James Cleverly said the Russian military will grow in the coming months, including with the supply of hundreds of ballistic missiles. Iran plans to limit the range of missiles sent to Russia so as not to violate a UN Security Council resolution. Russia's deputy defense minister, Alexander Fomin, visited Tehran with a military delegation on December 3, allegedly to discuss the matter. The Russian military official reportedly met with Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri. ■

20 December 2022

TOTALENERGIES, SHELL QUIT JOINT RUSSIAN ENERGY PROJECTS

Dozens of Europe's biggest companies have abandoned their operations in Russia. But regulations and deals in force slow down the procedure of quitting the country. Importantly, Western firms abandon joint projects with both state-run and private companies throughout Russia.

French oil giant TotalEnergies announced its decision to withdraw its representatives from the board of Russian gas company Novatek after it said it would walk away from Russian stakes back in March 2022. The French company said it cannot sell its 19.4 percent stake in the Russian firm as "it is forbidden for TotalEnergies to sell any asset to one of Novatek's main shareholders who is under sanction". TotalEnergies said in a statement that the two directors have had to

abstain from voting in board meetings due to the European sanctions. They are therefore no longer in a position to fully carry out their duties on the board that might become an issue for the governance of this company. Under these circumstances, the board of directors of TotalEnergies has decided to withdraw the representatives of the company from the board of Novatek with immediate effect. As a result, the criteria for significant influence no longer being met within the meaning of



SOURCE: ПАО НОВАТЭК ПРЕСС-ЦЕНТР : ФОТОГАЛЕРЕЯ (NOVATEK.RU)

the accounting regulations that apply to the company, TotalEnergies will no longer equity account for its 19.4 percent stake in Novatek in the company's accounts. This will lead to record an impairment of approximately \$3.7 billion in the accounts for the fourth quarter of 2022. Gazprom Neft subsidiary asks court to reverse order restricting the supermajor's rights to sell stake in the Salym joint venture in West Siberia. Consequently, the Russian firm could be eligible for purchasing shares. The court is set to convene on December 22 to consider and rule on the Salymskiye Proyektu

request. In August, a Russian court ruled that Salym Petroleum Development, a joint venture between Shell and Gazprom Neft, should be transferred to Russian jurisdiction. Gazprom Neft had asked to suspend its partner's right to vote at the shareholders' meeting or dispose of its shares by the end of 2023. In May, Shell ended an exploration partnership with Gazprom called Gydan. Salym Petroleum Development, established in 1996 is a joint venture between Gazprom Neft and Shell for the development of the Salym group of oil fields in Western Siberia.. ■



SOURCE: ПЛЕНАРНОЕ ЗАСЕДАНИЕ. «ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫЙ ЧАС» (14.12.2022) (DUMA.GOV.RU)

20 December 2022

RUSSIA'S STATE DUMA PASSES NEW SHOCKING BILL ON SABOTAGE

Putin's regime has continued its crackdown on citizens by introducing tighter laws on sabotage. Russia's State Duma, which is the lower house of the Russian parliament, has submitted a pile of bills on the country's war with Ukraine. On the one hand, Russia is tightening penalties for sabotage while seeking to waive criminal liability for crimes committed in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine until late September on the other.

The State Duma on December 14 passed in the first reading a bill against sabotage. The draft legislation makes disruptive and terrorist activities classified in Russia as “sabotage” punishable by up to between eight and twenty years or life in prison. The current law has entailed up to 15 years in prison. The act now includes the definition of “sabotage propaganda.” It should be understood as “the activity of disseminating materials and/or information designed to induce a person to engage in subversive activities.” The harsh bill has been unanimously supported by Russian State Duma members. The bill was submitted to the Russian parliament by 380 out of 450 deputies. The legislation is so vague that law enforcement officers can interpret it as broadly as they wish. Since the outbreak of the war,

Russian lawmakers have passed a raft of tight acts, including those on what they referred to as “foreign agents.” The proposed legislation would remove criminal liability for crimes on the occupied territories of Ukraine if they were committed to “defend the interests” of Russia. The bill refers to crimes committed on the territories of the self-proclaimed “LNR” and “DNR,” and in the occupied parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, before September 30 — the date the Kremlin formally annexed the Ukrainian territories. The draft law does not specify what, exactly, the “interests of the Russian Federation” means. The law also stipulates that the Russian state takes no responsibility for any damage caused to residents of the four regions mentioned before September 30. ■

21 December 2022

GAZPROM, ROSNEFT EMPLOYEES BANNED FROM LEAVING RUSSIA

Employees of Russian state-run oil and gas companies have been banned from leaving the country, according to independent Russian media outlets. Gazprom employees have seen the strictest ban as neither they nor their families are allowed to travel abroad. It is another chapter of Russia’s wartime communism strategy that seeks to align the state economy with its war machine. Likewise, the authorities hope to prevent senior energy officials from fleeing the country.

Employees of Russian state-owned oil and gas companies were “unofficially” banned from leaving Russia. The ban also applies to their closest relatives, including spouses and children, writes the Verstka portal with reference to sources in Gazprom and Rosneft.

At Gazprom, the ban covers all employees while only senior officials are not allowed to travel abroad at Rosneft. A middle manager in the St. Petersburg office of Gazprom added that it is not possible to leave “even to Turkey.” According to him, the innovation affects a large



SOURCE: НА ДОЛЖНОСТИ АВИАПЕРСОНАЛА ЗАПРЕТЯТ ПРИНИМАТЬ ПРИЧАСТНЫХ К ЭКСТРЕМИЗМУ (DUMA.GOV.RU)

part of the employees of the central office of the state monopoly of the Russian Federation. Another employee confirmed they were banned from traveling abroad. The security service will monitor the implementation of the ban at Gazprom. At the same time, many Gazprom employees have already bought tickets and booked hotels abroad for the New Year holidays. Under the ban, neither Gazprom employees nor their families are allowed to leave even for treatment. The same ban applies to Rosneft, state company employees say. Senior employees were required to sign an additional agreement, according to which they cannot travel outside of Russia. This is just the beginning of top-down attempts to insulate the Russian labor market, especially in strategic sectors. A

group of Russian parliamentary deputies and senators will introduce a bill to ban remote work for certain workers. This could apply to cybersecurity and transportation workers as well as public sector employees. According to Verstka, large Russian firms, including Sberbank and Nor Nickel, are introducing a ban on remote work for employees of Russian IT companies who live outside of Russia. This policy could deliver a new blow to the Russian economy. Since President Vladimir Putin announced a military mobilization, Russia has seen the loss of working-age people, entrepreneurs, and trained specialists, which has been a significant drain for the country. Consequently, more people could leave Russia. ■



SOURCE: ОСВОБОЖДАЮТСЯ ОТ НДФЛ ДОХОДЫ, ПОЛУЧЕННЫЕ В СВЯЗИ С ПРОЩЕНИЕМ БАНКАМИ ДОЛГОВ ПО ИПОТЕКЕ (DUMA.GOV.RU)

21 December 2022

RUSSIAN ECONOMY IS NOW IN FAR BETTER STATE THAN EXPECTED

The Russian economy has somewhat performed well throughout 2022 and experienced the aftermath of energy sanctions only in November. Officials and analysts have been gradually improving GDP forecasts for the full year, but suggested that the overall drop in output may be more prolonged. Gross domestic product fell 0.9 percent, according to September estimates, but now it could be 2 percent. The key story for the Russian economy in the coming months could be the launch of the EU's oil embargo mechanism from Dec. 5 and the imposition of a price cap on Russian oil.

The Russian economy shrank by 1.9 percent instead of 2.1 percent from January to October 2022, according to the Russian economic development ministry. Perhaps the ministry will align its outlook for 2022 with the newest figures. The economy ministry expects Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) to fall 2.9 percent this year, up from 4.2 percent in August and 7.8 percent in May. After initially dire predictions of a GDP slump, the Russian economy demonstrates better-than-anticipated resilience, mostly to the situation in the oil and gas sector. There was an almost scarce effect of sanctions imposed on Russia in the first months of the war as the country earned more despite shrinking export volumes due to rising energy prices. Yet as soon as this fall, Russia saw a sharp drop in its oil and gas revenues. In November, oil and gas revenues fell 2.1 percent from last year; however, in reality, almost half of that sum came from a one-off payment of Gazprom's mineral extraction taxes. The company secured these funds because it had refrained from paying out dividends to its shareholders. Without that money, oil and gas income was down 48.9 percent compared with 2021, according to the Russian website Bell. Revenues from Russian exports to the EU

were down roughly 83 percent in November after cutting off supplies into the EU and Nord Stream 2 sabotage. Russia is unlikely to regain profits by redirecting flows into Turkey or China amid infrastructure shortages and lower prices than in Europe. Oil prices drop globally, but there is a 30 percent price gap between Brent crude and cheaper Russian Urals oil whose prices keep going down. It traded at more than \$70 per barrel in October and just \$50 per barrel in mid-December. The Russian budget paper assumes that the average price of Urals oil in 2023 will be \$70.1 per barrel. Russia's finance ministry has significantly cut expectations of oil and gas revenues, predicting a 23.3 percent drop from 2021. The question remains whether the economy ministry has to review its outlook amid restricted export figures following the EU oil embargo. The economy faces additional headwinds from an oil price cap imposed by Western nations this month and a European Union embargo on its seaborne oil exports, in force since December 5. The Russian economy could hit the rock bottom amid new EU sanctions. The EU's ninth package has targeted three Russian banks that either collaborate or are controlled by Russia's biggest oil company Rosneft. ■

22 December 2022

MOLDOVA IS BECOMING INDEPENDENT OF RUSSIAN GAS FLOWS

Moldova has imported natural gas from new directions, for the first time obtaining volumes pumped from elsewhere than Russian state-run gas firm Gazprom. The pro-Western government in Chisinau is seeking to diversify its energy resources and accumulate supplies against the background of Gazprom's policy that consists in using gas as a tool of blackmail.



SOURCE: MOLDOVAGAZ [HTTPS://WWW.MOLDOVAGAZ.MD/ROM/CENTRUL-DE-PRESA/GALERIE-FOTO?SLUG=GALERIE-FOTO](https://www.moldovagaz.md/rom/centrul-de-pres/galerie-foto?slug=galerie-foto)

Moldova plans to sue Russia's Gazprom for failing to fulfill its obligations under a contract to supply gas. Moldova's Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Spinu accuses Gazprom of abrupt gas supply cuts and a steep surge in gas prices after the onset of war in Ukraine that forced Moldova to buy gas and energy on the international market. Russia's Gazprom cut natural gas supplies to Moldova in October by around 30 percent, prompting a new wave of cuts in December. In late November, the Russian gas giant withdrew a threat to reduce gas supplies to Moldova but said it reserved the right to lower or halt flows in the future if Moldova failed to make agreed payments. Moldova's survival of this winter without Russian gas would result from investments undertaken by the state-owned company Energocom in increasing the storage reserves of the raw material and its purchases outside the country. Moldova has stored the biggest gas

reserves in the country's thirty-year history, according to Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Spinu. The volume should be sufficient to satisfy the country's gas needs for two months provided that Gazprom completely cut off its flows. Moldova, which is one of Europe's poorest countries, is heavily dependent on Russian gas flows and has seen a sharp rise in its prices since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Moldova started importing natural gas from international markets, mainly from Romania. Romania has started transporting natural gas to Moldova, which is struggling to meet energy demand amid Russia's war against Ukraine. Gas began arriving in early December through a pipeline connecting Iasi in eastern Romania with the Moldovan border town of Ungheni. Back then, the Greece-Bulgaria natural gas interconnector, IGB, began transporting gas to Moldova. IGB is linked to another pipeline, part of the Southern

Gas Corridor that carries Azeri gas to Europe. It brings Bulgaria to gas flows via Turkey and Greece to Italy. Once cut off from Russian gas since April, Bulgaria has claimed its flows via the interconnector. Now the capacity of the interconnector is not yet being fully used. After gas supplies began flowing to Moldova, its capacity is 80 percent used. The route is used to supply Azeri gas via Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on December 7

in Istanbul that his country pledged to ensure Moldova's energy security by delivering gas supplies to the Eastern European country. Turkey is committed to deepening its strategic partnership with Moldova amid their historical and cultural ties, according to the chief Turkish diplomat. He added that Turkey endorsed the autonomy of the Turkish-speaking region of Gagauzia while considering it an integral part of Moldova. ■

22 December 2022

GAZPROM OPENS NEW ARCTIC FIELD DESPITE SHRINKING EXPORT

Russian gas giant Gazprom was forced to reduce its export volumes due to the war and sanctions. Despite that, it opened a new Arctic field. A major problem is rebuilding infrastructure to redirect gas flows from the Gulf of Ob to China from Europe.

The Semakovskoye natural gas field is located offshore in the far northern Gulf of Ob. The lion's share of its reserves is located offshore in shallow waters near Yamburg in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Region. The Semakovskoye is one of several fields planned launched in and around the Gulf of Ob. Development is underway also in the nearby Parusnoye field, as well as the Kamenno-Mysskoye, Geofysicheskoye, and Severo-Obsskoye fields. According to the company, production at the field will be up to 7,5 billion cubic meters per year and all of which will be transported by pipeline into the national grid.

It is unclear where Gazprom intends to sell the gas from the Semakovskoye as practically all regional natural gas infrastructure is aimed at the EU market. But new connections all the way to China will take years to build. Currently, Russia has only the Power of Siberia pipeline that in 2020 brought less than 5 billion cubic meters to the Chinese market. Capacity will increase significantly over the next years, and Russia also has plans for a Power of Siberia 2 and 3. But none of it will be able to replace the EU volumes, which is most painful for Gazprom. Russian natural gas production fell 11.6 percent from last year to 612.9 billion cubic meters



SOURCE: GAZPROM [HTTPS://VK.COM/GAZPROM](https://vk.com/gazprom)

from January to November 2022, amid a drop in Gazprom's output while Rosneft and Novatek boosted their overall production. Gazprom's production alone shrank by 19.4 percent due to more modest gas supplies to Europe and plummeting domestic demand by 5.7 percent. In late November 2022, Russia supplied EU nations with some 76–77 million cubic meters per day compared to 368–377 million cubic meters a year before. After Nord Stream sabotage and gas cuts via the Yamal Pipeline, the transit line

through Ukraine remains the only route for Russian gas supplies to western and central European countries. Gazprom currently sends around 42–43 million cubic meters per day to Europe via Ukraine. The rest is sent to the EU via the Turkish Stream. The pipeline's offshore section runs under the Black Sea to the European part of Turkey before splitting into a line that delivers gas flows to the Balkans, Hungary, and Austria (Balkan Stream). ■



SOURCE: ЗАСЕДАНИЕ КОЛЛЕГИИ МИНИСТЕРСТВА ОБОРОНЫ • ПРЕЗИДЕНТ РОССИИ (KREMLIN.RU)

23 December 2022

PUTIN PLEDGES REINFORCEMENTS TO COUNTRY'S WESTERN FLANK

Russian President Vladimir Putin attended an expanded meeting of the Russian Defense Ministry Board. The Russian leader made some remarks on what he referred to as the “special military operation” in Ukraine, but what Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told the meeting seemed more far-reaching. He publicly presented a series of proposed Russian defense policy changes to significantly increase the size of the Russian military by raising the age limit for conscripts and forming a new military unit near the border with Finland, a prospective NATO member.

Most surprisingly, Shoigu announced a plan to raise the age limit for conscripts. Russia will be gradually increasing the age of conscription for military service from 18 to 21 years. The age limit for conscripts will be raised from 27 to 30 years. The duty period remains the same. Why the age limit for conscripts was raised was unknown, but those at risk are men aged between 27 and 30. This group includes far more people than those aged between 18 and 21. Fewer people are allowed to defer military service because they have one child while not many young Russians now have two or more children. An extra advantage is that older and better-educated people will join the army. Russia should expand its armed forces to 1.5 million troops from the current 1.15 million to ensure its security, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin. The total should include 695,000 professional contract soldiers, he said, without explaining where the additional recruits would be found. Speaking at the meeting, Putin said Russia has “no limitations” on military spending for the war

in Ukraine, as he urged the army to deliver on his declared goals. He emphasized the value of upgrading drone tactics and communications specifically. Putin also mentioned some issues related to the military call-up. Shoigu made reference to mobilization, saying the ministry coped with it overall despite some issues. The defense minister suggested expanding military units in northwestern Russia, saying it was due to “NATO’s willingness to bolster military capabilities near its border with Russia.” A new army corps stationed in the northwest area of Karelia, close to Finland, is among the new military units and force formations that Shoigu described for western Russia. The Russian marine corps will be reorganized while the 200th and the 80th Motorized Rifle Divisions in Pechenga and Alakurtii will be both expanded. Furthermore, Shoigu proposed that Russia reestablish the Moscow and Leningrad military districts. There are currently five military districts in Russia: Western, Central, Eastern, Southern, and Northern. ■

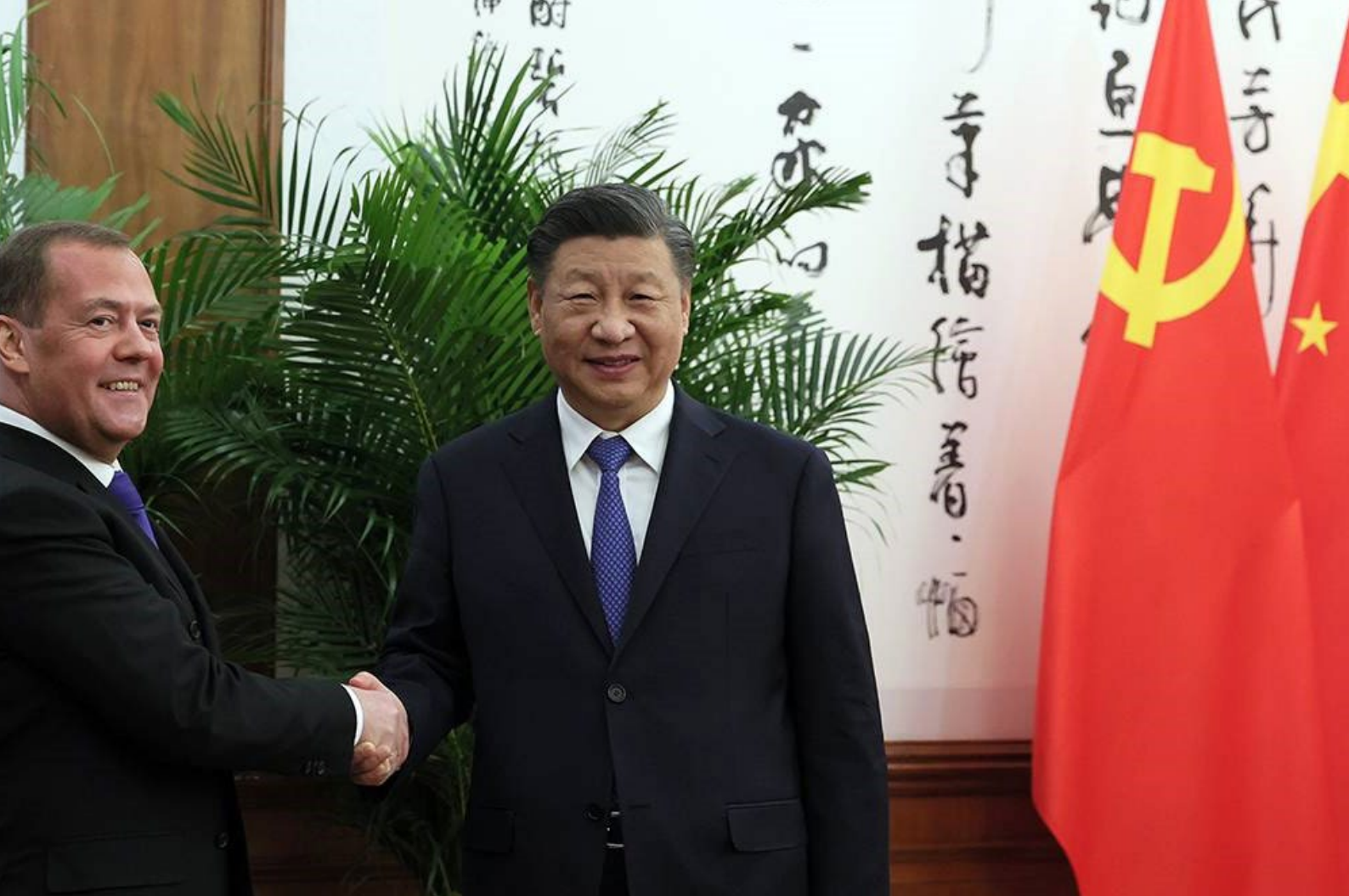
23 December 2022

CHINA SUPPORTS RUSSIA THROUGH JOINT DRILLS AND TOP BEIJING MEETING

Although Beijing has not thrown any official support to Russia in its war with Ukraine, its authorities back Moscow unofficially. One example of that is meetings between top state officials and joint navy drills.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. The very idea of his trip was meaningful as Medvedev now serves as the chairman

of the United Russia party and deputy head of the Russian Security Council. The former Russian president was on a visit to China at the invitation of the Communist Party of China



SOURCE: ДМИТРИЙ МЕДВЕДЕВ ВСТРЕТИЛСЯ С СИ ЦЗИНЬПИНОМ В РАМКАХ ОФИЦИАЛЬНОГО ВИЗИТА ДЕЛЕГАЦИИ «ЕДИНОЙ РОССИИ» В КИТАЙ (ER.RU)

(CPC). Medvedev and Xi met at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, where the two discussed a number of issues, including “the Ukraine crisis.” The Chinese leader said his country endorsed peace talks to solve “the Ukraine crisis,” adding he hoped all parties remain committed to tackling security issues through political dialogue. Medvedev claimed Russia would be ready to solve what he referred to as the “Ukraine crisis” through peace talks. The “peace talks” narrative is beneficial for Russia, which still occupies part of the Ukrainian territory. Beijing, which has forged closer ties with Moscow, has refused to condemn Russia’s actions in Ukraine and has also opposed economic sanctions on Russia. At the same time, the Chinese and Russian navies started a weeklong joint exercise.

Russia deployed the Varyag missile cruiser, the Marshal Shaposhnikov destroyer, and two corvettes of Russia’s Pacific Fleet for the East China Sea exercise. The weeklong drill began on December 21 and will last until December 27. Russian and Chinese aircraft were also taking part in the weeklong maneuvers that will involve firing exercises and anti-submarine drills, according to the Russian defense ministry. Military ties between Moscow and Beijing have grown stronger and this is just one example. In November, Russia and China both flew bombers in joint patrols over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. For the first time in the course of joint air patrols, Russian aircraft landed at an airfield in China, and Chinese aircraft landed at an airfield in Russia. ■



SOURCE: POTUS TWITTER [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/POTUS/STATUS/1605752493186719748](https://twitter.com/POTUS/status/1605752493186719748)

27 December 2022

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: NO CONCESSIONS TO RUSSIA

Volodymyr Zelensky's historic visit to the United States and remarks by the Ukrainian and U.S. leaders on that delivered a powerful message to Russia. Kyiv, which enjoys support from the United States and other Western nations, is making no concessions to Russia. Ukraine would sit at the negotiating table only after the invader leaves its territory. Washington will be sending Patriots missiles to Ukraine while it has rebuffed the ATACMS request. Joe Biden said some NATO states refuse strong support to the Ukrainian offensive potential.

Not incidentally, Zelensky arrived in Washington shortly after U.S. officials unveiled a new relief package. The United States will provide \$1.85 billion in additional military assistance for Ukraine, including a transfer of the Patriot Air Defense Systems, artillery ammunition, more than 150 vehicles, and ammunition for Soviet-made Grad missile artillery systems. Since February 24, Washington has provided Ukraine with \$21.2 billion worth of military assistance. The Biden administration has announced that it was prepared to provide more money in new funding in 2023. But to make it happen, bipartisan support is necessary, which is not obvious after the Republicans have taken control of the House of Representatives. This was apparent in Zelensky's speech in U.S. Congress. Both Biden and he hoped that the U.S. House of Representatives would adopt a federal funding bill with \$45 billion in Ukraine aid. When asked at a joint news conference with Zelensky about the missiles, which would allow Ukrainian forces to strike targets inside Russian territory, Biden warned such weaponry could shatter NATO unity in support of Ukraine. Biden might have meant Germany and France.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that the West should consider how to address Russia's need for security guarantees to end the war in Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky delivered a historic speech from the United States Capitol, expressing gratitude for American support in fighting Russian aggression, alongside a plea for more weapons. Zelensky made his first trip abroad since the beginning of the Russian aggression on February 24, which was of political importance. It was meant to demonstrate to the world and Russia US support for Ukraine, it was meant to influence the attitudes of US political elites and Americans, perhaps already in part tired of this war and perhaps wondering about the billions more being spent from their taxes on Ukraine's war with Russia. Zelensky's historic visit to Washington helped lift the morale of the Ukrainians and undermined that of the Russians. The day before his visit to the United States, Zelensky was in Bakhmut himself, unlike Russian officials that entered the front line, which resulted in Ukrainian assaults. These included Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov and Dmitry Rogozin. ■

27 December 2022

RUSSIAN FORCES RETREAT FROM BAKHMUT: THE BEGINNING OF UKRAINIAN OFFENSIVE?



SOURCE: GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PHOTO/?FBID=492085759771174&SET=PCB.492085879771162](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=492085759771174&set=pcb.492085879771162)

First the Russian assault on Bakhmut lost momentum and then rumors were that Russian troops made a retreat from the area. All eyes are now on Bakhmut while Ukrainian forces managed to advance towards Luhansk along the Svatove-Kreminna line after a weeks-long standstill. This could prompt a major Ukrainian assault in Donbas. Perhaps this could serve to distract Russian forces from the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, where Russia has expected a Ukrainian attack for weeks now.

Russia has deployed more troops and matériel to bolster its military groupings in southern and eastern Ukraine, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces informed on December 23. Russia has built up its forces around Bakhmut and along the southern front. Since August, Russian and Ukrainian forces have been fighting for control of the city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine which now is at the center of the bloodiest battles in war-torn Ukraine. Ukrainian troops have reclaimed

swathes of territory around Bakhmut. Dozens of Russian soldiers were dead while more of the were wounded in attacks, according to Ukrainian authorities. Ukrainian forces managed to stop Wagner Group mercenaries, forcing them to return to earlier positions. Russian forces have withdrawn from the southern and eastern outskirts of the city. As reported on December 23, the front line settled near the settlement of Opytne situated a few kilometers south of Bakhmut. It was

reported that the Ukrainians launched an assault while the Russians retreated from the area. Russian troops continue to move military hardware towards Berdiansk and Melitopol through Mariupol to the southern part of the Zaporizhzhia region. The Ukrainian army is stepping up military efforts on the southern front between Dnieper and Donbas. A Kherson town was fired last weekend, where Russian officers met for a gathering, injuring 70 and killing an undetermined number of people. In the fall, Ukrainian troops launched two ambitious counter-offensives that pushed Russian soldiers out of the Kharkiv region and allowed them to advance into the Luhansk region before being flanked near Donetsk. They pushed the Russians from the western bank of the Dnieper River and recaptured the city of

Kherson. A new Ukrainian offensive could either take place in Donbas or Zaporizhzhia. What could bring profits to Kyiv is some gains in the country's south thanks to a successful assault in Zaporizhzhia and perhaps efforts to reclaim Melitopol and Berdiansk. This could cut Crimea-based Russian soldiers off Donbas and southern Russia. Perhaps due to this, Ukrainian forces will surprise the Russians by striking elsewhere, thus in Donbas. The question remains whether Ukrainian movements in Bakhmut and Kremenna not prompt a forthcoming assault in Zaporizhzhia, where a crucial nuclear power plant is located. Regardless of whether an assault eventually takes place, a Ukrainian offensive should materialize in one or two weeks if Kyiv seeks to bolster its negotiating position in peace talks with Russia. ■

28 December 2022

UKRAINE CONTINUES CRACKDOWN ON RUSSIAN- AFFILIATED ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church affiliated to Moscow could no longer be allowed to lease Kyiv Pechersk Lavra churches, including the Church of the Assumption, according to Pavlo, head of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. This could be another step towards curbing the influence of churches affiliated to Moscow.

Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, a unique church site, is owned by the state. The Russian-controlled church's lease on this part of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra will expire at the end of December 2022. Consequently, Moscow-affiliated priests could be banned from entering church premises

in Kyiv. Pavlo Lebid, head of the Russian-affiliated church's Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, also urged Zelensky to prevent the adoption of bills restricting the church's rights to use Kyiv premises. In the last two months, Ukraine conducted nationwide raids on religious sites



SOURCE: СБУ ПРОВОДИТЬ БЕЗПЕКОВІ ЗАХОДИ НА ОБ'ЄКТАХ УПЦ (МП) У ДЕВ'ЯТИ ОБЛАСТЯХ УКРАЇНИ (SSU.GOV.UA)

that belong to the Russian-controlled church, during which authorities say they have so far found Russian propaganda. In other church facilities, searches uncovered large sums of money and forged documents. This triggered speculation that a part or all of the monastery may be transferred to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Zelensky said the parliament would approve a proposal by the National Security and Defense Council to ban the Russian-backed Ukrainian church. Ukraine has long held valid concerns that the Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church poses a security threat, and has instead promoted the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which in 2019 was granted “autocephaly” or independence, in the spring of 2022. In addition to these two, there is one more involving priests and parishioners loyal to the Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who declined the Holy Synod’s decision in May and remain formally

affiliated to the Patriarch of Moscow. There is no formal data on how many Ukrainian parishes remain in Moscow’s orbit, but the number is likely to now be considerably lower. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many of the parishes in Ukraine, which had remained loyal to Moscow, cut ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been penetrated by Russian services, which poses a grave threat to state security. Following recent raids on church premises, many priests and other dubious people have been sanctioned by Ukraine’s National Security Council. The question is why Ukrainian officials allowed the Orthodox Church loyal to Moscow to run for so long in war-torn Ukraine. Perhaps Zelensky was cautious about the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, whose declared independence came as a big success of Petro Poroshenko, former Ukrainian leader. ■



SOURCE: УЧАСТЬ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА У КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ ПОСЛІВ УКРАЇНИ — ОФІЦІЙНЕ ІНТЕРНЕТ-ПРЕДСТАВНИЦТВО ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ (PRESIDENT.GOV.UA)

29 December 2022

NO PEACE TALKS: UKRAINE PRESENTS 10-POINT PEACE FORMULA, RUSSIA DELIVERS ULTIMATUM

Moscow is not ready to accept Kyiv's terms for negotiations over Ukraine, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Russia is ready to discuss Ukraine in its absence, with just Western nations. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine is entering its twelfth month, Ukraine aims for a February peace summit to present a peace formula. Neither warring party is now seeking peace as Ukraine is willing to strengthen its negotiating position through battlefield gains and Russia is making no further concessions.

Ukraine's foreign minister said that his government is aiming to have a peace summit by the end of February, preferably at the United Nations. But Dmytro Kuleba said that Russia could only be invited to such a summit if the country faced a war crimes tribunal first. At the Group of 20 summit in Bali in November, Zelensky presented a 10-point peace formula that includes the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops, the release of all prisoners, a tribunal for those responsible for the aggression and security guarantees for Ukraine. Other demands include radiation and nuclear safety, food security, energy security, restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity according to the UN Charter, and signing of a document to end the war. Moscow is not ready to accept Kyiv's terms for negotiations over Ukraine, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Russia "never followed conditions set by others, only through its own and common sense," he added. "Moscow's proposals for "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine are well known to

Kyiv," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, adding either Ukraine fulfills them for their own good or the Russian army will decide the issue. Vladimir Putin also claimed he was ready to negotiate, but with Western leaders, and not Ukraine. The key narrative of Russian disinformation was that Ukraine is a puppet in the hands of the United States and other Western nations. William Burns, the director of the CIA, said that Russia was not serious about conducting negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. His words were echoed by John Kirby, the spokesman of the National Security Council. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated that the timing and contents of any negotiation framework remain Ukraine's decision. Ukraine is seeking to start peace talks with Russia after making some battlefield gains to force Moscow into a pile of concessions. Consequently, Ukraine is willing to strengthen its negotiating position through battlefield gains. The Kremlin will put off negotiations until its forces renew an assault on Ukraine, possibly in early spring. ■

29 December 2022

SBU SCORES BETTER IN FIGHTING RUSSIAN OPERATIVES SINCE PERSONNEL RESHUFFLES

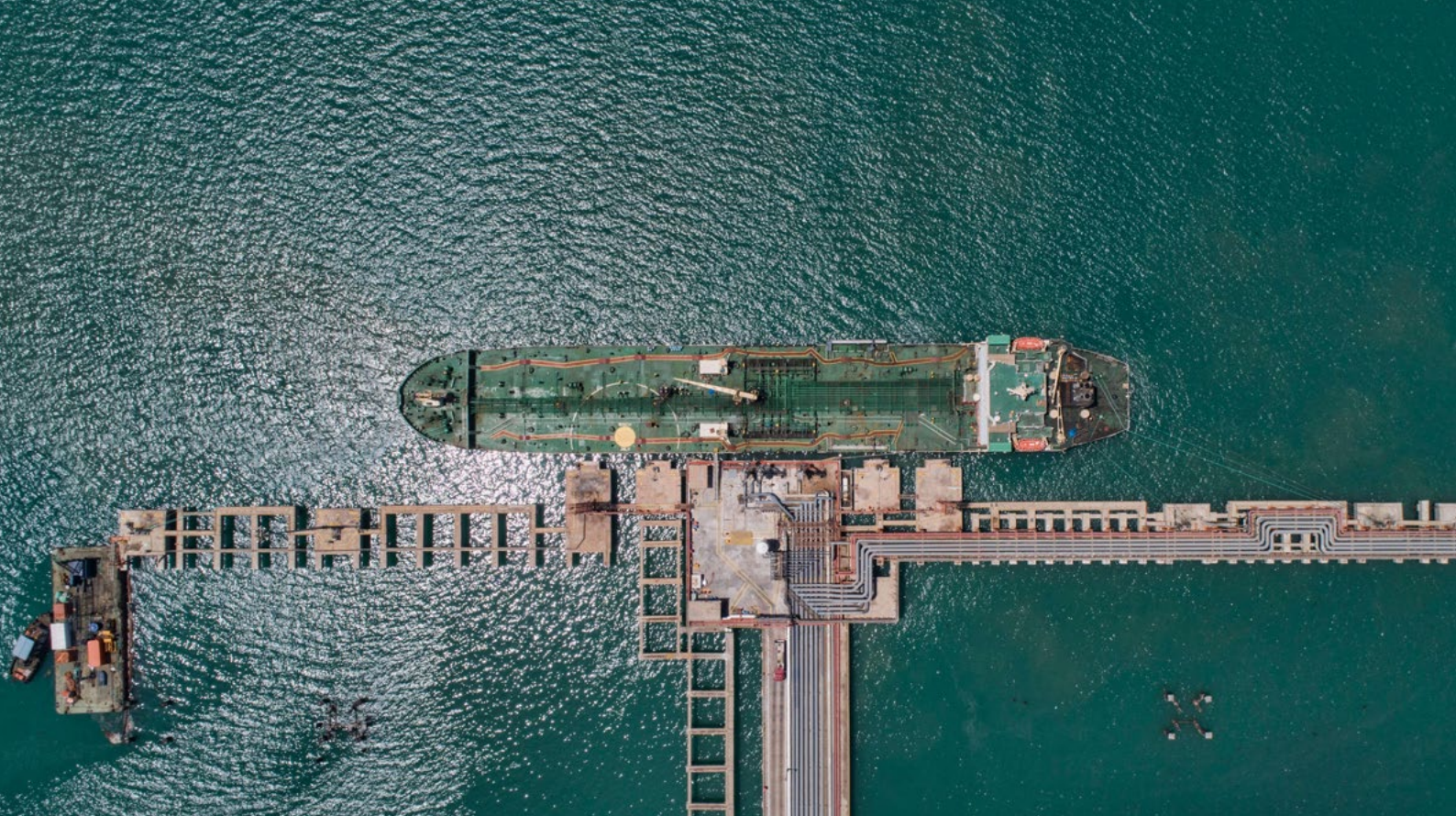
Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) has been in a whirlwind of activities as its officers have been involved in fighting Russian operatives, seizing assets belonging to sanctioned oligarchs, and protecting Ukraine's most important officials and state facilities. The SBU, which has seen a wave of harsh criticism following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is now far more efficient.



SOURCE: СБУ ВИКРИЛА МАСШТАБНУ КОРУПЦІЙНУ СХЕМУ В ДСНС, ЯКА СТАВИЛА ПІД ЗАГРОЗУ ЖИТТЯ ТИСЯЧ УКРАЇНЦІВ (SSU.GOV.UA)

The Security Service of Ukraine on December 27 established that 160,000 tons of iron ore, worth a total of \$49 million, belongs to the company of Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov, who is part of the inner circle of the top military and political leadership of the Kremlin. It was another successful action to arrest “dubious” assets. A week earlier, the SBU reported the discovery of a substantial arsenal of weapons left by Russian troops on Ukraine’s Chernihiv border. Among the seized items are dozens of boxes with rockets and ammunition for anti-tank weapons. In November and December, the SBU carried out searches of premises belonging to a branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In addition, the SBU arrested killers from the Russian special services who were plotting the assassinations of Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov and military intelligence boss Kyrylo Budanov, acting head of the SBU Vasyl Maluk said on December 21. Maluk claimed the men were preparing “the physical liquidation” of other top Ukrainian officials, including him. The SBU has been more efficient in fighting Russian operatives

since personnel reshuffles in July 2022. Many balked at the Ukrainian counterintelligence agency shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine’s loss of the southern city of Kherson has been due to betrayal from some SBU officers. When a resistance movement was being formed in Russian-occupied territories, the Kyiv-based command of the Special Forces did not inform local SBU units amid security concerns. Ivan Bakanov, former SBU chief, is Zelensky’s childhood friend. It did not salvage him from being sacked—he was easily manipulated and failed to uncover Russian spies in the SBU—as so did all SBU chiefs appointed past 2014. In mid-July, President Volodymyr Zelensky suspended the head of Ukraine’s spy agency (SBU), citing many cases of treason. He continued his purge of Ukraine’s security service by dismissing the organization’s deputy director. Vasily Malyuk has been appointed acting head of the Security Service of Ukraine. Furthermore, Zelensky dismissed Bakanov’s deputy and four senior SBU officers—before he had sacked SBU regional chiefs in Kharkiv and Kherson. ■



SOURCE: NAYARA ENERGY [HTTPS://WWW.NAYARAENERGY.COM/MEDIA/GALLERY](https://www.nayaraenergy.com/media/gallery)

30 December 2022

INDIA RUSHES TO BUY RUSSIAN OIL

Russia has for the first time emerged as a top oil supplier to India replacing Iraq, as refiners last month snapped up oil from Moscow in October and November fearing the December 5 price cap. India will prioritize its own energy needs and continue to buy oil from Russia. India announced last week that it would not comply with the price cap on Russian seaborne oil imposed by Western nations.

Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar made it clear after his talks with Baerbock that India will prioritize its own energy needs and continue to buy oil from Russia. So far India has refrained from condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine while the government in New Delhi praised Moscow for being “a pillar of strength for India’s development, security, and international relations.” Since the war broke out, India has

bought Russian oil at a discounted price. New Delhi has also declared intentions to boost bilateral trade with Russia and Rosneft’s huge Arctic Vostok Oil project could see investments by India. India’s oil imports from Russia rose for the fifth straight month, totaling 908,000 barrels per day (bpd) in November, up 4 percent from October. Back in November, Russian oil accounted for some 23 percent of India’s total imports. India, which rarely used to buy Russian

oil because of costly logistics, has emerged as Russia's second biggest oil client after China as refiners snap up discounted crude shunned by Western nations since the February invasion of Ukraine. Russia's market share in India is growing at the expense of the Middle East. In November, India's oil imports from Iraq declined to the lowest since September 2020, while that from Saudi Arabia plunged to a 14-month low, the data showed. India, the second largest consumer of oil in Asia, is better located to buy Urals than China because of a shorter transport route, and its refineries are well-suited to

processing Russian oil, according to Reuters. India decided not to support the price cap on Russian oil announced by the G7 countries and their allies. The Group of Seven nations, Australia, and European Union countries have imposed a price cap of \$60 a barrel on Russian seaborne oil. In December, India bought Russian oil much cheaper than that. For some deals this month, the price for the Urals has fallen to around minus \$12-\$15 below the monthly average. The discount stood at between \$10 and \$11 in November compared to \$5-8 in October. ■



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The Warsaw Institute Foundation
Wilcza 9 St., 00-538 Warsaw, Poland
+48 22 417 63 15
office@warsawinstitute.org
