



News Brief Update 33

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Russia's war with Ukraine

The conflict in Ukraine appears further than ever from resolution, with the prospect of bitter urban fighting for Kherson city the next likely phase in a war that has included nuclear threats and mass atrocities. Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu [reportedly](#) told western counterparts during telephone calls on 24 October that the war in Ukraine is heading for an "uncontrolled escalation" amid evidence that Russia's grip on the city of Kherson appeared [increasingly fragile](#) (see below).

According to a report in *Intelligence Online* (17 October, paywall), Russia was seeking to escalate the war in three stages as a means of retaking the initiative both politically and militarily. The first stage (now completed) involved 10 days of airstrikes on critical targets to weaken Ukraine and facilitate the recapture by Russian troops of the territories they recently lost, particularly in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia region, and unify the southern, eastern and northern fronts. The second stage, currently ongoing, involves similar airstrikes but this time on Ukraine's hydroelectric plants with the aim of [systematically degrading](#) Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The third phase could potentially involve the use of nuclear weapons, although *Intelligence Online* reports "the Kremlin considers that, at this point, the risk of a NATO response is too great to justify the use of nuclear weapons, even if this option has not been ruled out definitively".

Russian missile attacks have continued across Ukraine, striking hydroelectric plants and other critical energy and water infrastructure. About [4 million people](#) across Ukraine are being hit by power cuts from rolling blackouts due to

Russia's bombing campaign. Russia said it hit military and energy infrastructure targets, but Ukraine said its military facilities were not targeted.

Large parts of Kyiv were left without power or water. The Ukrainian capital's mayor [said](#) 80% of residents did not have water, with 350,000 apartments without power as of 31 October. About 500 power generators have been [sent](#) to Ukraine by 17 EU countries to help with the energy problems caused by Russian attacks. The governor of the Kyiv region, Oleksiy Kuleba, [told](#) Ukraine's *Hromadske TV* on 1 November that the Kyiv region is once again becoming an "outpost" in Russia's strategy to target the capital. In addition to providing an update on the energy situation in the region he said they were also preparing 425 underground shelters in case of a nuclear attack, and they would be ready by mid-November.

Meanwhile, a mobile phone app has been developed by Ukrainian volunteers to [allow civilians to report sightings](#) of incoming Russian drones and missiles – and, it is hoped, increase the proportion shot down before they hit the ground. The app, ePPO, relies on a phone's GPS and compass, and a user only has to point their device in the direction of the incoming object and press a button for it to send a location report to the military.

The battle for Kherson

In the south, Ukrainian troops have been pushing closer and closer to the city of [Kherson](#), just north of Crimea. Kherson is one of four regions in Ukraine that Moscow

recently claimed to have annexed, and city is the largest urban area under Russian occupation. However, Russia now only controls a shrinking chunk of the western bank of the Dnieper, and a Russian-installed occupation official [said](#) on 3 November that Moscow was likely to pull its troops from there, signalling a retreat that, if confirmed, could be a major turning point in the war. “Most likely our units, our soldiers, will leave for the left [eastern] bank,” said Kirill Stremousov, the Russian-installed deputy civilian administrator of the Kherson region, in an interview with *Solovyov Live*, a pro-Russian online media outlet. Ukrainian officials [expressed](#) caution that Moscow could be setting a trap by feigning a pull-out from the Kherson region. Nonetheless, US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin [said](#) he believes that Ukrainian forces can retake Kherson, calling their work “methodical” and “effective”. Russian troops have been [accused](#) of looting the city ahead of a potential withdrawal. Items taken range from art and cultural exhibits to ambulances and tractors.

Russian authorities in Kherson have been relocating civilians, claiming it is for their safety as Ukrainian forces move closer. On 22 October the Russian-installed authorities [ordered](#) all residents to leave “immediately” and on 30 October [said](#) that they had finished a pull-out of civilians from Kherson. The city had a population of about 288,000 people before the war and at least 70,000 people were reported to have left their homes in the space of a week. Ukraine described the forced [relocation of its citizens in the Kherson](#) and Zaporizhzhia regions as “deportations” and “war crimes”.

One week after the relocation of these 70,000 civilians from the right bank of the Dnieper River to the left bank, Russian authorities said they were moving them again to be “temporarily resettled deep into the Kherson region, as well as to other regions of the Russian Federation” citing “possible damage to the dam of the Kakhovskaya hydroelectric power station”. Forcibly deporting civilians from occupied territories to the territory of the occupying force can constitute a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. Meanwhile, all

men remaining in Kherson were invited to join a newly formed local militia. In a notice on [Telegram](#) on 24 October, the occupation authorities said men had the “opportunity” to join territorial defence units if they chose to remain in Kherson of their own free will. Compelling civilians to serve in the armed forces of an occupying power is also defined as a breach of the Geneva Conventions.

The attack on Russia’s Black Sea fleet

Russia’s Black Sea flagship vessel, the Admiral Makarov, was damaged and possibly disabled during a Ukrainian drone attack on 29 October on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, according to an examination of video footage. Open-source investigators said the frigate was one of three Russian ships to have been hit during the attack. In the wake of the Sevastopol attack Russia temporarily [suspended participation](#) in the UN-brokered grain deal that allows civilian ships to export grain and fertiliser from Black Sea ports. (It re-joined on 3 November - see below).

Russia claimed it could not “guarantee safety of civilian ships” travelling under the pact after the attack on its Black Sea fleet. Zelensky, however, said Moscow was looking for a pretext to end the initiative. It had been “deliberately aggravating” the food crisis since September, he said in a [video address](#). The Russian ambassador to the UK, Andrei Kelin, later [claimed](#) UK special forces were involved in the attack. He told Sky News: “We perfectly know about [the] participation of British specialists in [the] training, preparation and execution of violence against the Russian infrastructure and the Russian fleet in the Black Sea. We know that it has been done”, adding: “This is a warning actually that Britain is too deep in this conflict. It means the situation is becoming more and more dangerous”. The UK has strenuously denied any involvement (see below).

Dirty bombs and other disinformation

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [said](#) on 3 November that it had found no sign of undeclared nuclear activity at three sites in Ukraine that it inspected at Kyiv’s request, in

response to Russian allegations that work was being done on a “dirty bomb”. The IAEA said in a [statement](#) that “Our technical and scientific evaluation of the results we have so far did not show any sign of undeclared nuclear activities and materials at these three locations”, adding that environmental samples taken would be analysed. Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba reacted strongly to the results of the nuclear inspection, saying in a [tweet](#) that Russia had confirmed its status as “the world’s top liar”.

President Putin [said](#) he ordered his defence minister to call senior NATO commanders over the potential detonation of a “dirty bomb” in Ukraine. Putin claimed that Russia knew “about an incident with a so-called ‘dirty bomb’ being prepared”, and that Russia knew “where, generally, it was being prepared” in a speech near Moscow on 28 October. He gave no evidence of the alleged plot, which included the possibility of the device being loaded on to a Tochka-U or other tactical missile, detonated and then “blamed on Russia”. Ukraine and the United States had earlier [denounced](#) these suggestions as misinformation and a pretext for intensifying the war. “If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means one thing: Russia has already prepared all this”, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video [address](#) on 23 October. The IAEA previously [said](#) its inspectors had regularly visited two sites in Ukraine at the centre of Russian claims, but inspectors returned at the request of Ukraine. Russia took its case to the UN Security Council, sending a letter detailing the allegations to the UN on 24 October and then [raised the issue](#) at a closed meeting with the Security Council the next day.

Western leaders rejected the accusation and implied that Moscow was using it to set the stage for a “false flag” attack that the Kremlin could blame on Kyiv. “The world would see through any attempt to use this allegation as a pretext for escalation,” the United States, UK and France wrote in a [joint statement](#). Russia did not publicly share any information to back up its allegation. Meanwhile, the UK Ministry of Defence [said](#) Russia’s Defence Ministry was

“peddling false claims of an epic scale” after Moscow [accused](#) the British navy of a “terrorist attack” on Nord Stream gas pipelines and claimed British “specialists” aided the drone attack in Sevastopol. The UK MoD said in a [tweet](#): “This latest invented story says more about the arguments going on inside the Russian government than it does about the west”. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council overwhelmingly [rejected](#) Russia’s attempt to establish a commission to investigate its unfounded claims that Ukraine and the United States are carrying out “military biological” activities that violate the convention prohibiting the use of biological weapons.

Global divide in public opinion

University of Cambridge researchers have reviewed data from surveys conducted in 137 countries and issued a [report](#) that details the divide — in particular how populations have shifted in their attitudes toward the United States, NATO, Russia and China. The report found that the war has driven people in more democratic societies to stand more firmly with the United States and NATO. On the other side of the divide, the report found a swath of less liberal and more undemocratic societies — stretching from East Asia through the Middle East and West Africa — where populations have more positive attitudes toward China, Russia or both. Overall, the report found that among the 1.2 billion people who live in the world’s liberal democracies, 87% now hold a negative view of Russia and three-quarters (75%) a negative view of China; among the 6.3 billion who live in the world’s remaining countries, the opposite is true — with 70% of people feeling positively toward China and 66% toward Russia. “The world has divided into liberal and illiberal spheres,” said report co-author Dr. Xavier Romero-Vidal, from Cambridge’s Bennett Institute for Public Policy.

The authors also noted that the report included public opinion data from emerging economies and the Global South, and that the divide “is not just economic or strategic but based in personal and political ideology”. “While the war in Ukraine has accentuated this divide, it has been a decade in the making. The

NATO Secretary General echoed this divide in an [interview](#) with *Politico* on 28 October, in which he made the case for a long-term US presence in Europe and a widespread boost in defence spending. A victorious Russia, he said, would “be bad for all of us in Europe and North America, in the whole of NATO, because that will send a message to authoritarian leaders — not only Putin but also China — that by the use of brutal military force they can achieve their goals”.

Stalled diplomacy

The Russian annexations have greatly complicated the search for an eventual peace settlement, as Ukraine and Western nations will not accept or recognize them. President Zelensky, from once saying that he was accepting neutrality for Ukraine, has recently called for fast-tracking a NATO application for Ukraine. There have been some negotiations on key issues so far, such as the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, getting grain out of Ukraine and in organising prisoner swaps—and another 107 Ukrainian service personnel were recently freed from Russian captivity in a prisoner exchange, President Zelensky said in his [national address](#) on 3 November. But there have been no negotiations since March on the big issues.

French President Emmanuel Macron [said](#) it’s up to Ukraine to decide the time and terms of peace with Russia, and cautioned that the end of war “can’t be the consecration of the law of the strongest.” “To stay neutral would mean accepting the world order of the strongest, and I don’t agree with this,” Macron said at the opening of a three-day peace conference in Rome on 23 October. Meanwhile, in a speech addressed to the Valdai Discussion Club on 28 October, President Putin [said](#) the war in Ukraine is part of Russia’s wider struggle against western domination. “We are standing at a historical frontier: Ahead is probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and, at the same time, important decade since the end of World War Two”, he said. He added the war was simply part of the “tectonic shifts of the entire world order” and that “the historical

period of the west’s undivided dominance over world affairs is coming to an end”.

For options of what a possible settlement for Ukraine might look like, see Cambridge University’s [Ukraine Peace Settlement Project](#).

Military and financial assistance to Ukraine and Russia

Ukraine continues to rely heavily on international military and financial support from Western states. Most of the military assistance has come in the form of bilateral arms transfers, training and other support, which is being coordinated by the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which meets on an ad hoc basis and involves Ministers of Defence and senior military officials from Western-aligned states from around the world. The most recent meeting took place on 12 October (see [Update 32](#)). The US [announced](#) \$400 million worth of additional security assistance for Ukraine on 4 November, including refurbishing T-72 tanks from the Czech Republic and missiles for Hawk air defences that could be used against Russian drones and cruise missiles. Earlier, on 28 October, the US [announced](#) a further \$275 million in additional military assistance to Ukraine, including arms, munitions and equipment from US defence department inventories. The November package brought US military aid for Kyiv to more than \$18.2 billion since Russia’s invasion in February. Other estimates suggest that the United States has [pledged](#) about \$25 billion in military aid to Ukraine—more than four times Ukraine’s 2021 defence budget. America’s partners in Europe and beyond have [pledged](#) an additional \$12 billion, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. The EU [appointed](#) a Polish general, Piotr Trytek, to lead a new training operation with Ukrainian troops.

In addition, NATO agreed at its June [Madrid Summit](#) to strengthen a 2016 [Comprehensive Assistance Package](#) for Ukraine. The additional elements to the package include both short-term assistance (ranging from fuel, protective equipment to portable anti-drone systems and

secure communications) and longer-term support (to help modernize the Ukrainian armed forces to NATO interoperability standards and strengthen its defence and security institutions). NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre and Romania signed a cooperation [agreement](#) on 24 October 2022 to deliver paramedic training for Ukrainian first responders. Spain is [donating](#) 30 ambulances to Ukraine.

In a video speech to a conference for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz on 24 October, President Zelensky [urged](#) Israel to join the fight against Russia and repeated an appeal for Israeli air defence systems. Israel has condemned Russia's invasion but has limited its assistance to deliveries of humanitarian aid and defensive equipment. Most recently it offered to help Ukrainians develop air attack alerts for civilians. Zelensky said that was not enough and asked that Israeli leaders reconsider sending air defences as well.

External military support to Russia so far has been limited to a handful of states, principally [Iran](#) and [North Korea](#). Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [said](#) the country did supply Russia with drones but only before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In a video [address](#) on 5 November President Zelensky dismissed talk of limited Iranian supplies to Russia, saying Kyiv had downed 11 drones on 4 November alone. He said: "If Iran continues to lie about the obvious, it means the world will make even more efforts to investigate the terrorist cooperation between the Russian and Iranian regimes and what Russia pays Iran for such cooperation". Last month, the EU agreed new sanctions on Iran over its drone deliveries to Russia, and the UK imposed sanctions on three Iranian military figures and a defence manufacturer for supplying Russia with drones to attack civilian and infrastructure targets in Ukraine.

On 2 November the White House [accused](#) North Korea of covertly shipping a "significant number" of artillery shells to Russia amid mounting evidence of shortages for key weapons systems. US National security council spokesperson John Kirby said the US believed

North Korea "is covertly supplying" the ammunition to Russia and "trying to make it appear as though they are being sent to countries in the Middle East or north Africa". In addition, Afghan special forces soldiers are being recruited by the Russian military to fight in Ukraine, three former Afghan generals [told](#) the Associated Press. They said the Russians wanted to attract thousands of the former elite Afghan commandos into a "foreign legion" with offers of \$1,500 a month and promises of safe havens for themselves and their families.

For further details on arms transfers to Ukraine, see, the [Forum on the Arms Trade](#). And for a timeline of every US arms shipment to Ukraine that has been announced since the war began, see [here](#).

Humanitarian consequences of the war

Exact figures for the number of war fatalities, both military and civilian, are difficult to verify and confirm. [Undercounting and manipulation](#) of the data is common in war. In September Russia [acknowledged](#) nearly 6,000 war dead, while Ukraine [claims](#) to have killed more than 75,000 Russian soldiers in the war to date. Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed forces, [said](#) on 22 August at a public forum that nearly 9,000 Ukrainian military personnel have been killed in the war. This was the first time Ukraine has revealed the scale of its military losses since the war began, previously protected as a tightly guarded secret - although in early June, a senior Ukrainian presidential aide [told](#) BBC News 100-200 Ukrainian soldiers were dying in the Donbas region every day. In April, Russia [said](#) it had killed about 23,000 Ukrainian troops.

According to [data collected](#) by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 31 October, 6,430 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 402 children. The actual figures are likely to be considerably higher, as the receipt of information from some locations where intense hostilities have been going on has been delayed and many reports are still pending corroboration. According to [Action on Armed](#)

[Violence](#) (AOAV) the number of civilian casualties from explosive violence in the Ukrainian conflict reached 8,657 people by 4 November. From this number, 3,343 were killed and 5,650 were injured. Ninety-two per cent (8,235) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

As of 1 November, there were 7,785,514 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,460,847 of whom were registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe. This gives them the right to live and work in any EU country and benefit from housing and schooling assistance. In an interview broadcast on Ukrainian national television on 25 October, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk [said](#) that refugees who fled in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine should stay abroad this winter due to blackouts created by Moscow's bombardment of energy infrastructure.

Continuing concerns about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine was once again temporarily disconnected from the power grid after Russian shelling damaged the remaining high voltage lines, leaving it with just diesel generators, Ukraine nuclear firm Energoatom [said](#) on 3 November. The plant, in Russian hands but operated by Ukrainian workers, has 15 days' worth of fuel to run the generators, Energoatom said. However, External power was restored to the plant two days later on 5 November the IAEA [said](#). The plant is Europe's largest and was shut down in September due to fighting in and around it over the previous two months. This raised concerns about the potential for a [nuclear accident](#). A 14-member IAEA [expert mission](#) carried out an inspection of the plant in early September. For further details see NATO Watch updates [23](#) through to [27](#). Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to international institutions in Vienna, [told](#) the Tass news agency on 25 October that Moscow was generally supportive of the idea of creating a secure zone around the power plant.

Further reading:

On outcomes and consequences of the war

Anatol Lieven, [This is why there is no 'China-Russia alliance'](#), Responsible Statecraft, 5 November 2022

Phyllis Bennis, [We must end this war – saving Ukraine's democracy is just one reason to do so](#), The Guardian, 5 November 2022

Sam Cranny-Evans, [The Chechens: Putin's Loyal Foot Soldiers](#), RUSI Commentary, 4 November 2022

[Russian ambassador claims UK involved in drone attack on Black Sea fleet](#), The Guardian, 3 November 2022

Branko Marcetic, [No, calling for diplomacy is not 'Westsplaining'](#), Responsible Statecraft, 3 November 2022

[Ukraine "Skeptical" of Ceasefire Russia Could Use to Cement Occupation, Even as Grain Exports Resume](#), Democracy Now, 3 November 2022

Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, [Winter is Coming: Russia Turns to Countervalue Targeting](#), RUSI Commentary, 1 November 2022

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, [US-trained Afghan commandos join Russian campaign in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 1 November 2022

Connor Echols, [New plan to secure US weapons in Ukraine leaves gaps: experts](#), Responsible Statecraft, 1 November 2022

[Russia recruiting US-trained Afghan commandos for Ukraine: Report](#), Al Jazeera, 1 November 2022

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[Russia recruiting Afghan special forces who fought with US to fight in Ukraine](#), The Guardian, 31 October 2022

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David Szondy, [Eyes in the sky: NATO's E-3 spy plane fleet watches over Ukraine](#), New Atlas, 30 October 2022

[Deputy Chief of Staff of Wagner mercenary group killed by Ukrainian special forces](#), EuroWeekly, 30 October 2022

Barry Zellen, [Russian aggression gives US excuse to focus military, and more, on Arctic](#), Responsible Statecraft, 29 October 2022

[Don't let Russia win, NATO chief warns US](#), Politico, 28 October 2022

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[Vladimir Putin says 'dirty bomb' claims to Nato were made on his orders](#), The Guardian, 27 October 2022

Peter Gleick, [Water as weapon, and casualty, in Russia's war on Ukraine](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 27 October 2022

François Diaz-Maurin and Dan Drollette Jr, [Russia says Ukraine is preparing a "dirty bomb." Is it true, and what does it mean?](#) Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 27 October 2022

John Feffer, [Is Ukraine going too far?](#) Ukraine doesn't want to "cut its wins" in order to negotiate a peace deal. Is it wrong? Foreign Policy in Focus, 26 October 2022

[NATO and Romania join forces to train Ukrainian paramedics](#), NATO News Release, 25 October 2022

Anatol Lieven, [Why Germany's pursuit of peace in Ukraine is paralyzed](#), Responsible Statecraft, 25 October 2022

[Putin's threats worry Ukraine's NATO allies as sign of Russian desperation](#), Japan Times, 25 October 2022

Jon Wolfsthal, [The Elephant in the Room- What about Crimea?](#) Blog, 25 October 2022

[Ukraine war: Nato denounces Russia's 'dirty bomb' claim](#), BBC News, 24 October 2022

Connor Echols, [Moscow's 'dirty bomb' claims highlight risk of escalation](#), Responsible Statecraft, 24 October 2022

Saraphin Dhanani, [The Case for Designating the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Militias as Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#), Lawfare, 24 October 2022

[Republicans who question U.S. aid to Ukraine may soon have the power to end it](#), Los Angeles Times, 23 October 2022

Dan Plesch, [Zero Missiles: building on the precedent that helps Ukraine today](#), ELN Commentary, 21 October 2022

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Susan Watkins, [Five Wars in One: The Battle for Ukraine](#). New Left Review, Issue 137, September/October 2022

On the risk of nuclear war

There have been growing concerns for several weeks that the war in Ukraine might be approaching "a moment of [maximum danger](#)". In particular, there are worries that a cornered, desperate Vladimir Putin may resort to nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. However, the US has had no indications that Russia has decided to use any of these weapons a US military official [said](#) on 24 October. The US believes Russia is "keeping lines of communication open" after Moscow requested a call between US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on 23 October the official added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed "hope" that Joe Biden will recall the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when dealing with the war in Ukraine. In an [interview](#) for a Russian state television documentary on 30 October, Lavrov said there were "similarities" between the ongoing war in Ukraine and the 1962 confrontation. "I hope that in today's situation, President Joe Biden will have more opportunities to understand who gives orders and how", Lavrov said. "The difference is that

in the distant 1962, Khrushchev and Kennedy found the strength to show responsibility and wisdom, and now we do not see such readiness on the part of Washington and its satellites”, he added. In a [statement](#) on 2 November The Russian Foreign Ministry said it was fully committed to preventing nuclear war, and that avoiding a clash among countries that have nuclear weapons was its highest priority. It said it feared the five declared nuclear powers were teetering “on the brink of a direct armed conflict” and that the west must stop “encouraging provocations with weapons of mass destruction, which can lead to catastrophic consequences”.

During the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s inaugural one-day visit to China on 4 November, the first by a leader of a G7 nation in three years, both he and the Chinese President Xi Jinping [condemned](#) Russia’s threat to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Both leaders also expressed their desire for the conflict to end. The Chinese president stressed the need for greater cooperation between China and Germany in “times of change and turmoil”, while the German chancellor said Moscow was in danger of “crossing a line” if it used atomic weapons, in what was his first meeting with Xi.

Both NATO and Russia carried out annual nuclear war exercises in October. President Putin is [said](#) to have monitored drills of the country’s strategic nuclear forces involving multiple launches of ballistic and cruise missiles on 26 October. The Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin that the exercise was intended to simulate a “massive nuclear strike” by Russia in retaliation for a nuclear attack. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin [said](#) on 27 October that the United States had not seen anything to indicate that Russia’s ongoing annual ‘Grom’ exercises of its nuclear forces may be a cover for a real deployment. NATO released a short [video](#) about its latest ‘Steadfast Noon’ nuclear exercise over north-western Europe. The majority of the US-NATO exercises were held at least 1,000km from Russia’s borders, over Belgium, the North Sea and the UK.

US Nuclear Posture Review

Meanwhile, following months of delays, the Biden administration [released](#) its Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) on 27 October. The document declares that “the fundamental role of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, our Allies, and partners,” while also stating that the US nuclear arsenal could be used to deter conventional “attacks that have a strategic effect against the United States or its Allies and partners”. Biden’s NPR adjusts nuclear policy and programmes at the margins while making no significant changes to the Pentagon’s budgets and deployments. It endorses dozens of nuclear-weapons programmes that will cost an estimated \$634 billion over this decade, according to a May 2021 [assessment](#) from the Congressional Budget Office. Including in that estimate are missile defence programmes, weapons programmes added after the Congress report and expected inflation that could bring the cost to almost \$1 trillion per decade for several decades to come.

Shannon Bugos, [NATO, Russia Conduct Simultaneous Nuclear Exercises](#), Arms Control Association, November 2022

[Russia says U.S. lowering 'nuclear threshold' with newer bombs in Europe](#), Reuters, 29 October 2022

Emma Claire Foley, [Biden’s nuke review abandons campaign rhetoric on disarmament](#), Responsible Statecraft, 28 October 2022

Marion Messmer, [The 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis: What lessons does the crisis teach for today?](#) ELN Commentary, 28 October 2022

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Kate Hudson, [NATO, Russia war games are making nuclear risks worse](#), Al Jazeera, 24 October 2022

John Gower and Andrew Weber, [Rhetoric in Ukraine has reinforced the fallacy of limited nuclear exchange](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 21 October 2022

[Americans' nuclear fears surge to highest levels since Cold War](#), The Hill, 14 October 2022

On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

About 1,000 bodies – including civilians and children – have been exhumed in the recently liberated Kharkiv region, media [reports](#) said. This includes the 447 bodies found at the mass burial site in Izium. The International Criminal Court (ICC) opened an [investigation](#) into possible war crimes in Ukraine just days after Moscow's forces invaded and it dispatched dozens of investigators to the country to gather evidence. A substantial ICC investigative team [appears](#) to be working in Ukraine on a near permanent basis. On 14 July, 45 countries [agreed](#) at a conference in the Hague to coordinate investigations into suspected war crimes in Ukraine.

The UN culture agency, Unesco, has [said](#) it is using before-and-after satellite imagery to monitor the cultural destruction inflicted by Russia's war in Ukraine, and would make its tracking platform public soon. Unesco said it had verified damage to 207 cultural sites including religious sites, museums, buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, monuments and libraries.

David Bosco, [The ICC's Impact in Ukraine](#), Lawfare, 27 October 2022

Dan Sabbagh, ['Accountability gap': Nobel peace prize winner warns Russian war crimes going unpunished](#), The Guardian, 26 October 2022

On sanctions against Russia and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine galvanized the US, UK and EU, and a handful of other Western-aligned countries, to unleash a series of [sanctions](#) meant to punish Vladimir Putin's government and pressure him to pull his forces back. According to the EU justice commissioner, Didier Reynders, for example, the EU has [frozen](#) Russian assets worth about €17bn since Moscow invaded Ukraine. While the sanctions lists are sometimes difficult to interpret, the EU has [sanctioned](#) 1,236 individuals and 115 entities—an approximate doubling of its entire sanctions portfolio across the dozens of sanctions regimes it implements; the UK also roughly doubled its portfolio (excluding the UN listings it is obligated to implement) having [imposed](#) sanctions on over 1,200 individuals and over 120 businesses; and the US has [sanctioned](#) more than 1,000 individuals or organizations since the invasion.

The numbers, and the pace of the rollout, dwarf the sanctions lists for the likes of Iran, North Korea, Libya, the thematic counterterrorism lists, and all others. However, rather than dissuading the Kremlin as intended, the penalties appear instead to be exacerbating inflation, worsening food insecurity and punishing ordinary Russians more than Putin or his allies. Moreover, Russia has claimed (see NATO Watch [Update 17](#) and [Update 18](#)) that it is getting more revenue from its fossil fuel sales now than before its invasion of Ukraine, despite (or partly because of) Western sanctions.

Two [Russian oligarchs](#) and business partners of Roman Abramovich were added to the [UK Government's sanctions](#) list on 2 November. Alexander Abramov and Alexander Frolov, whom the UK Government said were “known to be business associates” of the former Chelsea FC owner, were among four new Russian steel and petrochemical tycoons added to the sanctions list. Meanwhile, Indian IT services company Infosys, from which the British prime minister's wife collects £11.5 million in annual dividends, is still [operating from Moscow](#) eight months after the company

said it was pulling out. The company retains a staffed office and is paying subcontractors in the Russian capital to carry out IT services for a global client, although a spokesperson said they were looking to end that arrangement.

A new Marshall Plan?

A German lobby group representing companies with interests in eastern Europe [called](#) for a plan to rebuild Ukraine that would mirror the Marshall plan that helped Europe recover from the second world war, the media group RND reported. A Ukraine-Germany business forum in Berlin on 24 October discussed the plan. The next day, national leaders, development experts and CEOs gathered in Berlin for a conference on the idea of developing such a Marshall plan. The conference, hosted by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the European Commission, did not involve concrete pledges of cash towards the estimated \$750bn reconstruction cost. However, President Zelensky and the European hosts laid out a [vision](#) of a future Ukraine as a EU member and major exporter of green energy to the continent.

IMF managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, [told](#) the conference that Ukraine's external financing needs will be around \$3bn a month through 2023 in a best case scenario, but could rise as high as \$5bn. Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [said](#) Russian assets and those of Russian oligarchs amount to "huge pot of gold" that should be used for Ukraine's reconstruction. "We must make sure that the offender pays for reconstruction. Russia should pay Ukraine war damages, war reparations", he added. Meanwhile, speaking after a meeting of energy ministers in Luxembourg, EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson [urged](#) EU countries and companies to donate more money and equipment to support the energy sector in Ukraine, over a third of which has been destroyed by Russian missile and drone strikes. Switzerland has [committed](#) to providing \$106 million for Ukraine's energy infrastructure recovery.

Anna Ackerman, Nataliya Andrusyevych and Oleh Savyskyi, [A Green Deal for post-war Ukraine](#),

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1 November 2022

Carla Norrlöf, [Don't be fooled: sanctions really are hurting Russia's war against Ukraine](#), The Guardian, 26 October 2022

Ronja Ganster and Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, [Postwar Planning Must Begin: What a Modern Marshall Plan for Ukraine Looks Like](#), GMF Insights, 24 October 2022

On international food security and Ukrainian grain exports

Russia announced on 2 November that it was rejoining a deal to facilitate grain shipments from Ukraine's ports. This came just four days after Russia withdrew from the deal, sparking fears it could worsen the global hunger crisis. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [said](#) the renewed deal would prioritize grain shipments to Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and other African nations. Russia said it rejoined the deal after Ukraine agreed not to use the sea corridor to attack Russian forces. The [grain deal](#) between Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the UN was agreed on 22 July and is considered to be crucial for Ukraine's economy as well as global food security (on international food security and Ukrainian grain exports, see NATO Watch [Update 17](#), [Update 18](#), [Update 20](#) and [Update 21](#)). The grain exports are being overseen by a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) in Istanbul where Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and UN personnel are working. It had allowed Ukraine to transport more than 9 million tonnes of grain and oilseed commodities, while Russia was allowed to export food and fertiliser, [helping to bring down food prices](#) by 15% from their March peak after the war made the route treacherous. Russian officials had hinted previously on several occasions about pulling out of the deal, which was due to expire on 19 November.

The Russian suspension

Russia [announced](#) it was suspending the arrangement in response to an [attack](#) on 29 October by Ukrainian airborne and underwater drones on its naval base of Sevastopol in Crimea (see above). President Putin [told](#) a news conference on 31 October that Ukrainian

drones had used the same marine corridors that grain ships transited under the UN-brokered deal. Moscow called ship movements through the Black Sea security corridor “unacceptable”. In a [statement](#), the Russian Defence Ministry said it wanted “commitments” from Ukraine not to use the Black Sea grain corridor for military purposes, adding “there can be no question of guaranteeing the security of any object” in the area until then. However, the UN disputed Moscow’s claim that a civilian cargo ship carrying Ukrainian grain may have been involved in the drone strike. The UN aid chief Martin Griffiths [said](#) no such ships were in the Black Sea’s designated “safe zone” corridor at the time Russia said the attack had taken place.

The UN, NATO, EU and US all urged Russia to reverse its decision amid fears of a global food crisis. US President Joe Biden [described](#) the move as “purely outrageous” while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) Russia was “weaponising food”. Echoing these comments, NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu [said](#) “President Putin must stop weaponising food and end his illegal war on Ukraine. We call on Russia to reconsider its decision and renew the deal urgently, enabling food to reach those who need it most”. EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, [said](#) “Russia’s decision to suspend participation in the Black Sea deal puts at risk the main export route of much-needed grain and fertilisers to address the global food crisis caused by its war against Ukraine”, while the UN Secretary General António Guterres [said](#) he was “deeply concerned” by Russia’s suspension of the deal and delayed his departure to attend the Arab League summit in Algiers for a day to try to revive it. Russia requested a meeting on 31 October of the UN Security Council to discuss the issue.

Nonetheless, the UN, Turkey and Ukraine [said](#) they would press ahead with implementation of the grain deal with a transit plan in place for 16 ships, despite Russia suspending its participation in the pact. And Ukraine’s minister of infrastructure [confirmed](#) that 12 of those ships left Ukraine on 31 October. In a statement, the JCC in Istanbul said the three

delegations had also agreed for inspections to be provided the same day for 40 outbound vessels. However, Kyiv’s infrastructure ministry [said](#) on 30 October that 218 vessels were now “effectively blocked” in its ports – 22 loaded and stuck at ports, 95 loaded and departed from ports, and 101 awaiting inspections. Earlier the UN had [said](#) on 24 October that urgent steps were needed to relieve a backlog of more than 150 ships involved in the grain deal. Ukraine said Russian inspections that have been creating “significant” delays for the export of Ukrainian food products were “politically motivated” and a cause for concern. Meanwhile, France said it was [working towards](#) allowing Ukrainian food exports to go through land routes rather than the Black Sea.

Russia rejoins the deal

On the 2 November, however, President Putin [said](#) that Moscow would rejoin the grain export deal, but that it reserved the right to withdraw again, if necessary. “We demanded assurances and guarantees from the Ukrainian side that nothing like this would happen again, that the humanitarian corridors would not be used militarily,” Putin said during a video meeting with his coordination council. The Russian Defence Ministry said it had received written guarantees from Kyiv not to use the Black Sea grain corridor for military operations against Russia. “The Russian Federation considers that the guarantees received at the moment appear sufficient, and resumes the implementation of the agreement,” the Ministry [statement](#) said. However, a Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that, contrary to Russian claims, Ukraine has made no new commitments that go beyond the terms originally signed in July.

Ukraine’s President Zelensky welcomed Moscow’s U-turn and hailed “a significant diplomatic result for our country and the whole world”. “Implementation of the grain export initiative continues,” he [said](#) in his address on 2 November. “The Kremlin is demanding security guarantees from Ukraine. This shows both the failure of the Russian aggression and how strong we are when we remain united”.

The Russian delegation [resumed](#) work at the JCC in Istanbul and joined vessel inspections on 3 November, the UN secretariat at the centre said. It said the queue for inspections has been significantly reduced, with currently over 120 ships waiting to move, mainly those planning an inbound voyage. The same day Russia [urged](#) the UN to help fulfil the parts of the deal intended to ease Russia's food and fertiliser exports. "We still do not see any results regarding a second aspect: the removal of obstacles to the export of Russian fertilisers and grain", the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference in Jordan. Russian agricultural exports do not fall explicitly under sanctions imposed since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February, but Moscow says they are badly hindered by the restrictions imposed on its financial, logistics and insurance sectors.

[African Nations Reliant on Grain Imports Seek Ukraine Diplomacy as U.S. & Europe Align Against Russia](#), Democracy Now, 3 November 2022

[NATO calls on Russia to urgently renew Ukraine grain deal](#), Reuters, 30 October 2022

[UN, Nato, EU and US call on Russia to resume Ukrainian grain deal](#), The Guardian, 30 October 2022

On energy security in Europe

Europe is striving to diversify its energy supply sources in order to curb its dependence on Russia. Gas shortages are occurring across Europe, raising the prospect of energy rationing as governments push to develop alternative supplies. The West accuses Russia of restricting energy supplies to boost prices in retaliation for sanctions imposed after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Russia denies it is to blame, and instead attributes responsibility to Western sanctions and various technical problems. President Putin has also [threatened](#) to cut off all deliveries of gas, oil, and coal to Europe if they imposed a price cap on Russian energy imports. A preliminary [assessment](#) of the damage caused to the Nord Stream gas pipeline by explosions at the end of September was published on 2 November. Nord Stream AG said that about 250 metres of the pipeline in the Baltic Sea was

"destroyed". Meanwhile, a 40% cut in deliveries of Russian natural gas is hitting Moldova's ability to provide sufficient electricity for its 2.5 million people, the deputy prime minister [said](#) on 31 October.

Andrii Chubyk, [Commercial Electricity Trade Between Ukraine and European Neighbours](#), Globesec commentary, 28 October 2022 28.10.2022

Stephen Kinzer, [When pipeline politics go boom](#), Responsible Statecraft, 28 October 2022

On developments within Russia

The Russian defence ministry [said](#) on 31 October that it had completed the partial military mobilisation announced by President Putin in September and no further call-up notices would be issued. Speaking at a meeting with President Putin broadcast on state television, Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu [said](#) 82,000 mobilised recruits were in the conflict zone and a further 218,000 in training in barracks. Meanwhile, a Russian Su-30 combat aircraft [crashed](#) in Siberia on 23 October, killing two crew members. The crash appears to reflect the growing strain that the fighting in Ukraine has put on the Russian air force.

At least 112,000 Russians have [emigrated](#) to Georgia this year, border crossing statistics show. Reuters reported that the first large wave of 43,000 arrived after Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February and the second wave came after Putin announced a nationwide mobilisation drive in late September.

A pro-Kremlin television presenter has been [accused](#) of inciting genocide after calling for Ukrainian children to be "drowned" and "burned" alive during an interview on the state-funded RT channel. Anton Krasovsky, the chief of Russian-language broadcasting for the channel formerly called Russia Today, was suspended from RT, and the head of Russia's powerful investigative committee said it would review his remarks as part of a potential criminal investigation. Meanwhile, a Russian court on 25 October [dismissed](#) WNBA basketball star Brittney Griner's appeal against

a nine-year sentence for possessing and smuggling vape cartridges containing cannabis oil. Griner's lawyer said she hoped she could be released in a prisoner exchange with the US. To this end, US embassy officials in Russia [visited](#) Griner on 3 November. The White House said officials were continuing to work toward a prisoner swap offer with Russia for the release of Griner – but elaborated no further on what that meant, or how soon that could take place.

Iran has [said](#) it will supply Russia with 40 turbines to help its gas industry amid western sanctions over Moscow's war in Ukraine, local media reported on 23 October. Iran's "industrial successes are not limited to the fields of missiles and drones", Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company's CEO, Reza Noushadi, was quoted as saying by Shana, the oil ministry's news agency.

On developments within NATO

Norway put its military on a [raised level of alert](#) on 31 October to enhance its response to the war in Ukraine, although Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said no direct threat of invasion was detected from Russia. Norway has a 198km border with Russia in the Arctic. Meanwhile, Poland [announced](#) on 2 November that it will build a razor-wire fence on its border with Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. Construction of the temporary 2.5-metre (8ft) high and 3-metre deep barrier will start immediately, Poland's Defence Minister Mariusz Błaszczak told a news conference.

On 20 October 2022, NATO issued a two-page document outlining its new approach and guiding principles to [Human Security](#). The document aims to "provide a coherent and consistent understanding of human security for NATO", and is related to the recently released [Strategic Concept](#).

[NATO, Türkiye agree on supporting Ukraine to end Russia's 'war of aggression': Stoltenberg](#), Anadolu Agency, 5 November 2022

[US Special Forces will showcase first ever live fire of airdropped cruise missiles off Northern Norway](#), Barents Observer, 5 November 2022

[Who Will Be NATO's Next Chief? The Race Is On](#), New York Times, 4 November 2022

Marla Keenan and Samantha Turner, [NATO issues its much anticipated "Human Security Approach"](#), Stimson, 2 November 2022

[Nato concludes two-week vigilance activity Neptune Strike 22.2](#), Naval Technology, 31 October 2022

["NATO fully respects Serbia's policy of military neutrality", says Chair of the NATO Military Committee](#), NATO News Release, 28 October 2022

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on board the US Navy Aircraft Carrier USS George H.W. Bush, 26 October 2022

[Joint press point](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Romania, Nicolae Ciucă, 26 October 2022

[NATO Secretary General and Romanian Prime Minister address Black Sea security](#), NATO News Release, 26 October 2022

[Secretary General aboard USS George H.W. Bush: NATO's strength deters conflict](#), NATO News Release, 25 October 2022

[NATO frigates shadowed outside Russia's Arctic submarine bases](#), Barents Observer, 25 October 2022

[German and Belgian Fighters on NATO Mission in Estonia](#), NATO News Release, 24 October 2022

[NATO clears BlackBerry SecuSUITE for global NATO secure communications](#), PR Newswire, 24 October 2022

[NATO's eFP Battlegroup Poland lays the foundation for combat readiness](#), US Army, 24 October 2022

Katarina Kertysova, [Perseverance amidst crisis: NATO's ambitious climate change and security agenda after Madrid](#), ELN Commentary, 18 October 2022

[Summit prepares ground for 'NATOisation of Europe' and continues collision course with China and high levels of military spending](#), NATO Watch Briefing No.96, 6 July 2022

On Finland and Sweden joining NATO

Finland and Sweden were invited to join NATO, after a [trilateral memorandum](#) with Turkey agreed on the eve of the NATO Madrid Summit assuaged Ankara's previous objections. The two Nordic countries will become NATO members after the Accession Protocol is ratified by all 30 member states. The invitation to Finland and Sweden represents a major geopolitical shift in Europe as the two countries move away from neutrality. To date, 28 NATO member states have ratified the decision. Hungary and Turkey are the two member states where parliaments have not yet been asked to vote on the issue.

Hungary's Government has submitted the ratification documents to the National Assembly, Minister Gergely Gulyás told reporters at a briefing on 22 October. Finland's President Sauli Niinistö [said](#) he was counting on Hungary to ratify its NATO application after he had talked on the phone with the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán on 2 November. While Hungary is expected to ratify by mid-December at the latest, the assumption is that Turkey is likely to wait until after a general election in June 2023. But ratification by Turkey is still by no means certain. As Finland and Sweden await final approval from Turkey, after talks in Helsinki on 28 October, their two prime ministers [agreed](#) to join NATO at the same time.



[Sweden to distance itself from Kurdish militias in effort to join NATO, FM says](#), Middle East Monitor, 6 November 2022

[Sweden to distance itself from Kurdish groups in bid to join NATO](#), Reuters, 5 November 2022

[Despite diplomacy, Hungary & Turkey still blocking Sweden and Finland from NATO](#), EuroNews, 4 November 2022

[Time to finalise Sweden's and Finland's entry to NATO, Stoltenberg says](#), Reuters, 3 November 2022

[NATO Secretary General visits Türkiye](#), NATO News Release, 3 November 2022

[Press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, 3 November 2022

[Turkey says Sweden, Finland not yet done enough under NATO deal](#), Reuters, 3 November 2022

[Turkey holds off on Finland and Sweden in NATO](#), Deutsche Welle, 3 November 2022

[Finnish President Believes Helsinki 'Can Count On Hungary' For NATO Ratification](#), RFE/RL, 2 November 2022

[Finland and Sweden hopeful Hungary will ratify NATO applications](#), Reuters, 2 November 2022

[Finland and Sweden call on Hungary and Turkey to ratify Nato applications](#), The Guardian, 1 November 2022

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[Finland urges Turkey, Hungary to swiftly approve Swedish, Finnish NATO bids](#), Reuters, 1 November 2022

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[PM does not rule out nuclear weapons or permanent Nato bases in Finland](#), YLE, 29 October 2022

[Convincing Turkey on NATO no easy task – Swedish prime minister](#), Ahval, 29 October 2022

[‘Hand-in-hand’: Finland, Sweden pledge to join NATO together](#), Politico, 29 October 2022

Ben Keith, [Turkey’s Erdoğan Deploys Sweden and Finland’s NATO Membership Bids to Further His Repression](#), Just Security, 28 October 2022

[NATO's Expansion in Doubt Over Turkey's Objections](#), VoA, 25 October 2022

[Turkish, Swedish top diplomats address implementation of NATO deal](#), Daily Sabah, 24 October 2022

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For further details see:

[Murky trilateral agreement results in Turkey lifting objections to Finland and Sweden’s NATO application](#), NATO Watch News Brief, 29 June 2022

[Should Finland and Sweden hold a referendum on NATO membership?](#) NATO Watch Briefing no. 93, 6 May 2022

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