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Russia's war with Ukraine

Russia carried out two mass rocket [attacks](#) on Ukraine on 14 January, destroying an apartment block in Dnipro and leaving at least 14 people dead and 64 injured, at least a dozen of them children. At least one person was also killed in a separate strike on a residential area in the nearby city of Kryvyi Rih. Ukrainian authorities said the targets were the country's energy infrastructure. Russia's campaign of airstrikes against Ukrainian critical infrastructure has continued into the New Year and largely consists of air- and maritime-launched cruise missiles but has also included [Iranian-provided drones](#).

Some of the heaviest fighting of the war has been taking place in Bakhmut and Soledar in the eastern Donbas region, where Russian forces have been trying to advance since early summer. Ukraine has denied [claims](#) on 10 January by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner mercenary group, that Russian forces have captured the salt mining town of Soledar. Prigozhin is interested in taking control of salt and gypsum from mines in the area, a White House official [said](#) on 5 January. There were indications that monetary motives were driving Russia's and Prigozhin's "obsession" with Bakhmut, the official added.

Ukrainian forces are repelling constant attacks on Bakhmut and holding their positions in nearby Soledar in arduous conditions, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his [video address](#) on 8 January: "Bakhmut is holding out against all odds. And although most of the city is destroyed by Russian strikes, our warriors repel constant attempts at Russian offensive there. Soledar is holding out. Although there is

even more destruction there and it is extremely hard...". On 13 January, Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces had taken full control of the town, but Ukrainian military spokesperson Serhii Cherevatyi [reported](#) "ongoing battles". Andriy Yermak, head of the office of the president of Ukraine, [likened](#) the fight for the town to 'Verdun for 21st century': the longest and bloodiest battle in World War I. Satellite [images](#) taken by Maxar Technologies show the destruction inflicted upon Soledar.

The outlook

Russia's artillery fire in Ukraine has gone down dramatically from its wartime high, in some places by as much as 75%, [according](#) to US and Ukrainian officials. The drop in shelling is further evidence of Russia's increasingly weak position on the battlefield nearly a year into its invasion, officials told CNN. However, Ukraine is unlikely to be able to take back a significant amount of territory from Russia without an increase in military capability, including tanks and armoured vehicles. Russian and Ukrainian forces are currently too closely matched for the Ukrainians to be able to mount a major offensive. Mick Ryan, a strategist and recently retired Australian Army major general, [suggested](#) that five factors will shape the Russia-Ukraine war in 2023: the husbanding of ammunition and the capacity of the West to increase defence production; the ability of Ukraine and Russia to mobilise, train and deploy its troops; the willingness of the West to provide more sophisticated ground and air offensive capabilities to Ukraine; the willingness of China to remain "neutral" in this war; and the strategic leadership of presidents

Zelenskyy, Putin and Biden — and their ability to sustain the will of their people.

Ukraine a 'de facto' member of NATO?

Russian President Vladimir Putin has framed his invasion of Ukraine as an existential battle against Western countries that want to weaken Russia. The Kremlin argues it is effectively fighting NATO in Ukraine, as the West has supplied the country with weapons. In an [interview](#) with the BBC on 13 January, the Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov seemed to agree, saying “Ukraine as a country, and the armed forces of Ukraine, became [a] member of NATO. De facto, not de jure (by law). Because we have weaponry, and the understanding of how to use it.” He added, “I’m sure that in the near future, we’ll become member of NATO, de jure”. Earlier President Zelensky urged NATO to do more than just promise Ukraine its ‘open doors’ and said Kyiv needs “powerful steps” as it tries to join the military alliance. “For today, just support for Ukraine from colleagues in NATO and support in the form of rhetoric about open doors is not enough for Ukraine. Namely, not enough to motivate our state ... our soldiers,” Zelensky [said](#) in Lviv on 11 January after talks with the presidents of Lithuania and Poland. “We need steps forward ... we are looking forward to powerful steps, we are counting on something more than just open doors”.

A unilateral Russian ‘ceasefire’

A unilateral 36-hour ceasefire on “the entire contact line” in Ukraine was [declared](#) by Russian President Vladimir Putin covering 6-7 January. The Russian President’s order came after Patriarch Kirill, head of the Orthodox church in Russia, [called](#) on 5 January for a ceasefire and a Christmas truce in Ukraine to enable Orthodox people to attend services. In a [statement](#), Kirill said he appealed to “all parties involved in the internecine conflict” for the ceasefire, so that “Orthodox people can attend services on Christmas Eve and the day of the Nativity of Christ”. Many Orthodox Christians, including those living in Russia and Ukraine, celebrate Christmas on 6-7 January. Despite the declared ceasefire, Russian attacks were [reported](#) in at least seven regions in

Ukraine’s east and south, and at least three people were killed.

President Zelensky [rejected](#) Russia’s ceasefire proposal, which he [claimed](#) was designed to halt the progress of Ukraine’s forces in Donetsk and the wider eastern Donbas region and bring in more of Moscow’s forces. The war would end, Zelensky said, when Russian troops left Ukraine or were thrown out. He also said Moscow had repeatedly ignored Kyiv’s own peace plan (see below). US President Joe Biden [said](#) Putin was “trying to find some oxygen” by floating the ceasefire, while the US Institute for the Study of War [claimed](#) Putin’s announcement was likely an information operation intended to damage Ukraine’s reputation. Other [analysis](#) of the ceasefire suggested that it signalled Russia’s intent to freeze the conflict along current territorial lines. “But the ceasefire may also have been a litmus test to determine how the Russian population would respond to the idea of reduced territorial goals in Ukraine – a stark revision of the initial war aims that included regime change in Kyiv”.

The Ukrainian attack on a Russian military base in Donetsk

Ukrainian artillery struck a Russian military base in occupied Makiyivka, a suburb of Donetsk, on New Year’s Eve. A Ukrainian Army Telegram channel said that some 400 mobilised Russians had been killed, while Russia later admitted 89 had died. The strike, which was conducted using the US-supplied HIMARS system, marked the highest number of Russian fatalities in a single incident that Moscow has admitted since the war began. The strike generated “significant criticism of Russian military leadership”, according to a [report](#) from the Institute for the Study of War. Several prominent Russian pro-war bloggers and commentators acknowledged the attack, with many suggesting the number of casualties was higher than the figures officially reported.

On 4 January Russia’s Defence Ministry [blamed](#) the illegal use of mobile phones by its soldiers for the missile strike: “This factor allowed the enemy to track and determine the coordinates

of the soldiers' location for a missile strike" it said in a statement. It was also reported that unsafe ammunition storage near troop accommodation in Makiivka contributed to Russia's high casualty rate. Russia [claimed](#) on 8 January to have killed more than 600 Ukrainian troops in a "retaliatory strike" in the eastern town of Kramatorsk, but Ukraine's armed forces rejected the claim. Ukrainian officials said significant Russian losses in the war meant Moscow would probably have to announce a second partial mobilisation in the first quarter of the year. Ukraine's military intelligence has also [claimed](#) Russia is set to order the mobilisation of as many as 500,000 conscripts in January in addition to the 300,000 it called up in October. Vadym Skibitsky, Ukraine's deputy military intelligence chief, said Ukraine believed the conscripts would be part of a string of Russian offensives over the spring and summer in the east and south of the country.

The self-proclaimed republics in Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR), both of which are occupied areas of Ukraine that Russia claims to have annexed, adopted new "constitutions", the Russian state-owned Tass news agency [reported](#) on 30 December. Denis Pushilin, who is styled as the acting leader of the DPR, was quoted as hailing "the return of Donbas to the bosom of the Russian cultural and historical tradition".

Belarus and Russia

Russia and Belarus have [expanded](#) their joint military training exercises in Belarus, the country's defence TV channel said on 8 January, as concerns grow that Moscow is pressuring its closest ally to join the war in Ukraine. The two countries added weapons, soldiers and specialised equipment to the exercises, Reuters reported. Rumours were circulating at the end of the year of a [wider Russian counteroffensive](#) in early 2023, including the [possibility](#) of Russian troops invading via Belarus, on Ukraine's northern border, in a [renewed attempt](#) at capturing the capital, Kyiv. Belarus summoned the Ukrainian ambassador on 30 December, [saying](#) it shot down a Ukrainian air defence missile in Belarusian territory. Alexander Volfovich the

secretary of the Belarus security council, accused Ukraine of trying to "provoke a regional conflict", claiming it was "unlikely" that the Ukrainian air defence missile downed on 29 December had entered Belarusian airspace by accident. A Ukrainian military spokesperson said the incident was "the result of air defence".

Stalled diplomacy

The EU is "prepared for a long war" in Ukraine and will support Kyiv against Russia's aggression for "as long as it takes", [said](#) Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billström on 11 January, whose country holds the EU's presidency. He also said the EU would continue working on more sanctions against Moscow over the invasion of Ukraine. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also stressed the importance of supporting Ukraine, including with more weapons, in a [speech](#) to the Annual Conference of the Norwegian Confederation of Enterprises in Oslo on 5 January 2023. "Weapons are – in fact – the way to peace", said Mr. Stoltenberg, adding: "there will be no lasting peace if oppression and tyranny win over freedom and democracy". He stressed the need for allies to invest more in defence, eliminate dependencies on authoritarian regimes, and to stand together to uphold freedom and democracy.

Both President Zelensky and President Putin have expressed a willingness to negotiate an end to the war, but their positions remain so far apart that there are no real hopes of peace talks in the near future. President Zelensky has previously suggested convening a special global peace summit that would focus on the implementation of Kyiv's [10-point peace plan](#), which 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. Zelenskyy had asked the Group of 20 (G20) last month to adopt the plan to end the war. However, Russia shows no signs of being ready to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and pre-war borders.

There have been some negotiations on key issues, such as the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant,

getting grain out of Ukraine and in organising prisoner swaps, but no Ukrainian-Russian negotiations since March on the big issues. Notably, a grain deal brokered by the UN and Turkey in July aimed at easing global food shortages was [extended](#) for four months on 17 November, and Russia and Ukraine have carried out numerous prisoner of war exchanges. About 50 Ukrainian soldiers were [released](#) from Russian detention on 8 January as part of the latest prisoner swap. In addition, Ukraine's human rights commissioner was due to meet his Russian counterpart for talks in Turkey this week, news agencies from both countries [reported](#). Tatiana Moskalkova, the Russian commissioner, was quoted by Interfax news agency as saying that the meeting with Ukraine's Dmytro Lubinets would take place during an international forum in Turkey between 12-14 January. The talks were expected to include the possibility of further exchanges of prisoners of war.

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 16 November. 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).

The United States is the [largest](#) provider of military assistance to Ukraine, having committed roughly \$20 billion since the start of the Biden administration, with \$19.3 billion being provided since February 2022. In comparison, the top recipient in other years, Israel, received between \$3 and \$4 billion. The US will provide a new weapons aid package for Ukraine and its neighbours worth more than \$3.75 billion, the White House [announced](#) on 6 January, including for the first time several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles. The package includes a \$2.85 billion drawdown from the Pentagon's stocks that will be sent directly to Ukraine and \$225 million in foreign military financing to build the long-term capacity and support the modernisation of Ukraine's military. In addition, Ukrainian troops are set to begin training on the Patriot missile system in the United States, US officials [said](#) on 10 January. The training programme will take place at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, and is expected to take "several months". During Zelensky's visit to the United States in December, President Biden announced \$1.85 billion in new military assistance to Kyiv, including the delivery of a Patriot missile battery system. The US is also [reportedly](#) considering sending Stryker armoured combat vehicles to Ukraine.

European and other partners have [pledged](#) about \$12 billion in military support to Ukraine, with more to come. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on 10 January [said](#) his government would purchase a US air defence system (worth US\$302 million) to donate to Ukraine.

As the second largest source of arms, the UK has [committed £2.3 billion](#) in military assistance to Ukraine so far and has pledged to match that assistance in 2023. The UK is also hosting a training programme (Operation Interflex), which is supported by several allies, with the aim of training 10,000 new and existing Ukrainian personnel within 120 days. The UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak [confirmed](#) on 14 January that the country will provide a small number of Challenger 2 tanks (possibly

10) and additional artillery systems to Ukraine to help Kyiv's forces "push Russian troops back. Earlier, the UK [gave](#) Ukraine more than 1,000 metal detectors and 100 kits to deactivate bombs to help clear minefields. "This latest package of UK support will help Ukraine safely clear land and buildings as it reclaims its rightful territory," the UK Defence Minister Ben Wallace, said in a [statement](#) on 30 December.

Poland's President Andrzej Duda [announced](#) plans on 11 January to send 10 German-made Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine as part of an international coalition. The transfer would require permission from Germany. While the German vice-chancellor, Robert Habeck, [said](#) his country should not stand in the way of other countries' military support for Ukraine, chancellor Olaf Scholz [said](#) on 13 January that Germany would continue to "weigh every step carefully" and consult with its allies on further weapons deliveries to Ukraine. The German leader is facing mounting pressure to approve the battle tanks for Kyiv. Scholz said Berlin would keep its "leading position" as one of Kyiv's top supporters but said he had no intention of being rushed on "such serious things that have to do with peace and war, with the security of our country and of Europe". Earlier, Germany joined the US in [agreeing](#) to supply an additional Patriot air defence battery to Ukraine, as well as armoured personnel carriers, after Scholz and Biden spoke by phone on 5 January. The two leaders "expressed their common determination to continue to provide the necessary financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine for as long as needed", the White House said in a [statement](#).

France [announced](#) on 4 January that it would send light AMX-10 RC armoured combat vehicles to Ukraine, although no details were given about the volume or timing of the planned shipments. Italy will not make a decision on supplying new arms to Ukraine until next month, according to a [report](#). Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni faces resistance to the approval of a decree to send arms to Ukraine from her allies Matteo Salvini and Silvio Berlusconi, la Repubblica reported, as

well as issues over cost considerations and military shortages. The first five tranches of Italian aid were sent to Kyiv during the tenure of Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who was replaced by Giorgia Meloni in late October.

[The EU](#) is also providing non-lethal and lethal arms through its European Peace Facility (EPF). This is the first time the EU has approved the supply of lethal weapons to a third country. To date, the EU has committed €3.1 billion in assistance, and in October 2022, the EU also approved a new training mission for the Ukrainian armed forces. In addition, Ukraine and the EU will hold a [summit](#) in Kyiv on 3 February to discuss further financial and military support, Zelenskiy's office said in a statement on 2 January. Finally, a [report](#) in The Economist claims that Elon Musk's SpaceX's satellite constellation and the use of private communication facilities have become integral to Ukraine's military and civil response.

External military support to Russia so far has been limited to a handful of states, principally [Iran](#) and [North Korea](#).

For further details on arms transfers to Ukraine, see, the [Forum on the Arms Trade](#). For a timeline of every US arms shipment to Ukraine that has been announced since the war began, see [here](#). And for a list of the total military support from Germany, 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. America's most senior general and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, [estimated](#) in November that Russia's military had seen more than 100,000 of its soldiers killed and wounded in Ukraine, adding Kyiv's armed forces have "probably" suffered a similar level of casualties in the war. Milley also suggested that around 40,000 civilians had died after being caught up in the conflict. In September Russia [acknowledged](#) nearly 6,000 war dead, while Ukraine [claims](#) to have killed more than 115,000 Russian soldiers in the war to date.

Speaking on Ukrainian tv on 2 December, Kyiv's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak [said](#) up to 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed since Russia invaded in February, apparently based on official figures from Ukraine's general staff. However, at certain points in the war, Ukraine [said](#) that between 100 and 200 of its forces were dying each day on the battlefield, making Podolyak's estimate seem conservative. 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 10 January, 6,952 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 431 children. The actual civilian casualty 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 10,680 people by 13 January. From this number, 3,813 were killed and 6,867 were injured. Ninety-four per cent (10,055) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

As of 10 January, there were 7,968,510 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,928,311 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.

Continuing concerns about nuclear facilities

There are ongoing fears Russia's relentless targeting of Ukraine's electricity grid will threaten the safety of the country's nuclear power plants. Most international concern has focused on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is in Russian hands but operated by Ukrainian workers. It is Europe's largest, provided about a fifth of Ukraine's electricity before Russia's invasion, was shut down in September due to fighting in and around it

over the previous two months, and has been forced to operate on backup generators several times since. These events raised concerns about the potential for a [nuclear accident](#). A 14-member International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [expert mission](#) carried out an inspection of the plant in early September. For further details see NATO Watch updates [23](#) through to [27](#). The IAEA [announced](#) on 13 January that it would boost its presence in Ukraine to help prevent a nuclear accident during the conflict. The IAEA will soon have a permanent presence at all five of Ukraine's nuclear facilities. Currently, only the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia plant, which is near the frontline, has a permanent IAEA presence.

Further reading:

On outcomes and consequences of the war

[Russia's frenzied fight for Ukraine's strategic eastern towns](#), Al Jazeera, 14 January 2023

Zoriana Mishchuk and Roman Vlasenko, [Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War](#), Globsec, 13 January 2023

Uzi Rubin, [Russia's Iranian-Made UAVs: A Technical Profile](#), RUSI Commentary, 13 January 2023

George Beebe, [Laying the foundations for a settlement in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 13 January 2023

[Ukraine defence minister: We are a de facto member of Nato alliance](#), BBC News, 13 January 2023

Blaise Malley, [Diplomacy Watch: Are European countries diverging on Ukraine aid?](#), Responsible Statecraft, 13 January 2023

Emily Ferris, [Could Russia's Reliance on Belarus be its Soft Underbelly?](#) Defence, Politics and Logistics, RUSI Emerging Insights, January 2023

Emily Ferris, [Russia's Messaging Around the 'Ceasefire': A Sign of What is to Come?](#) RUSI Commentary, 11 January 2023

[Russia's forces in Ukraine will be 'burned through and exhausted' by the end of winter, ex-NATO commander predicts](#), Business Insider, 9 January 2023

Anatol Lieven, [Where the war in Ukraine could be headed in 2023](#), Responsible Statecraft, 6 January 2023

[Ukraine Blasts Putin's Christmas Cease-Fire Proposal as 'Cynical Trap'](#), US News, 5 January 2023

[Drone advances in Ukraine could bring dawn of killer robots](#), ABC News, 4 January 2023

Michael Brenes, [Wealth for All Nations](#), Blog, 4 January 2023

Greg Mills, [Why Kyiv Needs an Africa Strategy](#), RUSI Commentary, 4 January 2023

Yves Smith, [Can NATO and the Pentagon Find a Diplomatic Off-Ramp from the Ukraine War?](#) Naked Capitalism, 4 January 2023

Ryan A. Musto, [In Addressing Russia's Attacks on Zaporizhzhia, Look to Africa](#), Lawfare, 4 January 2023

[Trump says US is giving Ukraine too much support, as new skeptical Republicans take office and swing control of the House](#), Business Insider, 3 January 2023

Joshua Huminski, [The time is now to question how NATO should look post Ukraine](#), Breaking Defense, 3 January 2023

Mick Ryan, [Five factors that will shape the Russia-Ukraine war in 2023](#), ABC News, 2 January 2023

[Ukraine must get long-term support, warns Nato chief](#), BBC News, 1 January 2023

Fridrik Jonsson and Erlingur Erlingsson, [To help Ukraine win, NATO must erase self-imposed red lines](#), The Hill, 30 December 2022

Craig Hooper, [America's Tough M2/M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles Are Perfect For Ukraine Fight](#), Forbes, 30 December 2022

Frederick, Bryan, Samuel Charap and Karl P. Mueller, [Responding to a Limited Russian Attack on NATO During the Ukraine War](#). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, December 2022

The Journal of Military and Strategic Studies, Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, Vol. 22 No. 2: *Special Issue on the War in Ukraine*, 12 December 2022

Alexander Hill, [From the Guest Editor](#)

Geoffrey Roberts, ['Now or Never': The Immediate Origins of Putin's Preventative War on Ukraine](#)

Alexander Hill, [How likely is it that Vladimir Putin will be able to Claim some sort of Victory in Ukraine? An Assessment based on Events from February - early November 2022](#)

Paul Robinson, [The Russia-Ukraine Conflict and the \(Un\)Changing Character of War](#)

Andrej Krickovic and Richard Sakwa, [War in Ukraine: The Clash of Norms and Ontologies](#)

Andrei P. Tsygankov, [At War with the West: Russian Realism and the Conflict in Ukraine](#)

Olayinka Ajala, [The Case for Neutrality: Understanding African Stances on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#)

On the risk of nuclear war

There have been concerns for several months 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.

Robert J. Goldston, [Ending the war while ensuring Russia does not gain territory via nuclear coercion](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 4 January 2023

On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

Demands for a special tribunal to investigate Russia for a "crime of aggression" against Ukraine have been [backed](#) by senior UK politicians from across the political divide in a move to show Vladimir Putin and his generals that they will be held to account. In a [joint statement](#), figures including the Labour leader Keir Starmer, the former NATO Secretary General George Robertson, the former Foreign

Secretary David Owen, and former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith say the tribunal should be set up to look into the “manifestly illegal war” on the same principles that guided the allies when they met in 1941 to lay the groundwork for the Nuremberg war crimes trials of Nazi leaders.

International fact-finding missions and investigations have identified clear patterns of violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February 2022. The violations are wide-ranging, including the conduct of fighting as well as treatment of prisoners of war, forced abductions, torture, restriction of civil and human rights, and denial of essential services. The United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Court of Human Rights, the ICC and Ukrainian national courts have all been active in attempting to hold criminals accountable. The ICC, for example, 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. Similarly, within the OSCE the Moscow Mechanism was activated to establish two expert missions to investigate violations and abuses committed in the war (see the subsequent [April](#) and [June](#) reports). On 14 July, 45 countries [agreed](#) at a conference in the Hague to coordinate investigations into suspected war crimes in Ukraine. In October, a [report](#) published by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine found reasonable grounds to conclude that an array of war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine. Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified. Finally, a [report](#) published on 7 December the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said Russian forces killed at least 441 civilians in the early days of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine. The report documents attacks in dozens of towns and summary executions that

it said might be war crimes. The actual number of victims in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions was likely to be much higher, the UN human rights office added. The report covers the period from the invasion’s start on 24 February until early April, when Russian forces withdrew from those three areas.

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. 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 Government has [frozen](#) more than £18bn of assets belonging to oligarchs and other Russians and UK [sanctions](#) have been imposed on 1,271 people according to [the annual review](#) of the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), published on 10 November; 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.

Nonetheless, new rounds of sanctions continue to be applied with notable impact, especially on the richest Russian oligarchs, which have [lost](#) almost \$95 billion this year – shedding \$330 million a day since the Kremlin launched its invasion. Roman Abramovich was the biggest loser, with his fortune falling by

57% to \$7.8 billion this year, according to the [Bloomberg Billionaires Index](#).

The United States is looking at ways to target Iranian drone production through sanctions and export controls, the White House [said](#) on 4 January. Washington previously imposed sanctions on companies and people it accused of producing or transferring Iranian drones that Russia has used against Ukraine.

Ukraine will need at least \$1.79bn (£1.48bn) to restore its telecommunications sector to prewar levels, according to a [report](#) by the Geneva-based International Telecommunication Union. Russia has “destroyed completely or seized” networks in parts of Ukraine, and communications infrastructure in more than 10 of the country’s 24 regions have been considerably damaged and destroyed, the report said.

Tom Keatinge and Aaron Arnold, [Will 2023 be the End of International Sanctions?](#) RUSI Commentary, 5 January 2023

Darya Dolzikova and Daniel Salisbury, [Triple threat: Russia, Iran, and North Korea trade arms to get around sanctions](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 28 December 2022

On international food security and Ukrainian grain exports

A [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. A senior Ukrainian official [said](#) on 4 January that Ukraine is seeking to increase exports under the deal by

securing faster inspections of ships rather than including more ports in the initiative.

On energy security in Europe

NATO and the EU are [launching](#) a taskforce to bolster the protection of critical infrastructure in response to last year’s attack on the Nord Stream gas pipelines and Russia’s “weaponising of energy”, leaders said on 11 January. The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said the taskforce would initially come up with proposals on transport, energy, digital and space infrastructure. Europe is striving to diversify its energy supply sources to curb its dependence on Russia. Gas shortages have been occurring across Europe and governments have been pushing 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.

On China’s position on the war

Despite widespread Western criticism of China’s position on the war in Ukraine, and the claim in NATO’s new [Strategic Concept](#) of a “deepening strategic partnership” between China and Russia, an unnamed senior US official [confirmed](#) on 30 June that China has not been giving material support for Russia's war in Ukraine. China’s newly appointed Foreign Minister, Qin Gang, spoke on 9 January with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, to discuss the “crisis” in Ukraine, the Chinese Foreign Ministry [said](#). The Ministry added that Qin called for efforts to peacefully settle the crisis in Ukraine. President Putin has [invited](#) his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to make a state visit to Moscow next northern spring, as Russia seeks to deepen its ties with China amid growing international isolation over the war in Ukraine. Speaking to Xi via a videoconference on 30 December, Putin said Russia’s ties with China were the “best in history” and expressed his wish to extend military collaboration.

Mara Hvistendahl and Alexey Kovalev, [Hacked Russian files reveal propaganda agreement with China](#), The Intercept, 30 December 2022

On developments within Russia

President Vladimir Putin's decision to replace his top commander in Ukraine after a few months is a sign of military disarray and his growing impatience in a war Russia is not winning, analysts [said](#). The Russian Defence Ministry said on 11 January it had, again, replaced its top commander in Ukraine, putting army chief of staff Valery Gerasimov in charge. It is the latest of several major [shake-ups](#) of Moscow's military leadership. Meanwhile, a Russian conscript has been [sentenced](#) to five-and-a-half years in prison after getting into an altercation with his superiors over poor training conditions, in the first known ruling against a soldier who criticised the Kremlin's unpopular mobilisation. In a [video](#) filmed on 13 November, draftee Alexander Leshkov is seen shouting profanities and shoving Lt Col Denis Mazanov at a training ground outside Moscow. Leshkov is heard telling his commander: "You are sabotaging the commander-in-chief's direct orders [to supply and train mobilised soldiers]," adding: "You should be arrested".

President Putin on 30 December [extended](#) holiday and 2023 New Year's greetings to heads of foreign states and governments, including NATO member Turkey, as well as leaders of international organizations. He "warmly congratulated" Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the coming new year, adding that "mutually beneficial relations" between the two countries were developing "very dynamically", the Kremlin said. Putin would not wish a happy new year to Joe Biden, Olaf Scholz, Emmanuel Macron or leaders of other "unfriendly countries", it added.

Moscow's exiled chief rabbi says Jews should leave Russia while they still can, before they are made scapegoats for the hardship caused by the war in Ukraine. Pinchas Goldschmidt [told](#) the Guardian on 30 December: "When we look back over Russian history, whenever the political system was in danger you saw the

government trying to redirect the anger and discontent of the masses towards the Jewish community ... We're seeing rising antisemitism while Russia is going back to a new kind of Soviet Union". Goldschmidt resigned from his post and left Russia in July after refusing to back Putin's war.

On developments within NATO

Calls for increased military spending

NATO countries will discuss their military spending targets in the coming months as some of them call for turning a 2% target into a minimum figure, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [told](#) the German news agency DPA on 3 January. Stoltenberg said that he would head the negotiations. "We will meet, we will have ministerial meetings, we will have talks in capitals," he said. He did not say which NATO countries were calling for a more ambitious target, according to DPA. The NATO chief said he aimed to reach an agreement no later than NATO's next regular summit, which will be in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, on 11-12 July. Patrick Turner, former Assistant Secretary General at NATO, has [called](#) for the target to be increased from 2% to 2.5%: "For comparison, 2.5% was roughly the level of defence spending by European countries at the end of the Cold War, a time when the threat from Russia was markedly lower and China did not pose the scale and range of threats it does today. Absolutely nothing less is required today".

Tensions in Kosovo

NATO's mission in Kosovo has declined a Serbian Government request to send up to 1,000 police and army personnel to Kosovo following a spate of clashes between Serbs and Kosovo authorities. On 5 January, the NATO-led KFOR mission completed the removal of several vehicles blocking roads in northern Kosovo, through the deployment of engineer units to the areas of Duda's Rock and Srbovac arterial route. It followed the decision taken on 28 December 2022 to remove barricades set up in northern Kosovo in December. The removal of barricades followed intensive efforts by NATO allies and the EU defuse tensions, with key support from KFOR and the EU-led Rule of Law mission (EULEX).

The EU and NATO take their partnership to the next level

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, met on 10 January 2023 at NATO Headquarters to sign the third [Joint Declaration](#) on NATO-European Union cooperation. Read more [here](#).

[NATO helps Jordan enhance its counter-terrorism capacity](#), NATO News Release, 13 January 2023

[NATO deploys AWACS surveillance jets to Romania](#), NATO News Release, 13 January 2023

Patrick Turner, [Ploughshares into Swords — NATO Spending Must Rise](#), CEPA Commentary, 12 January 2023

[Taiwan officer reveals details of rare interaction with NATO](#), Reuters, 12 January 2023

[After Nord Stream blasts, NATO, EU vow to protect infrastructure](#), Al Jazeera, 11 January 2023

[NATO Deputy Secretary General meets new Chinese Ambassador](#), NATO News Release, 11 January 2023

[Russia says EU is becoming a vassal of NATO](#), Reuters, 11 January 2023

[Joint Declaration](#) on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 10 January 2023

[NATO and European Union leadership sign third joint declaration](#), NATO News Release, 10 January 2023

[Joint press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, 10 January 2023

[EU and NATO vow to expand cooperation](#), Politico, 10 January 2023

[EU-NATO sign cooperation pledge, tone down strategic autonomy talk](#), Euractiv, 10 January 2023

[EU and NATO sign joint call for cooperation amid Ukraine war](#), Deutsche Welle, 10 January 2023

Dialogues between NATO and media literacy leaders to learn and collaborate on building more resilient global societies

Extract from press release: As NATO and the world adapts to growing, unpredictable threats from disruptive technology, AI and online warfare, media literacy education is increasingly recognized as an important foundation for resiliency and enabling citizens make independent decisions that support freedom. [The Center for Media Literacy](#) (CML), with sponsorship from NATO, presented a six-part webinar series that brought together high-level NATO representatives and leading media literacy researchers and practitioners for discussion, education and building bridges to create positive change. The webinar series took place in November and December 2022, and is now available for free streaming on YouTube [here](#). Each of the six webinars takes on one of the most pressing topics of our day. They include:

[Propaganda: Media Literacy's Role in Resilience](#)

[News Literacy: Empowering Global Citizens in a New Information Era](#)

[Mental Health and Social Media: Wellness Strategies from the Schoolroom to the Armed Forces](#)

[Pandemics: Health, Hope and Hoaxes](#)

[Education Systems and Media Literacy: Building Foundational Skills for Democracies Now and In the Future](#)

[NATO Delegations and Media Literacy in Governments: Leading the Way for More Resilient Global Citizens](#)

Also read: Tessa Joll, [Building Resiliency: Media Literacy as a Strategic Defense Strategy for the Transatlantic](#), Center for Media Literacy, September 2022

NATO and the Center for Media Literacy present webinars Resiliency through Media Literacy streaming free on YouTube, Center for Media Literacy [press release](#), 30 December 2022

[NATO, EU and US consult on developments in Kosovo, Western Balkans](#), NATO News Release, 9 January 2023

[NATO declines Serbia's request to deploy its troops in Kosovo amid ongoing tensions](#), ABC News, 9 January 2023

[NATO declines Serbia's request to deploy its troops in Kosovo](#), Reuters, 8 January 2023

Taehun Lim, [NATO's opportunity in the Indo-Pacific](#), IPS, 6 January 2023

Hamza Karčić, [NATO should renew its commitment to Kosovo](#), Al Jazeera, 5 January 2023

[NATO-led KFOR mission dismantles last barricades in northern Kosovo](#), NATO News Release, 5 January 2023

[Czech government submits law raising defence spend to NATO's 2% target](#), Reuters, 4 January 2023

Paul J. David-Justus, [Turkey's Future in NATO: Asset or Liability?](#) Real Clear Defense, 4 January 2023

Arnold C. Dupuy, [How NATO can keep pace with hybrid threats in the Black Sea region and beyond](#), Atlantic Council, 4 January 2023

[NATO countries to discuss defence spending target – Stoltenberg](#), Reuters, 3 January 2023

[Kosovo's Kurti wants more NATO troops amid Serbia tensions](#), Deutsche Welle, 1 January 2023

[NATO rapid-response force leadership passes to Germany in wake of armor failures](#), Stars and Stripes, 30 December 2022

[Bundeswehr Faces Critical Equipment Shortages Amid Assuming NATO Spearhead Role](#), Atlas News, 30 December 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 will ratify the bids early next year, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán [announced](#) on 24 November. 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.

In a [speech](#) at the Folk och Försvar Security Conference in Sälen, Sweden on 8 January 2023, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

underlined that in a more dangerous world, "it is even more important that Sweden and Finland become NATO members". On the margins of the conference, the Secretary General met with the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, the foreign and defence ministers, as well as with the leader of the opposition Magdalena Andersson. Sweden is confident that Turkey will approve its application to join the NATO military alliance, but it will not meet all the conditions that Ankara has set for its support, Sweden's prime minister has said. "Turkey has confirmed that we have done what we said we would do, but it also says that it wants things that we can't, that we don't want to, give it," Ulf Kristersson said. "We are convinced that Turkey will make a decision, we just don't know when," he said, adding that it will depend on internal politics inside Turkey as well as "Sweden's capacity to show its seriousness".

Turkey has made its approval conditional on Stockholm cracking down on exiled Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers a threat to its national security. The situation was further clouded by a demonstration by Kurdish groups in Stockholm on 11 January during which a puppet of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was hung from its feet. [Footage](#) shared by pro-government Turkish media showed what they said were supporters of the Kurdish militant group PKK hanging an effigy of the Turkish leader at a demonstration outside the Stockholm city hall. Ulf Kristersson denounced the protest, while Turkey summoned Sweden's ambassador over the protest.

[Turkey says Nordic NATO expansion unlikely before June](#), Associated Press, 14 January 2023

[Erdoğan aide says time running out to ratify Sweden, Finland NATO bids](#), Reuters, 14 January 2023

[Hanged Erdoğan effigy protest in Sweden angers Turkey](#), BBC News, 14 January 2023

[Sweden: Erdoğan effigy 'act of sabotage' against NATO bid](#), Associated Press, 13 January 2023

[Sweden insists NATO membership talks with Turkey progressing well](#), Politico, 11 January 2023

[NATO chief: Sweden has done what's needed to join alliance](#), Associated Press, 9 January 2023

[Sweden says Turkey asking too much over NATO application](#), Reuters, 8 January 2023

[Sweden Can't Meet Some of Turkey's Demands for NATO Bid, PM Says](#), VoA, 8 January 2023

[Sweden says cannot fulfil Turkey's demands for NATO application](#), Al Jazeera, 8 January 2023

[Secretary General: Sweden and Finland's NATO membership will make us all safer](#), NATO News Release, 8 January 2023

[Speech](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Folk och Försvar Security Conference in Sälen, Sweden, 8 January 2023

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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