



## News Brief Update 40

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Contact: Dr. Ian Davis  
Email: [idavis@natowatch.org](mailto:idavis@natowatch.org)  
[www.natowatch.org](http://www.natowatch.org)

### Russia's war with Ukraine

The war in Ukraine is in a state of deadlock, [according](#) to the UK Ministry of Defence. In an intelligence update, it said there was a possibility of Russian advances around the heavily contested city of Bakhmut in the Donbas region, but otherwise little movement. In the east of the country both sides have taken huge losses for little gain in intense trench warfare over the past two months. The Russian army [claimed](#) on 21 January that it has launched an offensive in the Zaporizhzhia region in south-east Ukraine.

Gen Mark Milley, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, [said](#) he did not believe it was realistic to expect Ukraine to push Russian troops out of its internationally recognised territory in 2023. "From a military standpoint, I still maintain that from this year it would be very, very difficult to militarily eject Russian forces from every inch of Russian-occupied Ukraine," he said at a press conference at the Ramstein US air force base in Germany on 20 January. The meeting of the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which is coordinating military support to Ukraine, was dominated by Germany's hesitancy in reaching a decision on whether to supply Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine (see below).

#### ***Belarus and Russia***

Russia and Belarus began joint air force drills on 16 January, triggering renewed fears in Kyiv and the west that Moscow could use its ally to launch a new ground offensive in Ukraine. According to a [statement](#) published to the Telegram account of the Belarus Ministry of Defence, units from Russia's aerospace forces arrived at the airfields of Belarus late on 15

January, and early the next morning the planned combat training tasks began. Belarus's security council [said](#) that the joint air force drills were purely defensive in nature and would focus on reconnaissance missions and how to thwart a potential attack. Russia and Belarus have [expanded](#) their joint military training exercises in Belarus, as concerns grow that Moscow is pressuring its closest ally to join the war in Ukraine. 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.

#### ***Davos***

President Volodymyr Zelensky used his [speech](#) at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss resort of Davos on 18 January to intensify his [call](#) for more tanks from allies and urged "resolve and speed" of decision-making from them. He also warned that "tyranny is outpacing democracy". Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz [avoided](#) committing to the supply of Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine when a Ukrainian delegate asked him "why the hesitancy" in signing off their re-export at the Davos summit. Scholz said his country was "strategically interlocked" with the US, France and other "friends and partners", and that any decisions about weapons had to be part of a collective effort to help Ukraine win the war. The Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper later reported that Scholz had spoken with US President Joe Biden and "made it clear that Germany could only give in to the pressure to

deliver if the US delivered Abrams battle tanks”.

Ukraine’s war with Russia [dominated](#) the first full day of the gathering of the global elite in Davos on 17 January. With the war clouding the outlook for the global economy in 2023, Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister Yuliia Svyrydenko urged allies to step up supplies of military hardware so Russia could be more quickly defeated. Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, used a special address to demand that those attending the World Economic Forum used their influence to end Russia’s aggression. She also [handed](#) to the Chinese delegation a letter written by President Zelensky inviting the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, for talks. “It was a gesture and invitation to dialogue and I hope very much that there will be a response to this invitation”, she told reporters on 18 January. Separately, Finland’s Prime Minister Sanna Marin [said](#) “I think the only message that we need to send is that we will support Ukraine as long as needed. One year, two years, five years, 10 years, 15 years”.

### ***Stalled diplomacy***

President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [spoke](#) by phone on 16 January and discussed the conflict in Ukraine, according to readouts of the call from both sides. The pair discussed the question of a prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, the Kremlin said, as well as the export of Ukrainian grain from Black Sea ports and ways to unblock fertiliser and food exports from Russia. The Kremlin [said](#) on 19 January Russia will achieve its goals in Ukraine “one way or another” and the sooner Kyiv accepts its demands, the sooner the conflict will end. The Kremlin has repeatedly said Russia is ready to halt military operations if Ukraine meets its demands, but Moscow has not publicly outlined details of its negotiating position or what it is seeking from Kyiv in order to end hostilities.

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. Currently, Russia and Ukraine are working on a large prisoner exchange deal which could include 1,000 people in total, Turkish ombudsman Seref Malkoc [said](#) on 16 January. Russian Human Rights Commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova and her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Lubinets met on the sidelines of an international ombudsman conference in Ankara.

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 20

January in Ramstein Air Base, Germany. The US [announced](#) \$2.5bn in new weaponry and munitions for Ukraine, including 90 Stryker armoured personnel carriers, an additional 59 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles, Avenger air defence systems, and large and small munitions. 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.

European and other partners have [pledged](#) about \$12 billion in military support to Ukraine, with more to come. A group of nine NATO countries meeting in Estonia pledged a raft of new military aid for Ukraine, ahead of the Contact Group meeting. The aid will include tens of stinger air defence systems, S-60 anti-aircraft guns, machine guns and training, according to a joint [statement](#) by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and the UK on 19 January.

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 plans to send 600 Brimstone missiles to Ukraine Defence Minister Ben Wallace [announced](#) in Estonia. Wallace also outlined a previously [announced](#) package of military support for Ukraine, including a squadron of Challenger 2 tanks – making the UK the first western power to supply the Ukrainians with main battle tanks. Wallace [urged](#) Germany to permit the supply of Leopard tanks to Ukraine, adding that the move could unlock support from other nations. The UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly [justified](#) the supply of Challenger tanks, saying it was designed to bring the war to a quick conclusion and there was a moral imperative to end the war soon due to the casualties and cost.

Poland said it was sending S-60 anti-aircraft guns with 70,000 rounds of ammunition and was ready to donate a company of German-made Leopard 2 tanks, “pending (a) wider coalition” of Leopard donors. Estonia’s Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur [announced](#) his country will send military equipment to Ukraine worth €113m in its latest package of support. Denmark [announced](#) it will donate 19 French-made Caesar howitzer artillery systems to Kyiv. Sweden’s government [announced](#) a new package of military aid to Ukraine that will include armoured infantry fighting vehicles and the Archer artillery system. Canada’s Defence Minister Anita Anand [announced](#) the donation of 200 armoured personnel carriers to Ukraine during a visit to Kyiv on 18 January. The Netherlands will join the US and Germany in sending the Patriot missile defence system to Ukraine, the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, [told](#) President Biden at the White House on 17 January.

However, it was the perceived heel-dragging by the German Government over its reluctance to send [Leopard 2 tanks](#) (see [Update 39](#)) to Ukraine that generated a backlash against Berlin among allies and the media.

### ***Tanks, tanks, tanks***

It had been hoped in Europe and the United States that Germany would at least allow Leopards owned by countries such as Poland and Finland to be re-exported, but despite days of pleading, Berlin’s newly appointed [Defence Minister](#) Boris Pistorius (following the resignation of Christine Lambrecht) [said](#) on 20 January that no final decision had been taken. President Zelenskiy [pleaded](#) with Germany and western allies to send their battle tanks to Kyiv at the opening of the meeting in Ramstein. Urgent action was necessary, the Ukrainian leader said, because “Russia is concentrating its forces, last forces, trying to convince everyone that hatred can be stronger than the world”. The US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin speaking after the Ramstein meeting [described](#) Germany as a “reliable ally”. The Kremlin [said](#) supplying additional tanks to Kyiv would not “fundamentally change anything”. Russia’s relationship with the United States was at its

“lowest point historically”, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov also said, with “no hope” of bilateral relations improving “in the foreseeable future”.

The US and German defence ministers [met](#) on 19 January to discuss the issue. The German Government had [indicated](#) that Berlin would allow Leopard tanks to be sent to Ukraine if the US agreed to send its own tanks. But US officials have publicly and privately insisted that Washington has no plans to send US-made tanks to Ukraine for now, arguing that they would be too difficult for Kyiv to maintain and would require a huge logistical effort to simply run. Meanwhile, a German Government spokesperson said on 19 January it had yet to receive a request from any country for permission to re-export German-made tanks to Ukraine. Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [signalled](#) on 20 January that it could send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine as part of a wider coalition even without Germany’s approval. “Consent is of secondary importance here, we will either obtain this consent quickly, or we will do what is needed ourselves,” Morawiecki said.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President Zelensky [tweeted](#) on 21 January his frustration at “global indecision” over arms supply to Ukraine: “Today’s indecision is killing more of our people. Every day of delay is the death of Ukrainians. Think faster”. Baltic countries [told](#) Germany to send the tanks “now” to Ukraine. The Latvian Foreign Minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, [tweeted](#) that they are “needed to stop Russian aggression”. The same tweet was put out by his counterparts in Estonia and Lithuania. In response to a question about the tanks after an event on 20 January, President Biden [told](#) reporters that “Ukraine is going to get all the help they need”. The German Defence Minister said that despite heightened expectations “we still cannot say when a decision will be taken, and what the decision will be, when it comes to the Leopard tank”. Germany has said it is doing a stocktake of its current tank numbers ahead of a possible decision. Meanwhile, German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall [warned](#) that Leopard tanks from German industrial reserves wanted by Ukraine will not

be ready to be delivered until 2024. “Even if the decision to send our Leopard tanks to Kyiv came tomorrow, the delivery would take until the start of next year”, Rheinmetall’s chief executive, Armin Papperger, told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

The European Council President Charles Michel also [spoke](#) in favour of the west providing tanks to Ukraine during a visit to Kyiv on 18 January. “We, the EU, will continue to support them for as long as it takes”, Michel said. “The time is now – they urgently need more equipment and I am personally in favour of supplying tanks to Ukraine”.

[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. In addition, the EU executive has confirmed it is releasing €3bn in emergency aid for Ukraine, the first tranche of an [€18bn fund](#) intended to help run essential public services during winter. The money will pay public sector wages, pensions and keep schools and hospitals running, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said at Davos. EU officials are also [seeking](#) approval from the ministers for a seventh tranche of military aid for Ukraine worth €500 million.

Bulgaria helped Ukraine survive Russia’s early onslaught by secretly supplying it with large amounts of desperately needed diesel and ammunition, the politicians responsible have [said](#). The former Bulgarian prime minister Kiril Petkov and finance minister Assen Vassilev said their country – often perceived as pro-Moscow – provided 30% of the Soviet-calibre ammunition Ukraine’s army needed during a crucial three-month period last spring, and at times 40% of the diesel.

**Table: ACLED conflict-related fatalities data for Ukraine 2018-22**

Event type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Battles	703	265	40	57	12163
Explosions/Remote violence	155	97	68	88	15025
Protests, riots and strategic developments	12	15	0	0	4
Violence against civilians	19	26	5	4	1165
<b>Total</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>28357</b>

Source: [ACLED dashboard](#); accessed 18 January 2023

Finally, 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 120,000 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 the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a disaggregated data collection, analysis and crisis mapping project, there were a total of 28,357 conflict-related fatalities in Ukraine in 2022 (see table).

According to [data](#) collected by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 16 January, 7,031 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 433 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. Speaking at Davos, Andriy Yermak, the head of the Ukrainian presidential staff, [said](#) more than 9,000 civilians, including 453 children, have been killed in Ukraine since Russia's invasion. He added, "We will not forgive a single [act of] torture or life taken. Each criminal will be held accountable". According to [Action on Armed Violence](#) (AOAV) the number of civilian casualties from explosive violence in the Ukrainian conflict reached 10,915 people by 20 January. From this number, 3,888 were killed and 7,027 were injured. Ninety-four per cent (10,274) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

As of 10 January, there were 7,977,980 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,940,057 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**

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, [said](#) he worries the world is becoming complacent about the dangers posed by the Russian-controlled



Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Grossi, speaking to reporters in Kyiv on 19 January, said a nuclear accident could happen any day and reiterated the situation at the plant was very precarious. There have been 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

[Ukraine must wait longer for a decision on Leopard 2 tanks after a NATO meeting in Ramstein](#), Euronews, 21 January 2023

Blaise Malley, [Diplomacy Watch: White House signals that retaking Crimea is in the cards](#), Responsible Statecraft, 20 January 2023

Anatol Lieven, [Germans remain adamantly opposed to sending any Leopard tanks to Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 20 January 2023

Saraphin Dhanani, [A Cautionary Tale: What Iran and Cuba Can Teach Us About Designating Russia a State Sponsor of Terrorism](#), Lawfare, 20 January 2023

[No Leopard tanks for Ukraine as NATO allies fail to agree](#), Al Jazeera, 20 January 2023

[NATO summit on Ukraine weapons as pressure mounts on US and Germany to send tanks](#), Euro News, 20 January 2023

[NATO's Bauer: countries must make their own decision on giving Ukraine tanks](#), Reuters, 20 January 2023

[How Ukraine Can Score Another Win at the UN](#), International Crisis Group, 20 January 2023

Paul Poast, [The War in Ukraine Will End With a Deal, Not a White Flag](#), World Politics Review, 20 January 2023

[NATO Secretary General in Ramstein: we must urgently step up support for Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 20 January 2023

Trita Parsi, [No, Weakening Russia Is Not "Costing Peanuts" for the U.S.](#), The New Republic, 20 January 2023

[Group of 9 countries pledge military aid for Ukraine](#), Reuters, 19 January 2023

[Lavrov says Russia will "sober up" NATO and EU](#), Reuters, 19 January 2023

['A whole new level' of war if NATO arms Ukraine, Russia warns](#), Al Jazeera, 19 January 2023

Anatol Lieven, [Six questions Western defense chiefs never seem to raise but should today](#), Responsible Statecraft, 19 January 2023

[Russia to stay a threat even if it loses war, says top NATO officer](#), Reuters, 19 January 2023

Frida Ghitis, [For Putin and Russia, Wagner's Outspoken Boss Is Becoming a Problem](#), World Politics Review, 19 January 2023 (paywall)

[Judy Asks: Is European Strategic Autonomy Over?](#) Carnegie Europe, 19 January 2023

[NATO Secretary General calls for more support to Ukraine at World Economic Forum](#), NATO News Release, 19 January 2023

[Davos 2023: NATO chief calls for significant boost in arms for Ukraine](#), Reuters, 18 January 2023

Monica Duffy Toft, [US military spending in Ukraine reached nearly \\$50 billion in 2022 – but no amount of money alone is enough to end the war](#), The Conversation, 18 January 2023

Andreas Umland, [How the West Can Help Ukraine Three Strategies for Achieving a Ukrainian Victory and Rebirth](#), Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies, January 2023

[NATO warns of extended war in Ukraine, vows to be ready](#), PBS News Hour, 18 January 2023

Timothy Garton Ash, [If Germany has truly learned from its history, it will send tanks to defend Ukraine](#), The Guardian, 18 January 2023

Jordan Smith, [Arms Control and Confidence-building after the Ukraine War](#), Rethinking Security, 17 January 2023

[Kissinger Backs Ukraine's NATO Bid](#), Wall Street Journal, 17 January 2023

Charli Carpenter, [Why Has the West Stepped Up on Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine?](#) World Politics Review, 17 January 2023 (paywall)

[Davos 2023: Europe, NATO to build Ukraine unity in Russian no-go zone](#), Reuters, 16 January 2023

Simon Haselock, [Breaking Out of the Bubble: Communicating Ukraine's Story in Africa](#), RUSI Commentary, 16 January 2023

[In About a Hundred Words on the Ramstein Meeting](#), Globsec, 16 January 2023

Patrik Szicherle, [Europe cannot sleepwalk into another crisis](#), Euractiv, 16 January 2023

[US Begins Training Ukrainian Forces in Germany in Possible Escalation](#), NBC News, 15 January 2023

[NATO chief hints at more heavy weapons deliveries to Ukraine](#), Al Jazeera, 15 January 2023

[NATO hints at more heavy weapons for Ukraine](#), France 24, 15 January 2023

[Ukraine War: US Provides Offensive Weapons for First Time](#), Geopolitical Monitor, 9 January 2023

## 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.

[Putin ally warns NATO of nuclear war if Russia is defeated in Ukraine](#), Reuters, 19 January 2023

Steven Pifer, [How the war in Ukraine hinders US-Russian nuclear arms control](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 17 January 2023

## On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

Germany's Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, and her Dutch counterpart, Wopke Hoekstra, [condemned](#) the deportation by Russians of thousands of Ukrainian children. Russia “must account for the whereabouts of these children”, Baerbock said at a joint news conference on 16 January with Hoekstra, who said this “deliberate Russian policy” is “tearing families apart and traumatising children”.

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**

EU countries are [reportedly](#) working on a 10th round of Russia-related sanctions. The next package of sanctions "will be somewhere around" the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, one senior diplomat told Reuters. Meanwhile, the United States will impose additional sanctions against the Wagner Group, the White House national security council spokesperson, John Kirby, [said](#) on 20 January. The US treasury department plans to designate Wagner as a significant transnational criminal organisation, which would freeze any assets the group has in the US and prohibit Americans from providing Wagner with funds, goods or services.

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,

### **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.

### **On energy security in Europe**

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 developments within Ukraine

President Zelensky [attended a memorial service](#) on 21 January to commemorate seven senior interior ministry officials killed in a helicopter crash on 18 January. The interior minister, Denys Monastyrskiy, his deputy and five others were killed when their helicopter crashed amid fog into a nursery on the eastern outskirts of Kyiv. Including those on the ground, a total of 14 people were killed.

### On developments within Russia

According to a recent [media report](#) life in Russia has not changed much because of the war. It argued that a 'perception gap' exists between how the war has affected Russians and how the West perceives this. Although some goods are more expensive; shops are well-stocked, e-commerce works, social security payments continue and most people feel only mildly affected. However, taxes may be raised as military spending and oil prices weigh on the budget. According to [analysis](#) published by Reuters, Russia is becoming too dependent on oil revenues to support its budget, as it increases military spending. The government may need to raise taxes if the prices of crude fail to meet expectations

Four people were detained on 17 January by Moscow police at a makeshift memorial dedicated to victims of the missile strike on a residential building in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro on 14 January. People began placing flowers at the statue of Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka in a "spontaneous memorial in memory of the victims of the missile strike in Dnipro", the independent Russian human rights monitor OVD-Info [said](#).

A Russian man who [reportedly](#) fought for the private mercenary Wagner Group crossed into Norway on 13 January and requested political asylum, according to Norwegian authorities.

Andrey Medvedev, who reportedly served as a high-ranking Wagner Group member, sought shelter in Norway, authorities confirmed to the Associated Press on 15 January. Meanwhile, Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić [called](#) on Russia to stop recruiting Serbs to fight alongside its Wagner Group in Ukraine. Vučić criticised Russian websites and social media groups for publicising adverts in the Serbian language calling for volunteers to join its ranks. He denied reports that the Wagner Group had a presence in Serbia, where pro-Kremlin and ultranationalist organisations have supported the invasion of Ukraine

David Lewis, [Can Russia Develop a New State Ideology?](#) RUSI Commentary, 17 January 2023

[Russia to make 'major changes' to armed forces from 2023 to 2026](#), Reuters, 17 January 2023

Alexander Titov, [Ten months into Putin's war in Ukraine, has life in Russia changed?](#) ABC News, 15 January 2023

### On China's position on the war

China has sought to position itself as neutral in the war, while at the same time deepening ties with Moscow. 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.

### On developments within NATO

On 18 and 19 January 2023, the NATO Military Committee met in Chiefs of Defence format (including those from "invitees", Finland and Sweden) in Brussels to discuss the strengthening of NATO's Defence and Deterrence posture. Over the two days this involved nine specific sessions, none of which were open to the public or media:

Session with NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geoană

Session 1 - Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) Strategic Considerations

Session 2 - Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Strategic Considerations  
 Session 3 - Readiness and Sustainment: Risks and Mitigations  
 Session 4 – KFOR  
 Session 5 - NATO Mission Iraq  
 Session 6 - Ukraine  
 Sessions 7-8 – Plenary

For further details, see [NATO's military leadership planning to face 'any threat, from any direction' with enhanced gobbledygook](#), NATO Watch Briefing No.102, 21 January 2023

[Time to join NATO? Moldova eyes joining 'a larger alliance'](#), Politico, 20 January 2023

[Fighter jets, NATO, Congress and Ukraine: Complex issues roil U.S.-Turkey relations](#), Los Angeles Times, 20 January 2023

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[NATO Allies US, Turkey Try to Mend Fences but Rifts Persist](#), VoA, 18 January 2023

[NATO Chiefs of Defence meet in Brussels](#), NATO News Release, 18 January 2023

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[NATO deploys surveillance planes to Romania, to monitor Russian activity](#), Reuters, 18 January 2023



[NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina strengthen science and technology cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 17 January 2023

Alexandra von Nahmen, [More NATO members pushing for higher defense spending](#), Deutsche Welle, 16 January 2023

[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.

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. Turkey condemned a demonstration involving the burning of Qur'ans in Sweden on 21 January, further inflaming tensions between the two countries. The protest in Stockholm, which took place under heavy police protection in front of Turkey's embassy, gathered about 100 people and a crowd of reporters.

[Protests in Stockholm, including Koran-burning, draw condemnation from Turkey](#), Reuters, 22 January 2023

[Turkey condemns burning of Qur'an during far-right protest in Sweden](#), The Guardian, 21 January 2023

[Anti-Turkey protests in Sweden heighten tensions over NATO bid](#), Deutsche Welle, 21 January 2023

Mark Episkopos, [What if Turkey blocks Finland and Sweden NATO bids?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 18 January 2023

[Davos 2023: Finland hopes Turkish minister's U.S. trip will boost its NATO membership bid](#), Reuters, 17 January 2023

Naman Karl-Thomas Habtom, [Sweden's Challenging Road to NATO Membership](#), Lawfare, 17 January 2023

[Erdoğan demands Sweden, Finland hand over 130 'terrorists' to green-light NATO membership](#), Politico, 16 January 2023

[Türkiye 'not in a position' to ratify Swedish NATO bid](#), Arab News, 15 January 2023

[Ankara says time running out to ratify Sweden, Finland NATO bids](#), Al Jazeera, 14 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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