



# News Brief Update 41

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## Russia's war with Ukraine

The war in Ukraine shows no sign of ending. On the contrary, the war is escalating on the battlefronts of Donbas and against civilians in cities throughout Ukraine. Ukrainian troops have been engaged in fierce fighting with Russian forces in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces have [withdrawn](#) from the eastern town of Soledar, "in order to preserve the lives of service personnel" a statement said. Russian forces continue to "endure operational deadlock and heavy casualties", [according](#) to a UK Ministry of Defence intelligence update dated 23 January. Russia continues to launch dozens of missile and drone attacks across the country, while the United States and Germany announced they would both send tanks to Ukraine, in a major reversal of policy.

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

Germany officially [announced](#) on 25 January it will send 14 German-made Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine and allow other NATO allies to send more German tanks. Finland, Spain and the Netherlands are expected to contribute the same model, while a second battalion will be made up of Leopard 2A4 tanks from Poland and Norway. Germany made the announcement after the United States agreed to also send 30 M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine. In a statement, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said, "This decision follows our well-known line of supporting Ukraine to the best of our ability. We are acting in a closely coordinated manner internationally". Germany will also provide training and ammunition for the tanks. President Zelensky welcomed the decision, and [said](#) he was "sincerely grateful" to Scholz.

In his nightly video [address](#), Zelensky said. "The key now is speed and volumes. Speed in training our forces, speed in supplying tanks to Ukraine. The numbers in tank support".

Scholz had faced intense pressure in recent weeks from allies to approve the tanks (see NATO Watch [update 40](#)), despite concern by many in Germany that it could lead to an escalation of the war in Ukraine and retaliation by Russia. The head of the Left Party in Germany's parliament warned the move could "potentially takes us closer to a Third World War than in the direction of peace in Europe".

President Biden [approved](#) sending 31 M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine after speaking with leaders Emmanuel Macron of France, Olaf Scholz, Giorgia Meloni of Italy and Rishi Sunak of the UK. The US had previously resisted providing its own M1 Abrams tanks, citing maintenance and logistical challenges with the hi-tech vehicles. President Zelensky [thanked](#) Biden for the "powerful decision" and described it as "an important step on the path to victory". By agreeing to send the Abrams, the United States was able to meet Scholz's demand for a US commitment but without having to send the tanks immediately. In public statements, Washington and Berlin [denied](#) any connection between their respective decisions, although media reports said German officials had made clear in private that the Leopards were conditional on the US making a similar commitment.

Supporters of these decisions included NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who has repeatedly urged NATO members to speed up deliveries of heavy weapons to Ukraine. On 24

January, after meeting Germany's defence minister, he [said](#), "The only way to lasting peace is to make it clear to Putin that he will not win on the battlefield. Therefore, we must provide heavier and more advanced systems so that Ukrainian forces are able to repel the Russian forces, not only to survive, but to win, take back territory and prevail as a sovereign independent state in Europe".

A total of 321 heavy tanks have been promised to Ukraine by several countries, Ukraine's ambassador to France Vadym Omelchenko [said](#) on 27 January, adding that "delivery terms vary for each case and we need this help as soon as possible", while not specifying the number of tanks per country. The same day, the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [announced](#) that his country will send an additional 60 tanks to Ukraine on top of the 14 German-made Leopard 2 tanks it has already [pledged](#). The UK hopes that the 14 Challenger 2 tanks it is supplying to Ukraine will arrive in the country at the end of March, defence department minister Alex Chalk [said](#) on 26 January. The same day, Canada [confirmed](#) that it will be sending 4 Leopard tanks to Ukraine. German defence group Rheinmetall could deliver 139 Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine if required, a spokesperson for the company [told](#) media group RND on 23 January.

These commitments to send advanced battle tanks were hailed as "only the beginning" by a senior official in Ukraine, who said hundreds of tanks were needed, as Kyiv also renewed its [calls](#) for combat aircraft—a request that has been repeatedly put to NATO allies without success. To this end, Kyiv and its western allies are reportedly engaged in "fast-track" talks on the possibility of equipping Ukraine with long-range missiles and military aircraft, Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's president [said](#) on 28 January. Ukraine [said](#) a day earlier that it would take its pilots about six months to train for combat in western combat aircraft such as US F-16s.

Meanwhile, the Russian embassy in Germany [accused](#) Berlin of taking the conflict in Ukraine "to a new level of confrontation", while the decision to approve the delivery of Leopard

tanks to Ukraine meant the "final refusal" of the German government "to recognise its "historical responsibility" to Moscow, ambassador Sergei Nechayev said in a statement. However, the Kremlin downplayed the impact that western tanks will have, [saying](#) that the military aid to Ukraine would "burn like all the rest".

### ***Stalled diplomacy***

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.

Russia [claimed](#) on 27 January that President Joe Biden has the key to end the conflict in Ukraine by directing Kyiv to settle but has not been willing to use it. "The key to the Kyiv regime is largely in the hands of Washington, Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said. "Now we see that the current White House leader ... does not want to use this key. On the contrary, he chooses the path of further pumping weapons into Ukraine". Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova accused Washington of engaging in a "hybrid war" against Moscow. In addition, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was willing to negotiate with Ukraine in the early months of the war, but the US and other western nations advised Kyiv against it. Lavrov was [speaking](#) during his visit to South Africa on 23 January, where he met with the foreign minister, Naledi Pandor, a month before the South African military is set to host a joint military exercise with Russia and China on its east coast.

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.

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. 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.

European and other partners have [pledged](#) about \$12 billion in military support to Ukraine, with more to come. 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. Former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a surprise visit to Ukraine on 22 January, where he [said](#) that it was “the moment to double down and to give the Ukrainians all the tools they need to finish the job”. Downing Street said Rishi Sunak is “supportive” of Boris Johnson’s visit, despite warnings that it would undermine the current prime minister’s authority.

Belgium [announced](#) on 27 January an additional €93.6 million package in military aid for Ukraine in what the Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said was – including previous spending – the largest of its kind Belgium had ever given another country. Meanwhile, on 20 January, Ukraine signed an [agreement](#) to join the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE). The agreement allows Ukraine access to NATO’s technology and research, while CCDCOE members will learn more about defending against cyberattacks during wartime.

[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. The EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, outlined the EU’s new military aid package to Ukraine worth €500 million, after the bloc’s 27 foreign ministers met in Brussels on 23 January. The [package](#) was approved along with a further €45 million for the EU’s military training mission for Ukraine. Hungary’s Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said his country would not block the EU move. In addition, Ukraine and the EU will

hold a [summit](#) in Kyiv on 3 February to discuss further financial and military support.

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. Norwegian chief of defence Eirik Kristoffersen [estimated](#) 180,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded in over the course of the conflict, while the figure for the Ukrainians is 100,000 military casualties and 30,000 dead civilians. He gave the figures in a tv interview on 22 January, without specifying how the numbers were calculated. 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. Ukraine [claims](#) to have killed more than 126,000 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.

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).

**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

According to [data](#) collected by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 23 January, 7,068 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 438 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 11, 067 people by 27 January. From this number, 3,922 were killed and 7,145 were injured. Ninety-four per cent (10,411) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

As of 10 January, there were 7,996,573 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,952,938 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**

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who visited Ukraine last week, [said](#) IAEA monitors reported powerful explosions near Ukraine's Russian-occupied

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station on 26 January and renewed calls for a security zone around the plant. 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 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 now has a permanent presence at all five of Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

## Further reading:

### On outcomes and consequences of the war

Charles W. Dunne, [Arab, Israeli positions on Ukraine continue to frustrate US](#), Responsible Statecraft, 29 January 2023

[Does the West's decision to arm Ukraine with tanks bring it closer to war with Russia?](#) CNN, 28 January 2023

Hrair Balian, [Will the war in Ukraine inevitably freeze?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 28 January 2023

[Russia Shifting War Focus To 'NATO And The West,' Says EU Official](#), RFE/RL, 27 January 2023

Matthew Kaminski, ['Ukraine's more integrated in NATO than any other country'](#), Politico, 27 January 2023

Connor Echols, [Diplomacy Watch: Switzerland weighs break with policy of neutrality](#), Responsible Statecraft, 27 January 2023

Paul Poast, [The 'Free the Leopards' Campaign Paid Off for the West and Ukraine](#), World Politics Review, 27 January 2023 (paywall)

Anatol Lieven, [First artillery, then tanks, then warplanes, then what?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 26 January 2023

Christopher S Chivvis, Matthew Duss, [Reverend William Barber and Phyllis Bennis, Is Biden right to send tanks to Ukraine?](#) Our panel reacts, The Guardian, 26 January 2023

Anatol Lieven, [Concerning the arguments for 'total defeat' of Russia](#), Responsible Statecraft, 26 January 2023

Connor Echols, [US weapons makers report 'all-time record orders' since Russian invasion](#), Responsible Statecraft, 26 January 2023

[Russia: NATO war involvement 'growing' with arms to Ukraine](#), Al Jazeera, 26 January 2023

Ian Davis, [Bargaining NATO's tank fixation for peace](#), Rethinking Security, 25 January 2023

[NATO members are right to send tanks to Ukraine](#), Economist Leader, 25 January 2023 (paywall)

[Why sending Ukraine tanks represents a fierce new step by the West](#), CNN, 25 January 2023

[As Germany & U.S. Agree on Tanks for Ukraine, German MP Accuses U.S. of Pushing Berlin into Proxy War](#), Democracy Now, 25 January 2023

Alexander Clarkson, [In Ukraine, Smartphones Are Thickening the Fog of War](#), World Politics Review, 25 January 2023 (paywall)

John Feffer, [Israel's Strange Ambivalence on Ukraine](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 25 January 2023

[Secretary General praises Germany's strong contributions to NATO and support to Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 24 January 2023

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Defence of Germany, Boris Pistorius, 24 January 2023

[Boris Johnson: Ukraine must join Nato for sake of long-term peace](#), The Guardian, 24 January 2023

Rob Garver, [NATO's Most Advanced Tanks Could Change the Course of War in Ukraine](#), VoA, 24 January 2023

Thomas Kasza, [The Afghans I Trained Are Fighting for Putin in Ukraine](#), New York Times, 24 January 2023



Branko Marcetic, [Mission Creep? How the US role in Ukraine has slowly escalated](#), Responsible Statecraft, 23 January 2023

Peter Rutland, [Why Putin's attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure could backfire](#), Responsible Statecraft, 23 January 2023

James R. Webb, [Iraq, Afghanistan provide lessons on US weapons flows](#), Responsible Statecraft, 23 January 2023

Stephen R. Shalom and Dan La Botz, [What are the Lessons Of Vietnam For Ukraine Today?](#) Foreign Policy in Focus, 23 January 2023

[NATO's 'Notorious' RQ-4B Global Hawk Again Spotted Near Crimea; Hardliners Slam Restraint, Demand Hitting UAV](#), Eurasian Times, 22 January 2023

[Germany 'would not stand in way' of Poland sending tanks to Ukraine, says minister](#), The Guardian, 22 January 2023

Jaganath Sankaran, [How Ukraine Fought Against Russia's Air War](#), Lawfare, 22 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. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists set its Doomsday Clock, intended to illustrate existential risks to the world (including nuclear war and the climate emergency), at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest to midnight the clock has ever been since it was first introduced in 1947. Their [statement](#) said, “The members of the science and security board moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock forward, largely, though not exclusively, because of the mounting dangers in the war in Ukraine. We moved the clock forward, the closest it has ever been to midnight. It is now 90 seconds to midnight”.

Tim Willasey-Wilsey, [Could a Russian Military Collapse Lead to Nuclear War?](#) RUSI Commentary, 25 January 2023

[Kremlin expresses alarm over 'Doomsday Clock', blames U.S. and NATO](#), Reuters, 25 January 2023

[Network reflections: What one thing could the world do to turn back the Doomsday Clock?](#), ELN Commentary, 24 January 2023

A time of unprecedented danger: It is 90 seconds to midnight, 2023 Doomsday Clock [Statement](#), Science and Security Board, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 24 January 2023

### On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

EU justice ministers meeting in Stockholm on 27 January [urged](#) swift accountability for “horrific” crimes in Ukraine. But the member states differ over how to bring prosecutions, seek evidence or fund war damage repairs. Meanwhile, the head of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Filippo Grandi, [said](#) the same day that Russia is violating the “fundamental principles of child protection” in wartime by giving Ukrainian children Russian passports and putting them up for adoption. Grandi said his agency was unable to estimate the number of children who had been given passports or put up for adoption, as access in Russia was extremely limited. Russia has said accusations Ukrainian children have been abducted are false

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 by 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.

Hungary will veto any EU sanctions against Russia affecting nuclear energy, the Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, [told](#) state radio on 27 January. Ukraine has already [called](#) on EU to include Russian state nuclear energy company Rosatom in sanctions, a move that has so far been blocked by Hungary, which has a Russian-built nuclear plant it plans to expand with Rosatom. Meanwhile, President Zelensky on 28 January [redoubled](#) his efforts to stop Russian athletes participating the 2024 Olympics, saying they would try to justify the war against Ukraine if allowed to compete. Zelensky said on 27 January that Ukraine would launch an international campaign to keep Russia out of the summer games, which will be held in Paris. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said the same day that any attempt to squeeze Moscow out of international sport was “doomed to fail”.

Jiayi Zhou and Ian Anthony, [Environmental accountability, justice and reconstruction in the Russian war on Ukraine](#), SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 25 January 2023

### **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.

Aaron Allen, [Germany Cut Russian Gas and Kept the Lights on This Winter. Now What?](#) World Politics Review, 24 January 2023 (paywall)

### On developments within Ukraine

Ukraine says it is setting up drone assault companies within its armed forces that will be equipped with Starlink satellite communications, as it presses ahead with an idea to build up an “army of drones”, Reuters [reported](#) on 27 January. Commander-in-chief Valeriy Zaluzhnyi signed off on the creation of the units in a project that would involve several ministries and agencies, the general staff said.

Meanwhile, the arrest on 26 January of a high-ranking Ukrainian intelligence agent accused of spying for Russia has highlighted the urgent need for a cleanout of the country’s key security service, a former deputy head of the agency [said](#). Meanwhile, a top aide to President Zelensky [said](#) on 26 January that Ukrainian government officials who shirk their duties during wartime will be quickly removed, amid a crackdown on corruption. Fifteen senior officials [left their posts](#) between 21 and 24 January, six of whom faced corruption allegations from journalists and Ukraine’s anti-corruption authorities. On 25 January prosecutor general Andriy Kostin signed orders on the voluntary dismissal of the heads of the Zaporizhzhia, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, and Chernihiv regional prosecutor’s offices. Oleksiy Kuleba, who was removed as governor of Kyiv on 24 January, was appointed deputy head of the president’s office as part of the reshuffle. In his nightly video address on 22 January President Zelensky had [said](#) Ukraine would not tolerate corruption and promised key decisions to uproot it. “I want this to be clear: there will be no return to what used to be in the past, to the way various people close to state institutions or those who spent their entire lives chasing a chair used to live,” he said. The EU has made anti-corruption reforms one of its key requirements for Ukraine’s

membership to the bloc, after granting Kyiv candidate status last year.

### On developments within Russia

Russia is intensifying its internal crackdown on domestic critics. On 25 January, a Russian court ordered the closing of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Russia’s oldest human rights organization. And on 26 January, the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office [designated](#) the independent Russian news outlet Meduza as an “illegal, undesirable organization.” In a statement, Russian authorities said the news outlet posed a “threat to the foundations of the Russian Federation’s constitutional order and national security”. The designation effectively outlaws the site from operating in Russia and bans any Russian from cooperating with Meduza or its journalists.

Tanya Mehra LL.M and Méryl Demuyneck, [Raising the stakes against the Wagner Group: From mercenaries to a designated terrorist group?](#) ICCT Commentary, 17 January 2023

### On developments within NATO

On 23 January, Germany [began](#) to move its Patriot air defence systems into Polish territory, close to the Ukrainian border, where they will be deployed to prevent stray missile strikes. Berlin’s offer to deploy three of its Patriot units in Poland came after two men were killed by a stray Ukrainian missile that struck the Polish village of Przewodow in November.

[NATO hosts conference of Allied Contact Point Embassies in partner countries](#), NATO News Release, 27 January 2023

[Cooperation with NATO may lead India to public opinion backlash, greater losses of strategic autonomy](#), Global Times, 27 January 2023

[Secretary General welcomes Israeli President to NATO HQ](#), NATO News Release, 26 January 2023

[NATO launches new cooperation initiative with experts from partners in the Indo-Pacific region](#), NATO News Release, 25 January 2023

[NATO's Stoltenberg expects allies to lift defence spending target](#), Reuters, 25 January 2023



## North Atlantic Treaty Organization



[NATO hosts symposium on climate change and military capabilities](#), NATO News Release, 23 January 2023

Ian Davis, [What really happened during those NATO meetings last week?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 24 January 2023

[NATO Secretary General accepts Honorary Award of Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada](#), NATO News Release, 23 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's President Erdoğan [said](#) he will not support Sweden's NATO membership bid after a protest in Stockholm that included the burning of a copy of the Qur'an. Protests in the Swedish capital on 21 January (see NATO Watch [update 40](#)) have heightened tensions with Turkey. Finland's Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto [signalled](#) a possible pause in discussions with Turkey over Finnish ambitions to join NATO alongside Sweden, which he says is due to the pressure of Turkey's forthcoming election.

[Finnish, Swedish FMs: NATO membership process hasn't stopped](#), Associated Press, 28 January 2023

[Türkiye-Sweden talks on NATO bid suspended: FM Billstrom](#), Daily Sabah, 28 January 2023

Lawrence Ukenye and Matt Berg, [Sweden's NATO dream deferred](#), Politico, 27 January 2023

Dave Keating, [Turkey Is Still Holding Sweden's NATO Bid Hostage](#), World Politics Review, 26 January 2023 (paywall)

[Turkey says it is "meaningless" to restore NATO dialogue with Sweden, Finland](#), Reuters, 26 February 2023

[Turkey says Sweden was complicit in burning of Quran amid tension over NATO membership bid](#), CNN, 26 January 2023

[Explainer: Why is Turkey blocking Swedish and Finnish NATO membership?](#), Reuters, 26 January 2023

Henri Vanhanen, [Finland in 2023: Beyond Military Nonalignment and a Revanchist Putin](#), Lawfare, 25 January 2023

[Finland says time-out needed in talks with Turkey over NATO bid](#), Reuters, 24 January 2023

[Finland calls for 'time-out' in heated Nato talks with Turkey](#), BBC News, 24 January 2023

[Turkey postpones NATO meeting with Sweden, Finland: State TV](#), Al Jazeera, 24 January 2023

[Sweden cannot expect Turkey's support for Nato membership, Erdoğan warns](#), The Guardian, 24 January 2023

[Erdogan tells Sweden not to expect Nato bid support](#), BBC News, 23 January 2023

James Stavridis, [If Turkey blocks Sweden and Finland, will NATO boot Turkey?](#), TBS News, 22 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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