



## News Brief Update 12

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### Russia's war with Ukraine

The illegal and immoral war in Ukraine entered its 10th week with heavy artillery and air strikes in eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as missile strikes on Ukrainian cities in other parts of the country. Russia continues to target civilians indiscriminately, but repeatedly denies doing so even as [evidence](#) to the contrary grows. Two missiles even [struck](#) Kyiv during the visit of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. All the [indications](#) point towards a protracted conflict. As NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [said](#) "We need to be prepared for the long term. There is absolutely the possibility that this war will drag on and last for months and years".

As the war drags on the risks of escalation and spillover to other territories continue to grow. As the battle losses weaken Russia's conventional military forces, Vladimir Putin's government has [resorted to nuclear threats](#) and intimidation. Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov [said](#) the risk of nuclear escalation was becoming "considerable". Nonetheless, Ukraine's allies are continuing to step up their support through sanctions, financial aid and military assistance, with the US Congress [approving](#) a further \$20bn of arms to Ukraine as part of a \$33bn aid package. At a US-hosted [meeting](#) of approximately 40 countries at Ramstein airbase to coordinate and enhance western military support for Kyiv, Germany announced it would send Gepard light tanks with anti-aircraft guns, while the UK defence minister James Heappey [said](#) it would be "entirely legitimate" for the weapons being supplied by the UK to be used against supply lines inside Russia. Separately, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin [said](#) that the US goal was "to see Russia weakened". Putin and other

senior Russian officials continued to warn NATO about waging a [proxy war](#) in Ukraine, and promised to [deliver](#) a "proportionate response". Russia has already started bombing the [supply lines](#) bringing in western arms, targeting railways and bridges and Kyiv.

In a further economic escalation, Russia's state energy company Gazprom [halted](#) gas supplies to two EU member states – Poland and Bulgaria –and warned that more countries could be similarly targeted. Meanwhile, a series of unexplained explosions in [Transnistria](#), a pro-Russian separatist region of Moldova, raised the threat of the war spilling over into new territory, with unpredictable consequences. The separatists blamed the incidents on Ukrainian infiltrators while the Kyiv government alleged that they were false-flag attacks designed to provide a pretext for additional Russian troops (about 1,500 are already based there).

External military assistance has been crucial in giving Ukraine's armed forces sufficient means to resist. While that support is rightly continuing and adjusting to the likely circumstances of a more attritional phase of the war, some western powers (principally the [USA](#) and [UK](#)) appear keen to escalate that intervention even further. This would be the wrong thing to do for three main reasons. First, a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia must be avoided. So far, NATO has managed to balance caution and assistance reasonably well, emphasising the defensive nature of the support it has provided to Kyiv. Russia's nuclear threats may be a sign of Moscow's desperation, but they also illuminate the high risks in the conflict.

Second, ambitious statements by western leaders promoting the strategic defeat of Russia simply feed into the Russian narrative that this is an existential war of national survival. It makes even harder for the Russian opposition to develop a potent and credible alternative vision of Russia; one that might successfully challenge the distorted historical vision that underlies Putin's war aims. Third, as members of the UN Security Council both the UK and USA share (with China, France and Russia) the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" (article 24 of the UN charter). British and American diplomacy should be focusing on strategies for ending the war, in keeping with the wishes of the vast majority of UN members who [denounced](#) Moscow's aggression in the UN General Assembly on 2 March.

The war in Ukraine is in danger of developing into an unconstrained international conflict potentially culminating in the spectre of nuclear confrontation. The threats and brinkmanship need to be dialled back and replaced with renewed efforts to find a negotiated settlement. This will inevitably reward Putin's aggression in the short term (in the longer term there will almost certainly be a reckoning from the Russian people), but the consequences of uncontrolled escalation are likely to be far worse.

## Further reading (key events 25 April-1 May):

### On conduct and consequences of the war

1 May: The British Foreign Office [said](#) that Russia was using a troll factory to spread disinformation about the war in Ukraine on social media and target politicians across a number of countries, including Britain and South Africa.

30 April: In his latest [address](#), the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Ukraine would be free. "All ... temporarily occupied cities and communities in which the occupiers are now pretending to be masters will be liberated ... The occupiers are still on our land and still do not recognise the apparent failure of their so-called operation. We still need to fight and direct all efforts to drive the occupiers out". The mayor of

Mariupol [said](#) the Russian military had killed twice as many of the city's residents in two months of war as Nazi Germany did in two years of occupation during the second world war. Vadym Boychenko said that the Nazis killed 10,000 civilians; the Russians had doubled that number, as well as deporting more than 40,000 people. Meanwhile, Ukrainian police [found](#) the bodies of three civilian men in the Bucha district north of Kyiv, tied up and with several gunshot wounds and signs of torture. The Pentagon press secretary, John Kirby, [spoke](#) of Vladimir Putin's "cruelty and depravity" in Ukraine, calling his actions "unconscionable".

The UK Ministry of Defence [said](#) Russian troops have been forced to merge and redeploy units from their "failed advances" in Ukraine's north-east, while Ukraine's military estimated 23,200 Russian soldiers had been killed since the beginning of the invasion (although death toll statistics are notoriously [unreliable](#)). Russian forces have stolen "several hundred thousand tonnes" of grain in the areas of Ukraine they occupy, [according](#) to Ukraine's deputy agriculture minister.

29 April: Moscow [confirmed](#) it carried out an airstrike on Kyiv during a visit by the UN secretary general, António Guterres. The defence ministry said two "high-precision, long-range air-based weapons" destroyed the production buildings of the Artyom missile and space enterprise in the Ukrainian capital. However, the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, said a 25-storey residential building in the capital's Shevchenkivskyi district was hit. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [said](#) one of its staff, the journalist and producer Vera Gyrych, had died "as a result of a Russian missile hitting the house where she lived" during Guterres' visit.

The US has begun training Ukrainian armed forces at sites located outside Ukraine. A Pentagon spokesperson [said](#) it was happening at three sites outside the US, including one in Germany. The UK will [send](#) 8,000 soldiers to eastern Europe on expanded military exercises in one of the country's largest deployments since the cold war. Dozens of tanks will be deployed to countries ranging from Finland to North Macedonia between April and June.

28 April: Joe Biden [called](#) for a \$33bn package of military and economic aid to Ukraine, more than

doubling the level of US assistance to date. The package would include over \$20bn in military aid, including heavy artillery and armoured vehicles, greater intelligence sharing, cyberwarfare tools and many more anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. “We’re not attacking Russia. We’re helping Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression” Biden said. The request is expected to be approved by the US Congress relatively quickly.

NATO said it was ready to maintain its support for Ukraine in the war against Russia for years, including help for Kyiv to shift from Soviet-era weapons to modern western arms and systems. “We need to be prepared for the long term,” Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO Secretary General, [told](#) a summit in Brussels. “There is absolutely the possibility that this war will drag on and last for months and years”.

The UK Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, [said](#) countries opposed to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine must “ramp up” military production to help Ukraine, including by supplying heavy weapons, tanks and planes. The crisis in Ukraine must be the “catalyst for change” to overhaul the west’s approach to international security, Truss [added](#). She also described Putin, as a “desperate rogue operator with no interest in international norms” and called upon the west to “dig deep” into its weapons inventories. “We’ve got to double down on our support for Ukraine” she said.

Russia [said](#) the “pumping” of western arms supplies to Ukraine posed a threat to the security of the European continent. Vladimir Putin [warned](#) any countries attempting to interfere in Ukraine would be met with a “lightning-fast” response from Moscow. In an address to lawmakers in St Petersburg, the Russian president said troops would use “all the tools for this — ones that no one can brag about”.

Moldova’s deputy prime minister, Nicu Popescu, [said](#) the country was facing “a very dangerous new moment” as unnamed forces were seeking to stoke tensions after a series of explosions in the breakaway region of Transnistria. Popescu said his government had seen “a dangerous deterioration of the situation” in recent days amid attacks in the region.

*27 April:* A former head of the Polish army [accused](#) UK prime minister Boris Johnson of “tempting evil” by revealing that Ukrainian

soldiers were being trained in Poland in how to use British anti-aircraft missiles before returning with them to Ukraine. Gen Waldemar Skrzypczak complained that a loose-lipped PM had revealed too much to the Russians and that his remarks risked the safety of the soldiers involved. Australia will [send](#) six M777 howitzers and ammunition to Ukraine as part of a A\$26.7m package in its response to “Russia’s brutal, unrelenting and illegal invasion” a statement from prime minister Scott Morrison and defence minister Peter Dutton said.

A newly released report by Microsoft [revealed](#) that a Russian state-backed hacker group conducted hundreds of cyberattacks on Ukrainian networks. The report also specified that the attacks launched by Russian hackers often coincided with the timing of Russian missile and ground attacks on Ukrainian forces. The report contradicts earlier evaluations which stated that Russia did not prominently use cyberattacks in the invasion.

*26 April:* The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, travelled to Moscow and, in a [joint press conference](#) with Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, Guterres said the UN was “ready to fully mobilise its human and logistical resources to help save lives in Mariupol”. Guterres also met Russian president Vladimir Putin who described the situation in the besieged city of Mariupol as “tragic” and “complicated”.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [announced](#) the formation of a “contact group” intended to assist Ukraine in its war against Russia after talks with representatives from over 40 countries at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. The group will be composed of US officials and European allies, and it will meet monthly to assess and address developments in the conflict. The United States vowed to move “heaven and earth” to help Ukraine win its battle against Russia’s invasion as it hosted the defence talks in Germany. US Army General Mark Milley [told](#) reporters at the talks that “Time is not on Ukraine’s side. The outcome of this battle, right here, today, is dependent on the people in this room. The Ukrainians will fight. We need to make sure they have the means to fight.”

The Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov [said](#) deliveries of western weaponry to Ukraine mean NATO is “in essence engaged in war with Russia”.

He also warned there remained a “real” danger of a third world war. His Ukrainian counterpart, Dymtro Kuleba, said the comments meant only that Moscow “senses defeat in Ukraine”. Russia’s defence ministry warned of an immediate “proportional response” if Britain continues its “direct provocation” of the Kyiv regime, after the UK armed forces minister, James Heappey, [described](#) Ukrainian strikes on Russian soil that hit supplies and disrupt logistics as “completely legitimate”.

Germany will [authorise](#) the delivery of 50 anti-aircraft systems to Ukraine, the German defence minister, Christine Lambrecht, said. Lambrecht said the government has agreed to sign off the delivery of around 50 Gepard anti-aircraft weapons systems.

*25 April:* About 15,000 Russian troops have been killed since the start of the invasion, the UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace [said](#), adding that 2,000 armoured vehicles had been destroyed or captured, including 530 tanks. Russia is also believed to have lost more than 60 helicopters and combat aircraft. Wallace also confirmed that the UK would be sending a small number of Stormer missile-launching vehicles to Ukraine, and that the overall amount of military aid could rise to £500 million. The UK has sent 5,361 NLAWs, 200 Javelins and will provide 250 Starstreak anti-air missiles.

Russia should be “weakened to the point where it can’t do things like invade Ukraine”, the US defence secretary, Lloyd Austin [said](#) after he and the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, visited Kyiv and pledged a [further \\$713m to help Ukraine](#) in its war effort. Blinken said Russia was “failing” in its war aims, while Ukraine was succeeding. He added that the US had put in place a strategy of “massive support for Ukraine, massive pressure against Russia” across NATO members.

Dozens of civilians who died during the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian city of Bucha were killed by tiny metal arrows from shells of a type fired by Russian artillery, forensic doctors have [said](#). Fléchettes are an anti-personnel weapon widely used during the first world war.

Andrew J. Bacevich, [The Ukraine War Is Ballooning America’s Military Industrial Complex](#), The Soapbox, 29 April 2022

[NATO says it's ready to back Kyiv for years in war against Russia](#), Reuters, 28 April 2022

Anatol Lieven, [The horrible dangers of pushing a US proxy war in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 27 April 2022

Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, [Vicious Blame Game Erupts Among Putin’s Security Forces](#), Moscow Times, 27 April 2022

John Feffer, [Russia is from Mars, Ukraine is from Venus](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 27 April 2022

Matthew Fitzgerald and Cort Thompson, [What Does Starlink’s Participation in Ukrainian Defense Reveal About U.S. Space Policy?](#) Lawfare, 26 April 2022

Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, [Operation Z: The Death Throes of an Imperial Delusion](#), RUSI Report, 22 April 2022

Antonio Prokscha, [Helping in Times of War: How Ukrainian NGOs Built a Support Network](#), GMF Insights, 22 April 2022

Cynthia Hooper, [In search of a new world order, Russia and China team up to push Ukraine propaganda](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 20 April 2022

## **On peace negotiations and other proposals for conflict transformation**

Russia dismissed Ukraine’s [proposal](#) to stage peace talks in Mariupol. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said it was too early to talk about who would mediate in any negotiations, but he said Moscow was committed to a diplomatic solution via talks on Ukraine

Denis Staunton, [Peace in Ukraine: What will it take and how can it happen?](#) Irish Times, 30 April 2022

Daniel M. Gerstein and Douglas Ligor, [Time for a U.N. Peace Enforcement Operation in Northern Ukraine?](#) Lawfare, 27 April 2022

Stephen R. Weissman, [The United States has supported successful mediation in 11 vicious conflicts since 1990: Could Ukraine make it an even dozen?](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 27 April 2022

Ed Corcoran, [Promoting change in Ukraine and Russia](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 26 April 2022

## On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine and other legal processes

UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited sites of suspected war crimes in Ukraine, [where he condemned](#) the “evil” acts committed against civilians and urged criminal accountability. Guterres described the war as “an absurdity” in the 21st century on a visit to the scene of civilian killings outside Kyiv, [adding](#): “I fully support the International Criminal Court (ICC) and I appeal to the Russian Federation to accept to cooperate with the International Criminal Court”. The UK will send investigators to Ukraine to help gather evidence of war crimes, including sexual violence, the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, [said](#). Ukraine’s prosecutor general has [named](#) 10 Russian soldiers allegedly involved in human rights abuses during the month-long [occupation of Bucha](#). There were 8,653 alleged war crimes under investigation, according to the [prosecutor’s office](#). Ukrainian prosecutors and the ICC have been investigating potential war crimes in Ukraine since the 24 February invasion.

At a meeting at the United Nations, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice Beth Van Schaak [reported](#) that the US gained credible information that a Russian military unit in Donetsk executed Ukrainians trying to surrender instead of taking them into custody. Van Schaak also said that the execution of Ukrainians trying to surrender by Russian forces would be in violation of the “prohibition against the summary execution of civilians and of combatants who are hors de combat by virtue of surrender, injury or other forms of incapacitation,” which she asserts is a core principle of the law of war.

The office of the prosecutor of the ICC joined an EU-backed team investigating crimes in Ukraine in an unprecedented move. Karim Khan QC [announced](#) that the ICC had become a participant in the joint investigation team (JIT), whose members are Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. The JIT involves international cooperation in criminal matters under the auspices of Eurojust, the EU agency for criminal justice cooperation.

Evan Wallach, [Russian leaders know they’re committing war crimes. Their laws of war manual says so](#), Lawfare, 25 April 2022

## On the growing risk of nuclear war

Nina Khrushcheva, an academic and the great-grandfather of the leader of the Soviet Union during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (Nikita Khrushchev), [said](#) Russia and the west are nearer to nuclear war than during that crisis. She warned that the war in Ukraine appeared to be more dangerous as neither side seemed willing to “back off”. She said both the US president John F Kennedy and Khrushchev agreed to de-escalate as soon as nuclear war became a real threat. Meanwhile, the head of nuclear nonproliferation in Russia’s Foreign Ministry, Vladimir Yermakov, [said](#): “The risks of nuclear war, which should never be unleashed, must be kept to a minimum, in particular through preventing any armed conflict between nuclear powers. Russia clearly follows this understanding”.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [said](#) it was probing a report that a missile had flown directly over a nuclear power station, adding it would be “extremely serious” if true. The IAEA director general, Rafael Grossi, said Kyiv told the agency the missile flew over the plant in southern Ukraine on 16 April and he described the situation at the plant as a “red light blinking” issue. Zaporizhzhia is the largest nuclear power plant in Europe, and is located near the city of Yuzhnoukrainsk, 350km (220 miles) south of Kyiv.

Oliver Meier, [Back to Basics: The Nuclear Order, Arms Control, and Europe](#), Arms Control Today, April 2022

Susan D’Agostino, [Will Putin go nuclear? A timeline of expert comments](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 27 April 2022

John Mecklin, [Siegfried Hecker: Putin has destroyed the world nuclear order. How should the democracies respond?](#) Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 21 April 2022

## On developments within Russia

Emily Hoge, [The legacy of the Soviet Afghan War and its role in the Ukrainian invasion](#), Lawfare, 25 April 2022

## On developments within NATO

Harry Targ, [Peace Movement Needs to Demand Dismantling of NATO](#), Covert Action Magazine, 28 April 2022



Eli Clifton, [Surprise: Ex-general pushing for NATO troops in Ukraine has weapons industry ties](#), Responsible Statecraft, 26 April 2022

Arshan Barzani, [Expand NATO To Hawaii](#), Wall Street Journal, 24 April 2022

[Shipping boss urges Nato to provide naval escorts in the Black Sea](#), Financial Times, 24 April 2022

### **On Finland and Sweden joining NATO**

Sweden and Finland agreed to submit simultaneous membership applications to NATO as early as mid-May. The story was broken by Finnish newspaper [Iltalehti](#), and Swedish government sources appeared to [confirm](#) the news to domestic media in the country.

David Auerswald, [Should Finland join NATO? Consider these factors](#), Defense News, 30 April 2022

[NATO maritime groups train with Finland and Sweden](#), NATO News Release, 29 April 2022

[Judy Asks: Is Finnish and Swedish NATO Membership Useful for European Security?](#) Carnegie Europe, 28 April 2022

[Russia will threaten Finland after NATO application: ex-PM](#) Stubb, Al Jazeera, 28 April 2022

[Swedish PM rejects referendum on possible NATO membership](#), Reuters, 28 April 2022

[Finnish, Swedish security services warn of Russian meddling over expected NATO bids](#), Reuters, 27 April 2022

[Sweden and Finland agree to submit Nato applications, say reports](#), The Guardian, 25 April 2022

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, [Putin Is Pushing Finland and Sweden into NATO's Arms](#), New York Times, 25 April 2022

### **On sanctions against Russia and energy security**

After Russia [halted](#) gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria (in response to Western sanctions), Moscow [warned](#) that other EU customers may be cut off from Russian natural gas supplies if they refuse to pay in roubles, a move that the EU Commission President [denounced](#) as “blackmail”. Poland’s prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, [described](#) Russia’s move as “a direct

attack” on Poland. US Press Secretary Jen Psaki [told](#) reporters, “Unfortunately this is the type of step, the type of almost weaponising energy supplies that we had predicted that Russia could take in this conflict”. The EU will consider it as a violation of sanctions if European energy companies comply with Moscow’s requirement to open a payment account in roubles with Gazprombank, EU officials [warned](#). The EU “cannot accept” that payments in euros for Russian gas are considered completed by Moscow only after they are converted into roubles, an official said. A new pipeline along the Greece-Bulgaria border is [expected](#) to reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian energy. The 110-mile pipeline—known as the Gas Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria—will give Bulgaria access to ports in Greece that hold liquefied natural gas, and will also help to obtain gas from Azerbaijan via another new pipeline system that ends in Italy. The pipeline is set to begin commercial operation in June and is anticipated to increase gas flows between Greece and Bulgaria to generate electricity, increase Europe’s fuel supply and heat homes.

The US House of Representatives [passed](#) legislation encouraging President Biden to sell the frozen luxury assets of sanctioned Russian oligarchs and use the proceeds to provide military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The nonbinding legislation passed 417-to-8, reportedly represents the bipartisan desire in Congress for a more aggressive approach to the war in Ukraine. A day before the legislation was passed, Attorney General Merrick Garland told senators that the Biden administration would support legislation that expanded its authority to confiscate and liquidate Russian assets to send funds “directly to Ukraine”.

Russia’s foreign ministry [announced](#) sanctions on 287 members of the UK House of Commons, accusing them of “whipping up Russophobic hysteria”. The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, said those members who had been hit with sanctions by Russia should regard it as “a badge of honour”.

Paul Stephan, [Giving Russian Assets to Ukraine—Freezing Is Not Seizing](#), Lawfare, 26 April 2022

Tatyana Novikova, [Russia and U.S. uranium](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 22 April 2022