



# News Brief Update 18

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## Russia's war with Ukraine

Fighting in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions (that together make up the Donbas) continues to grind on. The strategically important city of Sievierodonetsk has been the epicentre of intense street fighting and constant shelling and is in the last pocket of Luhansk province that has not yet been claimed by Russia or Moscow-backed separatists. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [said](#) the battle for the city would decide the fate of Donbas and was seeing probably the most difficult fighting since Russia's invasion began. Russia also [attacked](#) Ukraine's capital Kyiv with missiles on 5 June for the first time in more than a month.

### ***The continuing absence of peace talks***

Ukraine and Russia have held intermittent peace talks since the end of February 2022, but there has been little communication between them in recent weeks and the positions of the respective leaders appear to have hardened. In an [interview](#) with the *Financial Times* on 7 June President Zelensky said a stalemate with Russia is "not an option" and reiterated a plea for foreign help in the war. "Victory must be achieved on the battlefield", he said, adding that he "simply cannot see the preconditions for ending the war". He said victory meant restoring "all" of Ukraine's territory, including Crimea which was annexed by Russia in 2014, and separatist-held areas. Similarly, Ihor Zhovka, diplomatic adviser to the Ukrainian president, speaking to *Bloomberg*, [said](#) on 10 June, "We are not going to give away territory, we won't cede an inch - especially not in Donbas. Russia has thrown everything at it - I won't get tired of saying Ukraine needs immediate supply of heavy weapons". Meanwhile, on 9 June, after visiting

an exhibition in Moscow dedicated to the 350th birthday of the 18th-century ruler Peter the Great, Russian President Vladimir Putin [drew a parallel](#) between what he portrayed as their twin historic quests to win back Russian lands. Putin told a group of young entrepreneurs that "you get the impression that by fighting Sweden he was grabbing something. He wasn't taking anything, he was taking it back".

Although there have been [reports](#) of US officials meeting with their European counterparts to discuss "potential frameworks for a ceasefire and for ending the war through a negotiated settlement", there appears to be no real prospect for any diplomatic breakthroughs or ceasefires in the near future. France and Germany lead a NATO bloc favouring negotiations, while the US and UK lead a bloc that may favour continuing to send more advanced weapons. One of the potential frameworks being discussed for a negotiated settlement is a four-point Italian proposal, calling for Ukraine committing to neutrality and not joining NATO, security guarantees for Ukraine, and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia on Crimea and the Donbas (see [NATO Watch Update 16](#)).

### ***Military and financial assistance to Ukraine***

Ukraine says it needs more weapons from the West to effectively combat Russian troops and lessen casualties. Hence, President Zelenskyy continued to [lobby for more weapons](#) from the west, comparing Russia's invasion to Covid and describing weapons and sanctions as a vaccine. According to the latest US Congressional Research Service [report](#) on US Security

Assistance to Ukraine, since the 2014 armed conflict in the Donbas through to 1 June 2022, the United States has provided more than \$7.3 billion in security assistance “to help Ukraine preserve its territorial integrity, secure its borders, and improve interoperability with NATO”. Since the start of the 2022 war, the Biden Administration has committed a total of more than \$4.6 billion in security assistance to “provide Ukraine the equipment it needs to defend itself”.

UK Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, [said](#) the UK will send several tracked M270 multiple-launch rocket systems that can strike targets up to 80km away, in addition to the handful already promised by the United States. In response to these pledges Russian President Vladimir Putin [warned](#) that Moscow would hit new targets inside Ukraine. Oleksiy Arestovych, a military adviser to the Ukrainian president’s chief of staff [said](#) that the rocket launchers were “a gamechanger weapon”, but that not enough had been committed to turn the tide in the war. Spain is to [supply](#) Ukraine with anti-aircraft missiles and Leopard battle tanks in a step up of its military support, according to government sources cited by newspaper *El Pais*. In addition, the armed forces of Ukraine have also [received](#) new Starlink satellite communication systems from SpaceX, the US spacecraft company founded by Elon Musk. The Ukrainian defence ministry said the Starlinks would be used for intelligence missions.

The World Bank [approved](#) \$1.49 billion of additional financing for Ukraine to help pay wages for government and social workers, expanding the bank’s total pledged support for Kyiv to more than \$4 billion. The latest round of funding is supported by financing guarantees from Britain, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Latvia.

### ***Casualties and refugees***

[Military losses](#) on both sides continue to mount. Ukrainian [casualties](#) are reportedly running at a rate of somewhere between 600 and 1,000 a day. One presidential adviser, Oleksiy Arestovych said it was 150 killed and 800 wounded daily; another, Mykhaylo

Podolyak, told [the BBC](#) that 100 to 200 Ukrainian troops a day were being killed. This marks an increase from the 100 a day death toll provided earlier by President Zelenskyy. Approximately 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed since Russia’s invasion of the country in February, [according](#) to a military adviser to the president. Western assessments of Russian soldiers killed since the start of the invasion suggest that it could now be as high as 20,000. The Kremlin [announced](#) that the families of Russian national guard members who have died in Ukraine and Syria will receive a one-time payment of 5 million rubles (\$80,000).

Exact figures for the number of fatalities, both military and civilian, are difficult to verify and confirm. [Undercounting and manipulation](#) of the data is common in war. New [UN figures](#) revealed that 4,339 civilians have died since Russia first invaded Ukraine in February, including 274 children. The actual figures are likely to be considerably higher, as the receipt of information from some locations where intense hostilities have been going on has been delayed and many reports are still pending corroboration. The war in Ukraine has “caused one of the largest human displacement crises in the world”, the UN’s refugee agency, UNHCR [said](#). Nearly 5 million Ukrainians have been registered across Europe since the beginning of the war. However, far more will have actually left the country, with UNHCR [data](#) showing that more than 7.3 million border crossings out of Ukraine had been recorded by 7 June, with another 2.3 million crossings registered back into the country.

### ***Treatments of POWs***

More than 1,000 Ukrainian servicemen and foreign mercenaries, who had surrendered in Mariupol, have been transferred to Russia for an investigation there, Russian state-owned news agency Tass [reported](#). Two British men and one Moroccan man were [sentenced](#) to death by a court in the Donetsk People’s Republic, one of two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine that Russia has recognized, after they were charged with being mercenaries. The men had been fighting for

the Ukrainian military. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss objected to the verdict, calling it a “sham judgment with absolutely no legitimacy”. The trial was likely intended to discourage foreign fighters from assisting the Ukrainian forces. Both sides have [foreign fighters and mercenary groups](#) deployed in the armed conflict, including the [Wagner Group](#) on the Russian side.

Four Russian captives were exchanged for five Ukrainians on 10 June as Ukraine [conducted](#) its 11th prisoner swap with Russia since the start of the invasion in February.

### ***Threats of use of toxic chemicals as weapons***

Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the world’s chemical weapons watchdog, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), met Ukraine’s parliamentary chairman, Ruslan Stefanchuk, on 10 June to discuss “the implementation of the chemical weapons convention”, the Hague-based organisation [said](#). Since the beginning of the current conflict, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has been closely monitoring the situation in Ukraine within the scope of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In particular, the Secretariat is monitoring the status of relevant chemical industrial facilities and any threats of use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the country. Earlier it was [reported](#) that 800 civilians had taken refuge in a chemical factory in Sievierodonetsk.

### ***Russian activities in occupied parts of Ukraine***

As part of Moscow’s vision of building a ‘land bridge’ that connects Russia to the Crimea peninsula, Russian forces [reportedly](#) restored an important piece of Ukrainian infrastructure this week: a previously defunct canal from southern Ukraine to Crimea. The waterway was blocked by Ukrainian forces after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 to restrict the use of vital freshwater in the arid region. Meanwhile, Russian-installed officials in the occupied part of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region [reportedly](#) plan to stage a referendum later this year on joining Russia. Ukraine says any referendums

held under Russian occupation would be illegal and their results fraudulent. In 2014, Moscow and its proxies carried out a referendum in Ukraine’s Crimea which were [condemned](#) by western nations as being illegal. Russian officials in occupied Mariupol [shut down](#) the southern port city for quarantine over a possible cholera outbreak.

### ***EU candidate status for Ukraine***

The EU executive is expected to recommend next week that Ukraine be given candidate status. In a joint press conference with President Zelenskiy, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen [said](#): “We want to support Ukraine in its European journey”. Such a recommendation would be a step on a long road to full membership. Zelenskiy said that the EU’s decision on Ukraine would “determine” the future of Europe.

### **Further reading:**

#### **On outcomes and consequences of the war**

Stavros Atlamazoglou, [Ukrainian special-operations forces doubled in size while training with the US, top US special-ops commander says](#), Business Insider, 9 June 2022, 1

John Grady, [Turkey Pursuing Talks with Russia While Stalling Sweden, Finland NATO Application, Panel Says](#), USI News, 9 June 2022

Simon Jenkins, [The west’s calls for a total victory in Ukraine can lead only to ruinous escalation](#), The Guardian, 9 June 2022

Ted Snider, [When changing ‘facts on the ground’ could imperil Ukraine’s bargaining position](#), Responsible Statecraft, 8 June 2022

William Minter, [The war in Ukraine through an African lens](#), Responsible Statecraft, 6 June 2022

[U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine](#), Congressional Research Service, Updated 6 June 2022

[‘The occupier should never feel safe’: rise in partisan attacks in Ukraine](#), The Guardian, 6 June 2022

Ravi Agrawal, [Former NATO Chief: We 'Overestimated' Russia's Military: Anders Fogh Rasmussen speaks to FP about Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, the future of NATO, and more](#), Foreign Policy, 6 June 2022

[Ukraine's partisans are hitting Russian soldiers behind their own lines](#), The Economist, 5 June 2022

Dina Esfandiary, [The Ukraine Strain in the U.S.-UAE Partnership](#), Lawfare, 5 June 2022

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

A United Nations commission arrived in Ukraine on 11 June to investigate war crimes. The deputy speaker of Ukraine's parliament, Olena Kondratyuk, [said](#) the commission's goal was to record war crimes and human rights violations.

Sexual violence in Ukraine remains prevalent and underreported as Russia's invasion is "turning into a human trafficking crisis" according to the UN. "Women and children fleeing the conflict are being targeted for trafficking and exploitation" Pramila Patten, the UN special representative on sexual violence, [told](#) the UN Security Council on 6 June. "Sexual violence is the most consistently and massively under-reported violation" Russia has rejected the accusations that its troops committed sexual violence in Ukraine.

[Sexual Violence by Russian Troops in Ukraine "Chronically Underreported," U.N. & Amnesty Int'l Find](#), Democracy Now, 9 June 2022

### **On the risk of nuclear war**

Susan D'Agostino and François Diaz-Maurin, [Will Putin go nuclear? An updated timeline of expert comments](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 6 June 2022

### **On sanctions against Russia and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine**

Russia has claimed (see [NATO Watch Update 17](#)) 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. US energy security envoy Amos Hochstein [told](#) lawmakers during a Senate hearing this week that increases in global oil prices have offset the impact of import bans. Russia had been able to sell more cargoes to other buyers, including major energy consumers China and India, by offering it at a discount to oil from other origins, he said. For example, Russia is [increasing](#) oil exports from its major eastern port of Kozmino in order to offset the impact of sanctions with the surging demand from Asian buyers.

On 10 June Serbia's President, Aleksandar Vučić, appeared to reject calls from the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, for Serbia to join the EU in imposing sanctions on Russia. Vučić [said](#) he did not believe sanctions were "efficient" and that his country was in a complicated position, given the longstanding special relationship between Serbia and Russia. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's visit to Serbia was [cancelled](#) after countries around Serbia closed their airspace to his aircraft.

In its latest sanctions, the US Treasury [banned](#) US money managers from buying any Russian debt or stocks in secondary markets, on top of its existing ban on new-issue purchases. The US also [announced](#) that it will boycott the St Petersburg International Forum that is set to take place in Russia later this month. "We urge governments and companies to join our boycott and send a clear message that there is no 'business as usual' while Russian forces brutalise Ukraine," said Ned Price, the US State Department spokesperson.

Tom Keatinge and Maria Nizzero, [From Freeze to Seize: Creativity and Nuance is Needed](#), RUSI Commentary, 7 June 2022

[NATO nations block Russian envoy's plane from Serbia visit](#), Associated Press, 6 June 2022

### **On international food security and Ukrainian grain exports**

At a press conference on 8 June to launch the latest report on the conflict's impacts on food security, energy and financing, the UN

Secretary-General António Guterres [warned](#) that it was “threatening to unleash an unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution, leaving social and economic chaos in its wake”. The [report](#) said an estimated 94 countries, home to about 1.6bn people, are “severely exposed to at least one dimension of the crisis and unable to cope with it”. Earlier in the week, European Council president Charles Michel accused Russia of using food supplies as “a stealth missile against developing countries” and blamed the Kremlin for the looming global food crisis. “This is driving up food prices, pushing people into poverty, and destabilising entire regions. Russia is solely responsible for this food crisis,” Michel [told](#) a UN Security Council meeting on 6 June, prompting Moscow’s UN ambassador to walk out.

Ukraine’s Black Sea ports have been blocked since Russia invaded, with more than 20 million tonnes of grain stuck in silos in the country. [Negotiations](#) between Turkey and Russia that aimed to ease the global food crisis by negotiating safe passage for the grain [ended without agreement](#). Ukraine said Russia is imposing unreasonable conditions and Moscow said shipment depends on ending sanctions. Russia also said the onus of demining ports prior to resuming grain shipments fell on Kyiv and they blamed Zelenskyy for refusing to resolve the problem. Ukraine’s first deputy minister of agrarian policy and food, Taras Vysotskyi, [said](#) it would take six months to clear the coast of Russian and Ukrainian mines. Ukraine’s trade representative, Taras Kachka [said](#) the country will not be able to export more than 2 million tonnes of grain a month, around a third of prewar levels, as long as its main trade routes through its Black Sea ports remained blocked. Kachka called on the EU to build warehouses and extend railway tracks across the Ukrainian border to help Kyiv in its attempts to move more grain out of the country. Ukraine has also said military equipment was required to protect the coastline and a navy mission to patrol the export routes in the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, Ukraine officials [accused](#) Russia of stealing ‘several hundred thousand tonnes’ of

grain in areas under Russian occupation. On 8 June, during a visit to Ankara, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was [confronted](#) about this issue by a Ukrainian journalist during a press conference. “Apart from cereals, what other goods did you steal from Ukraine and who did you sell them to?” Muslim Umerov asked. The same day, it was [reported](#) that Russia-held territories of the Zaporizhzhia region were supplying grain to the Middle East via train through Russia. Russia also [claimed](#) shipments of grain would restart in the coming days from the Russian-occupied Ukrainian port of Berdiansk after work to remove mines.

[Plan to ship grain out of Ukraine dealt blow due to mines](#), The Guardian, 7 June 2022

Joanna Partridge, [How do you get 20m tonnes of grain out of Ukraine?](#) The Guardian, 7 June 2022

Michael Hudson: [Is US/NATO \(with WEF Help\) Pushing for a Global South Famine?](#) Naked Capitalism, 6 June 2022

### **On developments within Ukraine**

Thirty-seven thousand women are in the Ukrainian army and more than 1,000 women have become commanders, the Ukrainian first lady, Olena Zelenska [said](#) on 10 June. “Most of our doctors are women, as well as 50% of our entrepreneurs who work to support the economy at war”.

### **On developments within Russia**

Anatol Lieven of the US Quincy Institute [detects](#) a hardening of support among Russian intellectuals for the war in Ukraine. He writes that there “seems to be a growing belief in the Russian elites — including many who were horrified by the invasion itself — that the vital interests, and even perhaps the survival, of the Russian state are now at stake in Ukraine. Unlike the Russian masses, these well-informed figures have not been brainwashed by Putin’s propaganda. Most of them see quite clearly the appalling mess in which Russia has landed itself in Ukraine and the terrible suffering inflicted on ordinary Ukrainians. But the only way they seem to see out of it is

through something that can at least be presented as a victory”.

On 10 June, the Russian justice ministry [updated](#) its website list of blacklisted entities to include the Committee Against Torture, a UN-linked human rights treaty body. The same day, Moscow [announced](#) its withdrawal from the UN World Tourism Organisation. Russia had been suspended from the body in April because of its military invasion of Ukraine. Also on 10 June, Russia and China [opened a road bridge](#) between the two countries as a further sign of deepening ties. A Russian state-owned news agency said the infrastructure project cost \$342 million and connects the Chinese city of Heihe with the urban centre of Blagoveshchensk in Russia.

Meanwhile, Russia further [cracked down](#) against citizens who speak out about the fighting in Ukraine. A Moscow court on 8 June extended the detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza Jr, a journalist, while the Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov, said a criminal case had been opened against him. In addition, Moscow’s chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt, left Russia after coming under pressure to support its invasion of Ukraine, [according](#) to a relative. Goldschmidt flew to Hungary to raise money for refugees in eastern Europe after refusing to publicly support what Moscow calls its “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Giangiuseppe Pili and Fabrizio Minniti, [Understanding Russia’s Great Games: From Zapad 2013 to Zapad 2021](#), RUSI Commentary, 7 June 2022

Anatol Lieven, [Why Russian intellectuals are hardening support for war in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 6 June 2022

### **On developments within NATO**

Fourteen NATO member states along with two NATO partner nations, Finland and Sweden, are currently participating in the exercise Baltic Operations (BALTOPS 22) with over 45 ships, more than 75 aircraft and 7,500 personnel. This maritime-focused annual exercise in the Baltic Sea started in Stockholm, Sweden, on 5

June, and will end on 17 June. This is the 51st iteration of the exercise series, which began in 1972. “It is important for us, the United States, and the other NATO countries to show solidarity with both Finland and Sweden in this exercise,” US General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [said](#).

Spain, as host of the upcoming NATO summit, will push for the inclusion of “hybrid threats” such as irregular migration, food insecurity and terrorism in the alliance’s new policy roadmap, Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares [said](#) in an interview. The June 29-30 summit in Madrid will be one of the most important since NATO’s inception in 1949. It will draft the alliance’s ‘Strategic Concept’ for the next decade, outlining its mission against the backdrop of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the likely admission of new members Finland and Sweden. Meanwhile, The Baltic countries are pushing for a decision at the forthcoming NATO summit in Madrid to convert the existing NATO battalions deployed in these countries into brigades.

A new publication by the Bratislava-based think-tank, Globesec, [GLOBSEC Trends 2022](#), provides insight into the public perceptions in 9 NATO countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia on the issue of the war in Ukraine. While the recognition of Russia as the aggressor is shared by a majority – 64% of respondents in CEE believe Russia is primarily responsible for the war in Ukraine and 81% say Russia had no right to invade Ukraine – a clear consensus over Ukraine’s integration to Western structures or responses to the war is lacking. In 6 of 9 countries, most respondents would welcome Ukraine to be part of the EU and/or NATO. However, in Slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary more people would prefer Ukraine to stay neutral.

[NATO and the EU Directors General of Military Staffs discuss enhanced military cooperation ahead of Madrid Summit](#), NATO News Release, 10 June 2022

[NATO Secretary General and German Chancellor discuss Madrid Summit preparations](#), NATO News Release, 9 June 2022

[Canada still a long way from hitting NATO's defence spending target, budget watchdog says](#), CBC, 9 June 2022

[NATO Partners discuss interoperability, maritime and energy security](#), NATO News Release, 9 June 2022

Mari Yamaguchi, [Japan, NATO Boost Ties Amid Russia's Invasion of Ukraine](#), The Diplomat, 8 June 2022

[NATO Secretary General addresses deterrence and defence with Baltic Prime Ministers](#), NATO News Release, 8 June 2022

[Baltic PMs to discuss regional security with NATO chief Stoltenberg](#), The Baltic Times, 8 June 2022

[Spain wants NATO to flag migration as 'hybrid threat' in policy roadmap, says foreign minister](#), Reuters, 8 June 2022

[16 NATO Allies and partners take part in exercise BALTOPS 22](#), NATO News Release, 8 June 2022

[US Marines deploy to Poland to enhance NATO's capabilities in Eastern Europe](#), Defence Blog, 7 June 2022

[NATO should avoid learning the wrong lessons from Russia's blunder in Ukraine, says Michael Kofman](#), The Economist, 7 June 2022

Daniel Fried, Steven Pifer and Alexander Vershbow, [NATO-Russia: It's time to suspend the Founding Act](#), The Hill, 7 June 2022

Wang Zhongkui, Yuan Qilu and Liu Sizheng, [NATO, defensive in name but offensive in nature](#), China Military Online, 7 June 2022

James Carafano and Stefano Graziosi, [NATO Southern Flank Matters More Than Ever, but Who Will Fix It?](#) Heritage Foundation, 6 June 2022

## On Finland and Sweden joining NATO

Finland and Sweden's historic moves to join NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine currently face opposition from Turkey, which is threatening to veto the enlargement of the military alliance. The Turkish opposition stems from accusations launched by Ankara that both countries are harbouring people linked to

groups it deems terrorists, including the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and has taken issue with Helsinki and Stockholm's decisions to halt arms exports to Turkey in 2019.

The Finnish Government [said](#) it intends to implement legislation to permit the construction of barriers on its border with Russia. The move came as Finland strengthens its security measures in response to concerns that Russia may send migrants to its eastern frontier to increase pressure on the country, amid its pending application to NATO. The legislation would permit the government to build fences and roads to support border patrolling.

['Turkey cannot welcome Sweden, Finland to NATO amid terror concerns'](#), Daily Sabah, 8 June 2022

Abdullah Bozkurt, [Turkey's 'divide-and-conquer' plot for Sweden and Finland in their NATO bid failed](#), Nordic Monitor, 8 June 2022

Sinan Ülgen, [Why Turkey Is Imperiling NATO Enlargement](#), Project Syndicate, 6 June 2022

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

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