Russia's war with Ukraine

Russian forces now occupy around a fifth of Ukraine and continue to grind through the Donbas region in the east of the country. They also appeared to be preparing for the next stage of their offensive. Moscow said on 16 July its forces would step up military operations in "all operational areas". The focus of the offensive is expected to be Sloviansk, a symbolically important city held by Ukraine in the eastern region of Donetsk. However, on 20 July Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow's military "tasks" now go beyond the eastern Donbas region to permanently occupy broad swaths of southern Ukraine, calling it a buffer against US-supplied Himars rocket artillery.

Russian forces have continued to carry out seemingly indiscriminate artillery and missile strikes on several Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu is said to have instructed the military to prioritise destroying Ukraine's long-range missile and artillery weapons, after these Western-supplied weapons were used to strike Russian supply lines.

Civilian casualties continue to mount from Russian missile and rocket strikes, including a four-year-old girl who was killed in the city of Vinnytsia, in central Ukraine on 14 July. Twenty-three people were killed in the missile attack on Vinnytsia and at least 200 people were injured. President Zelenskiy called the attack "an open act of terrorism", and urged European and International Criminal Court (ICC) officials to open a "special tribunal" to investigate Russia's invasion of his country. (An

ICC investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine was opened on 2 March). Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's national security council, said that monitoring of Russian strikes suggested an increased emphasis in recent weeks of Russian forces deliberately escalating their attacks on civilian targets. Rather than a mistake or 'collateral damage', Ukrainian officials accuse Russia of carrying out such attacks as part of an "approved military strategy" to force Ukrainians to "peace at any price".

The UK Ministry of Defence claimed that Russia is using the private military company Wagner to reinforce its frontline forces in Ukraine, but that losses they have sustained are likely to be impacting their effectiveness. According to the US-based Institute for the Study of War, Russia has also begun "volunteer mobilisations" to address its soldier shortage.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's chief of staff, Andry Yermak indicated that Kyiv does not want the war to last into winter because it would give Russian forces time to dig in and make any Ukrainian counter-offensive more difficult. "It is very important for us not to enter the winter. After winter, when the Russians will have more time to dig in, it will certainly be more difficult", he said. NATO's former supreme allied commander, Ret. Adm. James Stavridis, predicted a Korean War-like ending for the war in Ukraine in 4 to 6 months, with an "ongoing animosity, kind of a frozen conflict".

Stalled diplomacy

Ukraine and Russia have held intermittent peace talks since the end of February 2022. However, negotiations have stalled and 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. The UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, for example, has said it was a "realistic" ambition to push Russian forces out of Ukraine entirely. 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).

Positions between the two sides remain incompatible: Ukraine insists on full sovereignty over all Ukrainian territory as it existed when Ukraine became independent in 1991, while Russia claims sovereignty over Crimea and recognition of independence of the Donbas separatist republics. Moreover, Russia has recognized the independence of the Donbas republics on the whole administrative territory of the Donbas, even though some of that territory remains in Ukrainian hands and is the focus of current fighting. On 13 July Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba once again ruled out ceding territory to Russia as part of any ceasefire deal, while Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president, said that peace in Ukraine would be on Moscow's terms. Medvedev, who is now deputy head of its security council, said: "Russia will achieve all its goals. There will be peace – on our terms". After his visit to Tehran (see below), President Putin claimed Moscow has not seen any desire from Ukraine to fulfil the terms of what he described as a preliminary peace deal "practically achieved" in March.

> 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

Ukraine continues to rely heavily on international military and financial support from Western states. The Ukrainian first lady, Olena Zelenska, appealed to the US Congress in a speech on 19 July for more weapons. "I am asking for weapons, weapons that would not be used to wage a war on somebody else's land, but to protect one's home and the right to wake up alive in that home", she said, adding that US weapons could help assure a "joint great victory". The next day, the US announced that it would provide four more Himars to Ukraine. The US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said "Ukraine needs the firepower and the ammunition to withstand this [Russian] barrage and to strike back".

The US will also provide additional guided multiple launch rocket system ammunition, which can strike targets up to 80km away. Earlier it was reported that the US House of Representatives approved $100 million (as a line item in the new US military budget) to train Ukrainian pilots to use US F-15 and F-16 combat aircraft.

On 19 July, EU foreign ministers agreed another €500m to supply arms to Ukraine, taking the bloc's security support to €2.5bn since February. "Today at the EU foreign ministers' meeting, a political agreement was reached on the fifth tranche of military assistance to Ukraine," Sweden's minister for foreign affairs, Ann Linde, said. In addition, on 20 July, Lithuania announced that will offer Ukraine additional military support, including M13 and M577 armoured personnel carriers, as well as ammunition for reserve training. Finally, in addition to the 12 French-made Caesar artillery guns already delivered to Ukraine, another six are "on their way", France's foreign minister confirmed on 19 July.

> For further details on arms transfers to Ukraine, see, the Forum on the Arms Trade

The trilateral summit in Tehran

Two major issues emerged from a trilateral summit in Tehran held by Iran, Russia and Turkey on 19 July. Formally, the meeting was part of the 'Astana process' (diplomacy among the three parties aimed at securing peace in Syria), but it also proved an occasion for Russia and Iran to affirm their stronger relationship in the wake of Russia's attack on Ukraine. Before the summit, President Putin met with Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who strongly backed Russia's war in Ukraine. Khamenei told Putin "War is a harsh and difficult issue, and Iran is not at all pleased that ordinary people suffer from it, but in the case of Ukraine if you had not taken the initiative, the other side would have caused the war with its own initiative … If the road is open to NATO, it knows no boundaries and if it was not stopped in Ukraine they would start the same war some time later". Secondly, Putin said progress had been made that may allow Russia to lift the blockade on Ukrainian wheat (see below). "I want to thank you for your mediation efforts," he told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in comments released by the Kremlin. "With your mediation, we have moved forward. Not all issues have yet been resolved, but the fact that there is movement is already good", he added.

Casualties and refugees

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, the chief of the UK defence staff, told the BBC on 17 July that Russia has lost more than 30% of its land combat effectiveness and 50,000 of its soldiers have either died or been injured in the conflict. Ukraine claims to have killed more than 38,000 Russian soldiers in the war to date. According to Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's military losses peaked in May, with up to 100 soldiers being killed a day. However, 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 in war.

UN figures revealed that, as at 18 July, 5,110 civilians have died since Russia first invaded Ukraine in February, including 346 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. According to Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) the number of casualties from explosive violence in the Ukrainian conflict reached 5,484 people by 20 July. From this number, 2,361 were killed and 3,123 were injured across 698 incidents. Ninety-six per cent (5,251) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

Treatments of POWs

The UK said that Russia was "fully responsible" for the death of a British captive in east Ukraine. The UK Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, said: "I am shocked to hear reports of the death of British aid worker Paul Urey while in the custody of a Russian proxy in Ukraine. Russia must bear the full responsibility for this".

Russian activities in occupied parts of Ukraine

An Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) report (see below) found "clear patterns of serious violations" of international humanitarian law (IHL) attributable mostly to Russian armed forces in many areas in which the OSCE experts mission investigated. The report also expressed "grave concern" about the alleged mistreatment of tens of thousands of Ukrainians in so-called filtration centres set up by Russia in the self-proclaimed breakaway Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, before being deported to Russia. During a video address to the Asian Leadership Conference in Seoul on 13 July President Zelenskiy said that Russia has forcibly removed nearly 2 million people from Ukraine, including several hundred thousand children, since its invasion of the country.

Pro-Russian separatist forces have reportedly stepped up the forced conscription of men in the occupied areas of Donbas. A video emerged of a Ukrainian woman confronting officials who attempted to force her husband to join pro-Russian fighters in Donetsk. "He doesn't want to go and fight. Nobody wants to

fight. We are so sick of you and your war," she said. Meanwhile, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said on 19 July that Russia was laying the groundwork for the annexation of more Ukrainian territory, and installing illegitimate proxy officials in areas under its control. Based on US intelligence assessments, Kirby said Russia was seeking to establish the rouble as the default currency and force residents to apply for citizenship.

On 13 July North Korea became the third state (after Russia and Syria) to officially recognise the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic as legitimate authorities. In response, Ukraine cut diplomatic ties with North Korea.

Further reading:

On outcomes and consequences of the war

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Arthur Traldi, Soldiers, Not Soldiers of Fortune, Lawfare, 19 July 2022

Mark Hannah, It's time for a US push to end the war in Ukraine, Responsible Statecraft, 18 July 2022

Yasmeen Serhan, 'France Has Delivered Almost Nothing': Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO's former secretary-general, is not impressed by Emmanuel Macron's diplomacy with Russia over Ukraine, The Atlantic, 18 July 2022

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Anatol Lieven, Why Russia has failed to achieve its goals in Ukraine, Responsible Statecraft, 12 July 2022

Tanya Mehra and Abigail Thorley, Foreign Fighters, Foreign Volunteers and Mercenaries in the Ukrainian Armed Conflict, ICCT Commentary, 11 Jul 2022

Claus Kold, Ukraine – The Need for A Global Peace Culture, Transnational, 4 July 2022

On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine and other legal processes

The ICC in the Hague 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. On 14 July, 45 countries agreed at a conference in the Hague to coordinate investigations into suspected war crimes in Ukraine. With some 23,000 war crimes investigations now open and different countries heading teams, evidence needed to be credible and organised, officials said. Further evidence of potential war crimes has continued to accumulate.

First, according to the Kyiv region's police chief Andriy Nebytov, 1,346 civilians have been found dead in the region after the retreat of Russian forces. Nebytov said about 300 individuals were still missing, and that 700 of those killed were shot with small arms such as a handgun. Second, new satellite images show an expanding mass grave site in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol, according to a report published by the UK-based Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) on 15 July. Investigators at CIR used satellite images to determine that approximately 1,400 new graves were added at the Mariupol Starokrymske cemetery between 12 May and 29 June.

Third, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism mission of experts presented their second round of findings to the OSCE Permanent Council on 14 July, collected in the

report entitled 'Report on Violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Committed in Ukraine (1 April – 25 June 2022)'. The mission "discovered clear patterns of serious violations of IHL attributable mostly to Russian armed forces", adding "The magnitude and frequency of the indiscriminate attacks carried out against civilians and civilian objects, including in sites where no military facility was identified, is credible evidence that hostilities were conducted by Russian armed forces with disregard to their fundamental obligation to comply with the basic principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution that constitute the fundamental basis of IHL".

The mission report also concluded that "international human rights law (IHRL) has been extensively violated in the conflict in Ukraine. Some of the most serious violations include targeted killing of civilians, including journalists, human rights defenders, or local mayors; unlawful detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances of such persons; large-scale deportations of Ukrainian civilians to Russia; various forms of mistreatment, including torture, inflicted on detained civilians and prisoners of war; the failure to respect fair trial guarantees; and the imposition of the death penalty. Most, albeit not all, violations have been committed in the territories under the effective control of the Russian Federation, including the territories of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, and are largely attributable to the Russian Federation"

The OSCE mission also identified "two new alarming phenomena which were not included or paid sufficient attention in the first report, namely the establishment and use of so-called filtration centres and the tendency by the Russian Federation to bypass its international obligations by handing detained persons over to the two so-called People's Republics and letting them engage in problematic practices, including the imposition of the death penalty".

On the risk of nuclear war

Chris Hedges, [NATO's endless expansion threatens endless war — and potential nuclear holocaust](#), Salon, 12 July 2022

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. 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. Europe has "shot itself in the lungs" with sanctions aimed at Russia over its war in Ukraine, the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, [said](#) on 15 July. Orbán is a fierce critic of EU sanctions on Russian oil and in an address on national radio he urged EU leaders to change the sanctions policy.

The EU agreed a new round of [sanctions against Russia](#), this time targeting its [gold exports](#), as well as individuals and entities. The move marks the seventh package of penalties and will see assets frozen at Russia's largest bank, Sberbank, with several more names added to the blacklist. The EU's high representative for foreign policy, Josep Borrell, said the ban on Russian gold was the most important measure of the latest plan, which is focused largely on "improving the implementation of the already existing sanctions".

The EU has so far frozen €13.8bn worth of assets held by Russian oligarchs, other individuals and entities sanctioned for Moscow's war against Ukraine, the EU's top justice official said on 12 July.

EU Allows Russia to Move Goods Through NATO Nations After Putin Warning, Newsweek, 13 July 2022

On energy security in Europe

On 20 July the EU set out emergency plans to reduce its gas use amid fears Russia could cut off its supply in winter. It proposed a voluntary target for countries to restrict usage by 15% from August until March, accusing Russia of weaponising gas exports. "Russia is blackmailing us. Russia is using energy as a weapon", the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said in a news conference. The voluntary commitment may be made legally binding if Russia further restricts the transport of gas to Europe this summer. Three days earlier, von der Leyen had travelled to Baku and signed a deal with Azerbaijan to double EU imports of natural gas by 2027.

The biggest single pipeline carrying Russian gas to Germany began annual maintenance on 11 July, and flows were interrupted for 10 days. Although governments, markets and companies were worried the shutdown might be extended because of the war in Ukraine, in the event gas supplies resumed on 21 July, albeit at lower levels. Nonetheless, Russia's Gazprom told customers in Europe that it cannot guarantee gas supplies because of "extraordinary" circumstances, according to a letter seen by *Reuters*. The Russian state gas monopoly said it was declaring force majeure on supplies, starting from 14 June.

Eldar Mamedov, Azerbaijan and the EU's faltering gas realpolitik, Responsible Statecraft, 21 July 2022

Aura Sabadus, Russia's European Gas Endgame May Hurt Even More than a Total Curtailment, RUSI Commentary, 12 July 2022

On international food security and Ukrainian grain exports

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 (see NATO Watch Update 17, Update 18 and Update 20). Although a preliminary agreement to resume exporting Ukrainian grain was announced after talks in Istanbul on 13 July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said more work was needed. The officials from Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the UN agreed to establish a coordination and monitoring centre in Istanbul, while Ankara agreed to ensure the safety of shipments in transit and all the parties would jointly check grain cargoes in ports. However, to date no agreement has been finalised. Turkey said on 18 July that a meeting with Ukraine, Russia and the UN this week to discuss resuming Ukraine's Black Sea grain exports is "probable", while a Turkish official said lingering "small problems" should be overcome. Russia and Turkey also discussed the export of Ukrainian grain at their meeting in Tehran the next day (see above).

Grain shipments via the Danube river increased with the reopening of the Bystre canal on 12 July, enabling the number of foreign ships reaching Ukraine ports to help with grain exports to double to 16 within 24 hours, according to Ukraine's deputy infrastructure minister Yuriy Vaskov. Ukraine has restored long-decommissioned ports to facilitate the exportation of grain due to Russia's Black Sea blockade and expects to increase monthly exports to 500,000 tonnes. However, a traffic jam of more than 130 cargo ships loaded with Ukrainian grain is waiting in the Black Sea to pass into the Danube

On developments within Ukraine

President Zelenskiy appointed a new security official on 18 July as acting head of the domestic security agency after two senior officials were fired over claims of failure to counter Russian infiltration. Zelenskiy's childhood friend, Ivan Bakanov, will be replaced by Vasyl Maliuk, a former first deputy head of the SBU who led the anti-corruption and organised crime unit of the agency's central directorate. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired his senior security chief and prosecutor general on 17 July in response to the opening of hundreds of high

treason cases into officials from both of their offices for collaboration with Russia in its invasion of Ukraine.

Connor Echols, Zelensky firings raise concern about corruption, Russian moles, Responsible Statecraft, 19 July 2022

On developments within Russia

On 14 July, President Putin signed into law tougher measures for individuals or entities considered "foreign agents" by Russia, as well as a new law equating defection with high treason. The new bill, which will come into force on 1 December, will broaden the definition of "foreign agents" to anyone deemed to have fallen "under foreign influence" or receiving support from abroad, not just foreign money.

On 15 July the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, denounced the continued shrinking space for freedom of expression and media freedom in Russia as the authorities enact more restrictive laws. Recently, this crackdown included taking steps against the Wikimedia Foundation, which hosts online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*, for violating Russian laws around the conflict in Ukraine, as well as banning investigative news outlet *Bellingcat* and its partner *The Insider*. Meanwhile, the independent Russian TV station, *Dozhd*, which was blocked in March, has now begun broadcasting from abroad.

On 13 July, a Moscow court ordered one of the last prominent opposition figures still in Russia, Ilya Yashin, a Moscow city councillor, to be detained for two months pending an investigation into the spreading of "fake information" about Russia's army. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison for spreading "false information" about Russian forces fighting in Ukraine. In addition, Russian police briefly detained journalist Marina Ovsyannikova, who in March interrupted a live TV broadcast to denounce the military action in Ukraine.

Manucharian Grigoriy, The 'Goebbels Method': RIA Novosti as Window into Russian Propaganda, Geopolitical Monitor, 13 July 2022

Thomas Withington, Defending Mother Russia's Skies, RUSI Commentary, 13 July 2022

On China's position on the war

Despite widespread Western criticism of China's position on the war in Ukraine, and the claim in NATO's new Strategic Concept of a "deepening strategic partnership" between China and Russia, an unnamed senior US official confirmed on 30 June that China has not been giving material support for Russia's war in Ukraine.

Nonetheless, China's chip exports to Russia have doubled to about $50 million in the first five months of 2022 compared to the same time last year, reported the *Wall Street Journal* on 15 July. China has sent Russia microchips, aluminium oxide and other 'dual-use' materials that will support Russian efforts in Ukraine in increasing volume since the beginning of the war. Separately, the Biden administration said in a congressional hearing on 14 July that it will be monitoring US export policies of semiconductor chips to China to ensure that proprietary information does not end up in Beijing.

On developments within NATO

On 13 July NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg briefed members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on the outcome of the 28-30 June NATO summit in Madrid and EU-NATO cooperation. Stoltenberg described the NATO Summit in Madrid as "historic and transformative", adding that Ukraine can count on NATO's support, for "as long as it takes". The Secretary General also said that the Summit decided the "biggest overhaul in our deterrence and defence since the Cold War" to adapt to a new security reality. NATO will strengthen forward defences, enhance battlegroups in the eastern part of the alliance, increase the number of high readiness forces to over 300,000 and pre-position equipment and stockpiles of military supplies.

Speaking about Finland and Sweden's NATO membership application, he said that it is good for Finland, for Sweden, for NATO, for stability throughout the Euro Atlantic area "and it also demonstrates that NATO's door is open".

The Secretary General also highlighted that in Madrid NATO leaders endorsed a new Strategic Concept. He said that NATO's Strategic Concept and the EU's Strategic Compass are different documents, but they "reflect the same reality" in a more dangerous, competitive and unpredictable world.

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

Erin Sikorsky, Summer Heatwave Underscores Importance of NATO's Climate Security Focus, Climate and Security, 21 July 2022

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Katharine Wright, Post-Madrid: Challenges and Contradictions in NATO's Women, Peace and Security Strategy, Australian Institute of International Affairs, 14 July 2022

Anatol Lieven, The real military balance between Russia and NATO, Responsible Statecraft, 14 July 2022

Andris Banka, NATO and the Schrödinger's Cat, RUSI Commentary, 13 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. However, ratification by Turkey is still by no means certain. The trilateral agreement could still falter on implementation, especially regarding Turkish extradition requests. Indeed, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on 18 July that Turkey could still "freeze" Sweden and Finland's membership in NATO unless the two countries take steps that meet Ankara's security demands.

To date, approximately half of the NATO member states have ratified the decision. Lithuania was the latest to do so, when the Lithuanian parliament Seimas on 20 July gave final approval to Sweden and Finland's NATO accession protocols. Sweden's accession to the alliance was ratified with 112 votes in favour and one against. MPs voted unanimously in favour of Finland's NATO membership.

In the United States the House of Representatives approved a resolution supporting Finnish and Swedish membership in

a 394-14 vote, with only Republicans voting in opposition. Two Democrats and 17 Republicans did not vote. The decision must still be approved by the Senate, the legislative body responsible for deciding on international agreements and requires a two-thirds majority vote for a measure to pass. The Senate is expected to vote on the issue before their summer break, which begins on 4 August.

Ken Howery, Sweden and NATO are ready for each other, The Hill, 20 July 2022

Bradley Bowman, Ryan Brobst, Jack Sullivan and John Hardie, Finland and Sweden in NATO are strategic assets, not liabilities, Defense News, 20 July 2022

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US Congress signals support for Finland's Nato membership, YLE, 19 July 2022

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Murky trilateral agreement results in Turkey lifting objections to Finland and Sweden's NATO application, NATO Watch News Brief, 29 June 2022

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