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Contact: Dr. Ian Davis
Email: idavis@natowatch.org
www.natowatch.org

Russia's war with Ukraine

As Russia's war in Ukraine nears the eight-month mark it appears to be escalating on a number of fronts, with Russian President Vladimir Putin launching the largest airstrikes on [civilian targets](#) in Ukraine in months. In addition, Russia's recent explicit [threats](#) to use nuclear weapons in connection with its invasion have caused apprehension worldwide. [Belarus](#) and Russia have deployed a joint military task force on Ukraine's western border, and the Russian President has sought to draft hundreds of thousands of additional civilians into his military, and carried out sham referendums to annex parts of Ukraine (see NATO Watch [Update 31](#)). President Putin [said](#) on 14 October he believed the "partial mobilisation" of army reservists would be completed in two weeks, adding that a total of 222,000 reservists would be called up, down from the 300,000 figure initially circulated after the order last month.

Over the last two weeks Russia has carried out frequent missile barrages and drone attacks across Ukraine, targeting energy infrastructure with the aim of wearing down Ukrainians. Between 10-12 October, for example, Russia [launched](#) up to 130 missile and drone strikes against civilian and energy facilities, particularly in the capital, Kyiv. And on 22 October, more than a dozen Russian missiles hit energy facilities and other infrastructure across Ukraine, the Ukrainian air force [said](#), causing blackouts in parts of different regions. Kira Rudik, a member of the Ukrainian parliament, [said](#) 1.5 million people were without electricity after the airstrikes. President Volodymyr Zelensky said the Russian attacks had struck on a "very wide" scale,

Reuters [reported](#). He pledged that his military would improve on an already good record of downing missiles with help from its partners. The leaders of the G7 condemned Russia's missile attacks on cities across Ukraine "in the strongest possible terms" and vowed to stand "firmly" with Kyiv "for as long as it takes" in a [statement](#) on 11 October. The French President Emmanuel Macron [described](#) Russia's attacks as "a profound change in the nature of this war".

On 19 October President Putin [declared](#) martial law in the four provinces of Ukraine where Russia controls territory. The law gives far-reaching emergency powers to the Russian-installed heads of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces. Ukraine's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak described the announcement as the "pseudo-legalisation of looting of Ukrainians' property". Putin also ordered an "economic mobilisation" in six provinces that border Ukraine, plus Crimea and Sevastopol, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. In televised remarks he said he was granting additional authority to the regional leaders of all Russian provinces to maintain public order and increase production in support of Moscow's war. The law also limits the freedom to move in and out of the eight provinces.

The battle for Kherson

In the south, Ukrainian troops have been pushing closer and closer to the city of [Kherson](#), just north of Crimea. Kherson is one of four regions in Ukraine that Moscow recently claimed to have annexed. On 22 October the Russian-installed authorities

ordered all residents of to leave “immediately”, calling on civilians to use boat crossings over a major river to move deeper into Russian-held territory, Associated Press [reported](#). Russian officials had earlier [warned](#) of a Ukrainian assault on Kherson amid plans to “resettle” civilians. The Russian-installed head of the key southern city Vladimir Saldo spoke of plans to move up to 60,000 people across the Dnieper River and into Russia. Images of people using boats to flee the city were broadcast by Russian state TV. Ukrainian officials described Russia’s announcements as “a propaganda show” and told people not to comply with the evacuation request. Forcibly deporting civilians from occupied territories to the territory of the occupying force can constitute a war crime under the Geneva Convention.

As Ukrainian forces prepared their offensive on Kherson, President Zelensky [urged](#) the west on 20 October to warn Russia not to blow up a hydroelectric dam that would flood a large part of southern Ukraine. In a television address, Zelensky said Russian forces had planted explosives inside the huge Nova Kakhovka dam and were planning to blow it up. “Now everyone in the world must act powerfully and quickly to prevent a new Russian terrorist attack. Destroying the dam would mean a large-scale disaster,” he said. A Russian-appointed official in Kherson Kirill Stremousov [denied](#) Kyiv’s allegations that Moscow’s forces have started mining the dam. Meanwhile, Russian soldiers reportedly [shot dead](#) Ukrainian conductor Yuriy Kerpatenko in his home after he refused to take part in a concert in occupied Kherson. The concert was “intended by the occupiers to demonstrate the so-called ‘improvement of peaceful life’ in Kherson”, Kyiv’s culture ministry said in a [statement](#) on its Facebook page on 15 October.

Russia’s alleged use of Iranian-produced ‘kamikaze’ drones

As noted above, intensified Russian air and missile attacks have been targeting critical infrastructure across Ukraine. These attacks have allegedly involved extensive use of so-called kamikaze drone [strikes](#) (with Iranian-

produced Shahed-129 UAVs). Ukraine [claims](#) to have shot down 233 Shahed UAVs and dozens of missiles during October. Russian airstrikes have destroyed [30% of Ukraine’s power stations](#) since 10 October, causing rolling blackouts across the country, and in response, on 20 October Ukraine began [restricting](#) electricity supplies across the country. The attacks on critical energy infrastructure are “acts of pure terror” that amount to war crimes, the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen [said](#) to the European parliament on 19 October.

The drones offer a cheap alternative to missile strikes and allow Russian forces to keep up the pressure on Ukrainian cities located far from the frontline. Ukrainian intelligence [said](#) 1,750 drones, each costing only £20,000 to manufacture, have been delivered. They can be fired from mobile trucks and, despite their slow speeds, are hard to detect until the last minute. Moreover, the cost to Ukraine of downing the drones vastly exceeds the sums paid by Russia in sourcing and launching the cheap Iranian-made technology, [analysis suggest](#). The total cost to Russia of the drone attacks on Ukraine in recent weeks is estimated by military analysts to be between \$11.66-\$17.9 million, whereas the estimated cost to Ukraine to bring down the drones stands at more than \$28.14 million.

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [called](#) on the EU to sanction Iran for providing Russia with kamikaze drones that killed at least four civilians in Kyiv on 17 October, and the next day he [said](#) he was proposing a formal cut in diplomatic ties with Tehran. Iran has repeatedly [denied](#) providing Russia with drones to use in Ukraine. “The published news about Iran providing Russia with drones has political ambitions and it is circulated by western sources. We have not provided weaponry to any side of the countries at war”, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said. However, [according](#) to both US and Iranian security officials, Iran has supplied medium-range missiles to Russia for use in Ukraine, and the evidence that they have also supplied drones seems compelling. NATO

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on 18 October that Ukraine would receive anti-drone defence systems in the coming days, and also that member states would “step up” and deliver more air defences to help stabilise the situation (see [NATO Watch Defence Ministers briefing](#)).

The EU’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell initially said the bloc would look for “concrete evidence” about the participation of Iran in Russia’s war on Ukraine. However, the EU subsequently [imposed sanctions](#) on three senior Iranian military commanders and the company that develops the drones, indicating EU ministers do not believe Iran’s denials. The UK also [announced](#) new sanctions on the same Iranian entities. Meanwhile, on 21 October the UK, France and Germany [called](#) for a UN investigation into accusations that Russia is using Iranian drones in Ukraine. If found to be true, the allegations would be in breach of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. A letter seen by Reuters was circulated to UN Security Council members by the three countries, known as the E3—Iran’s Foreign Ministry strongly [condemned](#) the call. Russia’s deputy UN ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy [told](#) reporters on 19 October that Russia will reassess its cooperation with UN Secretary-General António Guterres and his staff if Guterres sends experts to Ukraine to inspect the downed drones. Finally, the White House [said](#) on 20 October that Iranian advisers based in Crimea have been providing technical support (training and maintenance) for Russian pilots flying the drones.

UN General Assembly resolution

The United Nations General Assembly on 12 October overwhelmingly [voted](#) to condemn Russia’s annexation of parts of Ukraine, although 35 nations abstained including China, India, South Africa and Pakistan. The resolution “condemns the organisation by the Russian Federation of so-called referendums within the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine” and “the attempted illegal annexation” announced last month.

Stalled diplomacy

The Pentagon [confirmed](#) a phone call between the US Defence Secretary, Lloyd Austin, and the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, on 21 October. They said Austin “emphasised the importance of maintaining lines of communication” with Shoigu. Russia’s defence ministry said of the call: “Topical issues of international security, including the situation in Ukraine, were discussed”. The Pentagon also published a [readout](#) of Austin’s call with the Ukrainian Defence Minister, Oleksii Reznikov. The US Defence Secretary pledged “unwavering US commitment” to supporting Ukraine against Russia. On the same day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US would consider every means to advance diplomacy with Russia if it saw an opening, but at the moment Moscow showed no sign of willingness to engage in meaningful talks. Reuters [reported](#) Blinken as saying: “Every indication is that far from being willing to engage in meaningful diplomacy, President Putin continues to push in the opposite direction”. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [said](#) on 18 October that Russia no longer sees a need to maintain a diplomatic presence in the West. “There is neither point nor desire to maintain the previous presence in western states. Our people work there in conditions that can hardly be called human,” Lavrov said, according to the Russian news agency Tass.

The Russian annexations have greatly complicated the search for an eventual peace settlement, as Ukraine and Western nations will not accept or recognize them. President Zelensky, from once saying that he was accepting neutrality for Ukraine, has recently called for fast-tracking a NATO application for Ukraine. There have been some negotiations on key issues so far, such as the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, getting grain out of Ukraine and in organising prisoner swaps. But there have been no negotiations since March on the big issues.

Negotiations between Ukraine and Russia took place for several months following the invasion, but they did not stop the war, and

talks have been stalled ever since. There has been some [speculation](#) that a tentative [fifteen-point peace plan](#) to end the war was close to being agreed at the end of March, but that the UK and USA reportedly urged President Zelensky to break off the talks with Russia – others dispute that interpretation and [argue](#) that the March negotiations failed as a result of a complex interplay of different factors primarily related to Ukraine’s and Russia’s internal politics and the dynamics of the military operations. Before that, negotiations on Donbas had lasted for more than seven years with French and German participation; but despite signed agreements and a ceasefire, the conflict was never resolved. Each side blames the other for a lack of progress and there appears to be no real prospect for any diplomatic breakthroughs or ceasefires in the near future. Positions between the two sides remain incompatible.

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. 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. An in-person meeting of the Contact Group took place on 12 October during the NATO Defence Ministerial meeting in Brussels. It was the Group’s sixth meeting and the fourth in-person session since being formed in April. France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain the UK and the USA, announced delivery of new air defences to Ukraine, while other NATO Member States committed more military aid (see [NATO Watch Defence Ministers briefing](#)).

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 UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace [claimed](#) on 13 October that Russia will run out of supplies and armaments before the West does. He said procurement processes were in place among allies in the West that would ensure that the international community could continue arming Ukraine for years ahead. The United States has [pledged](#) about \$25 billion in military aid to Ukraine—more than four times Ukraine’s 2021 defence budget. America’s partners in Europe and beyond have [pledged](#) an additional \$12 billion, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. External military support to Russia so far has been limited to a handful of states, principally [Iran](#) and [North Korea](#).

The US investigative journalism news organisation, The Intercept, [reported](#) (citing unnamed US intelligence and military officials) that US special operations forces are on the ground in Ukraine as part of a broad covert operation that includes CIA personnel. The report said that the US withdrew its CIA and special operations assets from Ukraine shortly before Russia’s invasion, although one US official said the CIA “never completely left”. The CIA initially predicted that Kyiv would fall quickly to Russia, but after it became clear that it wouldn’t happen, the Biden administration allegedly sent its covert assets back into Ukraine. Several current and former intelligence officials said that there “is a much larger presence of both CIA and US special operations personnel and resources in Ukraine than there were at the time of the Russian invasion in February”.

The EU has [agreed](#) to create a mission to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers. It will also provide a

further €500 million to help buy weapons. An EU Foreign Ministers meeting on 17 October approved the two-year training mission, which will involve different EU forces providing basic and specialist instruction to Ukrainian soldiers, in Poland and Germany. Officials hope the mission, which is expected to cost €107 million, will be up and running by mid-November. France will train up to 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers on its territory, France's minister for the armed forces told Le Parisien newspaper in an [interview](#) on 15 October. Sebastien Lecornu said soldiers would "be taken into our units for several weeks", and that France would also provide Ukraine with Crotale air defence systems, without specifying how many.

For further details on arms transfers to Ukraine, see, the [Forum on the Arms Trade](#). And for a timeline of every US arms shipment to Ukraine that has been announced since the war began, see [here](#).

Saudi Arabia [announced](#) \$400 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine on 14 October. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman expressed the Kingdom's readiness to continue efforts of mediation, and support everything that contributes to de-escalation.

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. In September Russia [acknowledged](#) nearly 6,000 war dead, while Ukraine [claims](#) to have killed more than 65,000 Russian soldiers in the war to date. Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed forces, [said](#) on 22 August at a public forum that nearly 9,000 Ukrainian military personnel have been killed in the war. This was the first time Ukraine has revealed the scale of its military losses since the war began, previously protected as a tightly guarded secret - although in early June, a senior Ukrainian presidential aide [told](#) BBC News 100-200 Ukrainian soldiers were dying in the Donbas region every day. In April, Russia [said](#) it had killed about 23,000 Ukrainian troops.

According to [data collected](#) by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 17 October, 6,306 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 397 children. (According to the office of the Ukrainian prosecutor general, [423 children](#) have been killed since the start of the invasion and a further 810 children had been injured in the conflict). 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 civilian casualties from explosive violence in the Ukrainian conflict reached 8,657 people by 21 October. From this number, 3,253 were killed and 5,404 were injured. Ninety-three per cent (8,068) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

As of 19 October, there were 7,710,924 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,386,102 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. The EU [announced](#) it will extend the bloc-wide protection scheme for Ukrainian refugees into 2024. Ukrainians in the EU who choose to return to their country will still be able to maintain their refugee status, if they notify the relevant EU country of their move, according to the EU's home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson.

Poverty in Ukraine has [increased](#) tenfold since the start of the war, a senior World Bank official Arup Banerji said. Meanwhile, US-based thinktank The Institute for the Study of War said in its 15 October [assessment](#) that Russia continues to conduct "massive, forced deportations" of Ukrainians that "likely amount to a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign". It notes that Russian officials have "openly admitted to placing children from occupied areas of Ukraine up for adoption with Russian families". Finally, Ukraine [announced](#) on 17 October that more than 100 prisoners have been swapped with Russia in what it said

was the first all-female exchange with Moscow after nearly eight months of war. “The more Russian prisoners we have, the sooner we will be able to free our heroes. Every Ukrainian soldier, every frontline commander should remember this”, Zelensky said.

Concerns about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is Europe's largest and was shut down in September due to fighting in and around it over the previous two months. This raised concerns about the potential for a [nuclear accident](#). A 14-member IAEA [expert mission](#) carried out an inspection of the plant in early September. For further details see NATO Watch updates [23](#) through to [27](#). Fighting in and around the city has continued (see above). An attempt to retake control of the plant by boats loaded with Ukrainian special forces was repulsed on 18 October, [according](#) to one of the Russian-installed officials in occupied eastern Ukraine. On the same day, Ukraine's state nuclear energy company [accused](#) Russia of “kidnapping” two senior staff at the plant. Energoatom said Russian forces “kidnapped” the head of information technology, Oleg Kostyukov, and the plant's assistant general director, Oleg Osheka, and “took them to an unknown destination”.

The Sakharov prize

The European Parliament awarded the people of Ukraine its annual [Sakharov prize](#) on 19 October for freedom of thought to honour their fight against Russia's invasion. “They are standing up for what they believe in. Fighting for our values. Protecting democracy, freedom and rule of law. Risking their lives for us,” the European Parliament president, Roberta Metsola, said.

Further reading:

On outcomes and consequences of the war

Connor Echols, [Diplomacy Watch: Could Lula be a force for peace in Ukraine?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 21 October 2022

[NATO is rushing equipment to Ukraine as troops hunker down for the winter](#), Politico, 19 October 2022

Connor Echols, [Defense contractors eye long-term profits from Ukraine war](#), Responsible Statecraft, 19 October 2022

[US Special operations forces are on the ground in Ukraine](#), Modern Diplomacy, 18 October 2022

Peter Rutland, [Why Crimea is the key to the Ukraine war](#), Responsible Statecraft, 18 October 2022

[Ukraine to get anti-drone systems in coming days, NATO's Stoltenberg says](#), Reuters, 18 October 2022

Vladyslav Vlasiuk, [The world has a choice: act decisively now or face a larger conflict with Russia](#), The Guardian, 18 October 2022

Volodymyr Artiukh and Taras Fedirko, [No, the West Didn't Halt Ukraine's Peace Talks With Russia](#), Novara Media, 17 October 2022

Jack Matlock, [Why the US must press for a ceasefire in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 17 October 2022

Iryna Kosse, [Ukrainian Electricity Network Withstood Russian Shelling](#), Globsec Commentary, 17 October 2022

Carlos Solar, [Is Russia's War in Ukraine Aiding the Survival of the Venezuelan Regime?](#) RUSI Commentary, 17 October 2022

Simon Tisdall, [Putin's lying diplomats make excuses for terror in Ukraine. Expel them all](#), The Observer, 16 October 2022

[China tension over Ukraine flares at Arctic Circle Assembly in Iceland](#), South China Morning Post, 16 October 2022

[Chair of the NATO Military Committee highlights strategic importance of the Arctic](#), NATO News Release, 16 October 2022

[Ukraine: Putin says Germany made 'mistake' to side with NATO](#), Deutsche Welle, 14 October 2022

Connor Echols, [Diplomacy Watch: Gulf states join Turkey in push for Ukraine peace talks](#), Responsible Statecraft, 14 October 2022

[The UK and France pledge to help bolster Ukraine's defence systems](#), Euronews, 13 October 2022

Taras Kuzio, [How Western Experts Got the Ukraine War So Wrong](#), Geopolitical Monitor, 13 October 2022

[Russian official warns of World War Three if Ukraine joins NATO](#), Reuters, 13 October 2022

Sarang Shidore, [Global South again shows ambivalence on the Ukraine war](#), Responsible Statecraft, 13 October 2022

[Russia strikes Ukrainian towns, head of annexed region tells residents to leave](#), Reuters, 13 October 2022

[NATO sets sights on rebuilding Ukraine's defense industry](#), Politico, 12 October 2022

[NATO cautious to avoid Ukraine war but members help anyway](#), AP, 12 October 2022

Medea Benjamin & Nicolas Davies: [Negotiations "Still the Only Way Forward" to End Ukraine War](#), Democracy Now, 12 October 2022

[NATO, Kyiv allies meet to talk bolstering Ukraine air defense](#), Deutsche Welle, 12 October 2022

[U.S. predicts Ukraine will battle through winter; allies bolster air defenses](#), Reuters, 12 October 2022

[NATO pivots to sending Ukraine air defenses after Russian missile attacks](#), Politico, 11 October 2022

Anatol Lieven, [Is Putin on the way out?](#) Responsible Statecraft, 11 October 2022

[NATO condemns "horrific" Russian attacks on Ukraine, Stoltenberg says](#), Reuters, 10 October 2022

Ben Armbruster, [Former Joint Chiefs chair calls for talks to end Ukraine war](#), Responsible Statecraft, 10 October 2022

Kelley Beacar Vlahos, [Russia unleashes fury; Zelensky implores West for more help](#), Responsible Statecraft, 10 October 2022

Zakhar Popovych, Denys I. Bondar and M.V. Ramana, [Zaporizhzhia on the brink: How deteriorating conditions at the nuclear power plant could lead to disaster](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 7 October 2022

Branka Marijan, [Russia's War on Ukraine Is a Test Case for Future Conflict](#), CIGI Commentary, 6 October 2022

On the risk of nuclear war

There have been growing concerns 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. A Russian nuclear strike would change the course of the conflict and "almost certainly" trigger a "physical response" from Ukraine's allies and potentially from NATO, a senior NATO official [said](#) on 12 October in advance of the NATO Defence Ministers meeting, including a closed-door meeting of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group on 13 October. Any use of nuclear weapons by Moscow would have "unprecedented consequences" for Russia, the official was quoted by Reuters as saying. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell [warned](#) Moscow on 13 October that its forces would be "annihilated" by the west's military response if President Putin used nuclear weapons against Ukraine.

The United States and NATO launched annual nuclear war exercises in the skies above Belgium, the UK and the North Sea. NATO's nuclear exercise '[Steadfast Noon](#)' involves 14 countries and up to 60 aircraft of various types, including fourth and fifth generation combat aircraft, as well as surveillance and tanker aircraft. It runs from 17-30 October, and, as in previous years, US B-52 long-range bombers will take part, flying from Minot Air Base in North Dakota. No live weapons are used. Russia's military is set to stage its own annual large-scale nuclear exercise called "Thunder" along Russia's northwestern coast. Reiterating the earlier message from NATO Defence Ministers, the UK government [said](#) on 19 October that Putin will face "severe consequences" if he uses nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine.

The West should listen carefully when President Putin talks about using nuclear weapons but should remember that it is more useful for him to threaten their use than to go ahead, the head of Norway's armed forces [told](#) Reuters on 18 October. Meanwhile, President Biden published a new US [National Security Strategy](#) on 12 October, which warned that the

US will need to deter two major nuclear weapons powers for the first time. The Strategy depicts China as the most capable long-term competitor, but Russia as the more immediate, disruptive threat, pointing to its nuclear posturing over Ukraine. “Russia’s conventional military will have been weakened, which will likely increase Moscow’s reliance on nuclear weapons in its military planning,” the strategy blueprint reads.

While Russia’s threats have drastically increased the current risk of nuclear war, all the nuclear-armed states and nuclear supportive allies are complicit in this crisis. They have all perpetuated the belief that nuclear weapons afford security and stability, leading to proliferation and preparedness for use. They have together invested billions of dollars into the modernisation and maintenance of nuclear weapon systems, extending the possession of these weapons of terror into the indefinite future, in violation of their legal obligations to disarm. The production and testing of these bombs has contaminated land, water, and bodies for generations but the nuclear possessors resist effective remediation and reparation.

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, Editorial, [First Committee Monitor](#), 22 October 2022

François Diaz-Maurin, [Nowhere to Hide: How a nuclear war would kill you — and almost everyone else](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 20 October 2022

[U.S. Eyes Planned Russian Nuclear Exercises Amid NATO War Games](#), Time, 20 October 2022

Scott Ritter, [Nuclear High Noon in Europe](#), Consortium News, 19 October 2022

[60 Years After Cuban Missile Crisis, Activists Demand World Leaders “Defuse Nuclear War”](#), Democracy Now, 18 October 2022

Jon Wolfsthal, [The Nuclear Sanctions Option - How to deter nuclear use](#), Blog, 17 October 2022

[NATO begins nuclear exercises amid Russia war tensions](#), ABC News, 17 October 2022

[Would Russian military follow order to use nukes? ‘Questionable,’ says ex-U.S. NATO envoy](#), Global News, 16 October 2022

Nina Tannenwald and David Holloway, [The precedent the world—and Russia—has rejected](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 14 October 2022

Jonathan Eyal and Matthew Harries, [Ukraine and the Consequences for Nuclear Deterrence](#), RUSI Commentary, 14 October 2022

[NATO’s annual nuclear exercise gets underway](#), NATO News Release, 14 October 2022

[NATO to keep close eye on Russia's upcoming nuclear exercise – Stoltenberg](#), Reuters, 13 October 2022

[NATO chief: circumstances for NATO to use nuclear weapons 'extremely remote'](#), Reuters, 13 October 2022

Lorne Cook, [NATO chief warns Russia not to cross ‘very important line’](#), AP, 13 October 2022

Christian Ruhl, [Sixty years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, how to face a new era of global catastrophic risks](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 13 October 2022

Katrina vanden Heuvel and James Carden, [How did we avoid a Cuban Missile ‘Armageddon’? Strategic empathy](#), Responsible Statecraft, 12 October 2022

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[Russian nuclear strike likely to provoke 'physical response,' NATO official says](#), Reuters, 12 October 2022

Lorne Cook, [NATO to hold nuclear exercise despite Russian warnings](#), AP, 11 October 2022

Jon Wolfsthal, [We Never Learned the Key Lesson From the Cuban Missile Crisis](#), New Republic, 11 October 2022

Steven Pifer, [Pushing back against Putin’s threat of nuclear use in Ukraine](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 10 October 2022

On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

Based on its investigations of the events in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions in late February and March 2022, the

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has found reasonable grounds to conclude that an array of war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine. Given the gravity of the identified violations, there is an undeniable need for accountability, the Commission said on the day of submitting a detailed written [report](#) to the UN General Assembly. “The impact of these violations on the civilian population in Ukraine is immense. The loss of lives is in the thousands. The destruction of infrastructure is devastating,” said Chair of the Commission Erik Møse. Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified, including war crimes. Ukrainian forces have also committed international humanitarian law violations in some cases, including two incidents that qualify as war crimes. The International Criminal Court (ICC) 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.

Lauren Wolfe, [Ukraine’s true detectives: the investigators closing in on Russian war criminals](#), The Guardian, 20 October 2022

On sanctions against Russia and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine

The United States on 19 October [imposed new sanctions](#) on Russia, targeting a network that Washington accused of procuring military and dual-use technologies from US manufacturers and illegally supplying them to Russia for its war in Ukraine. Some of the equipment was recovered on battlefields in Ukraine, the Justice Department said. 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 also roughly doubled its portfolio (excluding the UN listings it is obligated to implement) having [imposed](#) sanctions on over 1,200 individuals and over 120 businesses; 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.

Aaron Arnold, [The Haves and Have Nots of Sanctions Implementation](#), RUSI Commentary, 18 October 2022

Juraj Kuruc., [Sanctions and Active Financial Measures – Another Front of the War against Ukraine](#), Globesec Commentary, 10 October 2022

On energy security in Europe

Europe is striving to diversify its energy supply sources in order to curb its dependence on Russia. Gas shortages are occurring across Europe, raising the prospect of energy rationing as governments push 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. President Putin has also [threatened](#) to cut off all deliveries of gas, oil, and coal to Europe if they imposed a price cap on Russian energy imports.

On the 18 October the European Commission [presented](#) proposals to mitigate soaring energy costs. The proposals include joint gas

purchases by 2023. By harnessing the bloc's collective purchasing power, the EU is looking to avoid member states outbidding each other in the market and thus driving up prices. In an [address](#) to the Russian Energy Week international forum on 12 October, President Putin said Russia is ready to resume gas supplies via one link of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that remains operational. The ball was in the EU's court on whether it wanted gas supplied via the pipeline, Putin said. The same day, Alexei Miller, the head of the Russian state-owned gas monopoly supplier, Gazprom, [warned](#) Europe of the consequences of renouncing Russian gas. There is "no guarantee" that Europe would survive winter based on its current gas storage capacity, Miller said, adding that gas in Germany's underground storage would be enough for between two- and two-and-a-half months.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [said](#) on 20 October that Putin was using energy and hunger as weapons but has failed to break the west's unity and will not achieve his war aims through scorched earth tactics. "We will not let Moscow's latest escalation go unanswered. Scorched earth tactics will not help Russia win the war. They will only strengthen the unity and resolve of Ukraine and its partners," Scholz told the German parliament.

President Putin and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, met for [talks](#) on 13 October, but did not discuss ways to resolve the conflict in Ukraine according to reports. Instead, Putin courted Erdoğan with a plan to provide more Russian gas via Turkey that would turn it into a new supply "hub", bidding to preserve Russia's energy leverage over Europe. The hub would be used for supplies but also to determine and regulate the price of gas, independent from politics.

Russia [summoned](#) diplomats from Germany, Denmark and Sweden on 13 October to complain that representatives from Moscow and Gazprom had not been invited to join an investigation into ruptures of the Nord Stream gas pipelines. "Russia will obviously not recognise the pseudo-results of such an investigation unless Russian experts are

involved," the Foreign Ministry said. The Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines, which are owned by Russian-controlled Gazprom and carry natural gas to Germany and European markets, were damaged by explosions in several locations in the exclusive economic zones of Denmark and Sweden on 26 September (see [Update 30](#)). Russia had [switched off](#) the pipelines earlier in September amid tensions with the West over its war in Ukraine. Politicians across Europe have warned that the suspected sabotaging of the two Nord Stream pipelines could herald a new stage of hybrid warfare targeting vulnerable energy infrastructure in order to undermine support for Ukraine.

Michal Wyrebkowski and Wiktor Babinski, [Winter is coming: Europe's huge geopolitical blunder on Russian energy](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 14 October 2022

On developments within Russia

At least 13 people were killed when a Russian combat aircraft [crashed](#) near the border with Ukraine. The plane struck a residential area of Yeysk, a town in southwestern Russia, news agencies reported, citing the defence ministry. Meanwhile, at least 11 people were killed and 15 wounded at a military training ground in south-west Russia's Belgorod region when two volunteers opened fire on other troops, the Russian defence ministry [said](#) on 15 October.

The Russian domestic intelligence service, the FSB, has set up a special unit to monitor anti-war sentiment in the country, Intelligence Online [reported](#). The unit has, for example, already been dispatched to Dagestan to discreetly negotiate with local leaders to stop the demonstrations in the region that took place after the announcement of a draft mobilisation order on 21 September. Russia southern republics and the large cities of Moscow, St Petersburg, Yekaterinburg and others with large middle classes where anti-draft sentiment may be strongest, remain under closest scrutiny.

A Russian court has ordered the arrest of television journalist Marina Ovsyannikova,

local media [reports](#). Ovsyannikova, who staged an on-air protest against the war in March, was under house arrest but has since fled Russia, her lawyer [said](#).

[Seventh round of military-to-military staff talks with the African Union](#), NATO News Release, 18 October 2022

Cornell Overfield, [Wrangling Warships: Russia's Proposed Law on Northern Sea Route Navigation](#), Lawfare, 17 October 2022

Julian Cooper, [Implementation of the Russian Federal Budget during January–July 2022 and Spending on the Military](#), SIPRI Background Paper, October 2022

On developments within NATO

NATO Defence Ministers meeting, 12-13 October 2022

The two-day NATO Defence Ministerial meeting in Brussels was the first since the NATO Madrid Summit in June 2022 and the first Ministerial that Finland and Sweden joined as Invitees. Three main issues were discussed: Support to Ukraine – this included a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group; Progress on strengthening NATO's defence and deterrence, against the backdrop of a significant escalation in the Russia-Ukraine war - this included (a) a meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group; (b) discussions on increasing the protection of critical infrastructure; and (c) discussions on increasing military production and strengthening the military base within Member States; and NATO's missions and operations, including those in Kosovo and Iraq. For further details see [NATO Watch Defence Ministers briefing](#) 16 October 2022.

Cooperation with the African Union

On 17-18 October 2022, NATO's Cooperative Security division welcomed a delegation from the African Union for military-to-military [talks](#). Discussions focused on readiness, education and training, participation in exercises as well as capacity building and gender mainstreaming. This was the 7th round of NATO-AU talks, with the previous military-to-military staff talks taking place in May 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The annual talks were

put on hold due to the ongoing COVID pandemic and the ensuing travel restrictions.

[NATO Military Committee highlights importance of readiness across land and maritime domains](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2022

['NATO Pod' set to take final test flight this year: General Atomics](#), Breaking Defense, 18 October 2022

[NATO Secretary General takes part in B9 Defence Ministers' meeting](#), NATO News Release, 14 October 2022

[US favours Finland and Sweden joining NATO at the same time](#), Euractiv, 14 October 2022

Judy Asks: [Is Europe Taking Resilience Seriously?](#) Carnegie Europe, 13 October 2022

[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 Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

Hungary's government supports their NATO membership and has submitted the ratification documents to the National Assembly, Minister Gergely Gulyás told reporters at a briefing on 22 October. Gulyás, chief of staff to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, said the expansion of NATO to include the two Nordic countries would be ratified by mid-December at the latest, according to media reports. 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.

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the new Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to NATO Headquarters on 20 October for discussions on Sweden and Finland's applications to join the Alliance. "Joining the Alliance will make you safer, NATO stronger and the Euro-Atlantic area more secure," said the Secretary General. He noted that the accession process for Sweden and Finland has been the fastest in NATO's modern history, and underlined that many allies have given security assurances to both countries and NATO has increased its presence in the Baltic Sea. "It is inconceivable that Allies would not act, should Sweden and Finland come under any form of pressure," he said.

[Hungary to ratify NATO bids of Sweden, Finland by year end: Minister](#), Politico, 22 October 2022

[Turkish state media: Talks to be held on Finland's NATO bid](#), AP, 22 October 2022

[Finnish delegation to visit Türkiye for NATO talks next week](#), Daily Sabah, 22 October 2022

[Erdogan to discuss NATO bid with Swedish PM in Turkey](#), Arab News, 21 October 2022

[Turkey's Erdogan to meet Swedish PM Kristersson to discuss extraditions, NATO bid](#), Reuters, 21 October 2022

[In letter, Sweden lists 'concrete actions' on Turkey's concerns over NATO bid](#), Reuters, 21 October 2022

[Press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Ulf Kristersson, 20 October 2022

[Sweden committed to NATO agreement with Türkiye: Swedish PM](#), Daily Sabah, 17 October 2022

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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