



News Brief Update 43

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Russia's war with Ukraine

Russia [launched](#) more than 100 missiles and staged 12 air and 20 artillery attacks on various targets across Ukraine on 10 February, striking several cities including Kyiv. Ukraine's armed forces reportedly destroyed 61 cruise missiles. Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko [said](#) 10 Russian missiles had been shot down over the capital in the first attack on it in two weeks. Energy minister German Galushchenko [said](#) Russia had hit power facilities in six regions with missiles and drones, causing blackouts across most of Ukraine. Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal [said](#) Ukraine was without 44% of nuclear generation and 75% of thermal power capacity. The attacks came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky ended a tour of European allies to lobby leaders for long-range weapons and combat aircraft (see below).

Meanwhile, Russia has [reportedly](#) launched a major offensive in eastern Ukraine and is trying to break through defences near the town of Kreminna in the Luhansk region. The Institute for the Study of War confirmed a "marked increase" in operations in the area over the past week in its latest [report](#). In addition, a series of Russian drone and missile attacks in the south and east of Ukraine were [reported](#) on 9 February.

Zelensky goes to London, Paris and Brussels seeking combat aircraft

President Zelensky visited, London and Paris (on 8 February) and Brussels (on 9 February) to urge the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and the EU to speed up the delivery of weapons, supply Ukraine with combat aircraft,

and to open EU membership talks with Ukraine this year.

In a [speech](#) to both UK Houses of Parliament on 8 February, President Zelensky said, "I appeal to you and the world with simple and yet most important words: combat aircrafts – for Ukraine! Wings – for freedom!". The UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, previously opposed to supplying UK combat aircraft, ordered a defence ministry review into whether Zelensky's request can be met, and [said](#) "nothing was off the table". He did [pledge](#) to extend Ukraine military training to pilots on advanced NATO combat aircraft "to ensure Ukraine can defend its skies well into the future". Sunak added: "The first step in being able to provide advanced aircrafts is to have soldiers or aviators that are capable of using them. That is a process. It takes some time, we've started that process today". The UK has previously argued that the RAF's F-35 and Typhoon jets would take too long for Ukrainian pilots to train on. Finally, Sunak also confirmed that UK Challenger 2 tanks would be deployed in Ukraine in March.

Zelensky also used his visit to Paris to [urge](#) Europe to deliver combat aircraft and heavy arms to Ukraine as soon as possible. "The sooner Ukraine gets long-range heavy weaponry, the sooner our pilots get planes, the sooner this Russian aggression will end and we can return to peace in Europe", the Ukrainian President said as he arrived at the Élysée Palace on 8 February. Zelensky met with the French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Macron [said](#) Paris would "continue the efforts" to deliver

arms to Kyiv, adding that France was determined to help Ukraine towards “victory, peace and Europe”. “Russia cannot and must not win,” he said, adding that “the future of Europe” was at stake in Ukraine. Scholz [said](#) it was clear that Moscow would not win, and assured Ukraine its future was in the EU, saying Ukraine was part of the “European family”. “Putin will not achieve his goals – not on the battlefield and not through a dictated peace”. Zelensky said in an [interview](#) published in Le Figaro on 8 February that Macron had undergone a significant change in his stance towards Ukraine after the French President had sought to keep channels open to Russia in the early phase of the conflict.

[Addressing](#) the European Parliament in Brussels on 9 February President Zelensky said Russia was trying to annihilate “the Ukrainian-European way of life” and thanked the bloc’s members for their support and proclaimed that Ukraine “will join the European Union”. In his [speech](#) to the participants of the special session of the European Council later the same day, Zelensky [claimed](#) Ukraine had intercepted a document which “shows who, when and how was going to break the democracy of Moldova and establish control over Moldova”, adding that he had immediately warned Moldova’s president, Maia Sandu.

In a subsequent news conference, Zelensky also [claimed](#) that several EU leaders said they were ready to provide Kyiv with aircraft, but gave no further details about the pledges. “Europe will be with us until our victory. I’ve heard it from a number of European leaders ... about the readiness to give us the necessary weapons and support, including the aircraft,” he said, adding I have a number of bilaterals now, we are going to raise the issue of the fighter jets and other aircraft”. But there was no immediate confirmation from any European countries. The Dutch Defence Minister Kaja Ollongrenn [confirmed](#) that the Netherlands had been asked to supply F-16s, but said: “We need to discuss the availability of the F-16 with the Americans and other allies”. Similarly, Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [said](#) that any decision to supply the aircraft to Ukraine must come from NATO.

Alleged violations of Moldovan and Romanian airspace

Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi, commander-in-chief of Ukraine’s armed forces, [said](#) in a tweet on 10 February that two Russian Kalibr cruise missiles had entered the airspace of Moldova and Romania that day, before crossing into western Ukraine. Moldova [confirmed](#) at least one missile had overflowed its airspace and summoned the Russian ambassador over the incident. On the same day, Moldova’s pro-EU government [resigned](#), adding to the sense of crisis. However, Romania’s foreign ministry categorically denied an incursion occurred. It [said](#) the Russian cruise missiles came to within 35km of the country’s north-eastern border but did not violate its territory. Two MiG-21 aircraft on a training flight were diverted to monitor the area, it said. US State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel [said](#) in response to a question about the incident that the US had “no indication” of a direct military threat by Russia to Moldova or Romania at this time.

Stalled diplomacy

Addressing the UN General Assembly on 6 February, the UN Secretary General António Guterres [warned](#) the world is walking into a “wider war” over Ukraine. Guterres added, “The prospects for peace keep diminishing. The chances of further escalation and bloodshed keep growing”. In addition, Ukraine’s supporters have circulated a [proposed resolution](#) for adoption by the UN General Assembly on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion that would underscore the need for peace ensuring Ukraine’s “sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity”. The proposed resolution is broader and less detailed than [10-point peace plan](#) that Ukraine’s President Zelenskyy announced in November 2022 (which called for the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops, the release of all prisoners, a tribunal for those responsible for the aggression and security guarantees for Ukraine). This was apparently a deliberate decision by Ukraine and its backers to try to gain maximum support when it is put to a vote.

Despite this draft resolution and repeated call from the UN Secretary General for the war to end, few other voices seemed to share this view. During a joint press conference with the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington DC on 8 February, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, [said](#) there was no sign of Russia preparing for peace. “On the contrary, Moscow is preparing for new military offensives”, he said. However, there was no sign of Ukraine or its Western allies preparing for peace either. US President Joe Biden [announced](#) he would mark one year since Russia’s invasion by visiting Poland, Ukraine’s neighbour and NATO ally. The White House said the US president would visit on 20-22 February and make a speech to mark “Russia’s brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, addressing how the United States has rallied the world to support the people of Ukraine as they defend their freedom and democracy”.

Both President Zelensky and President Putin have previously expressed a willingness to negotiate an end to the war, but their positions remain so far apart that there are no real hopes of peace talks soon. Russia is ready for negotiations with Ukraine, but without preconditions, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin [said](#) in an interview with state-run Zvezda television on 11 February. Vershinin said it was not Ukraine, but the United States and the EU that should make the decision on talks with Russia. Ukraine’s presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, who headed the country’s negotiating team in the early phases of the conflict, [tweeted](#) “talks are out of the question”.

A recent RAND [report](#) argued that an end to the war in which Ukraine gained full control over the entirety of its internationally recognized territory was “a highly unlikely outcome”. In particular, the authors of the RAND report say that attempting the recapture of Crimea would increase the duration of the war. And some analysts are [suggesting](#) that there may be a “quiet consensus” emerging that Crimea cannot be recaptured militarily and that a peace could be maintained after a negotiated end to the war without Ukraine entering NATO.

There have been some negotiations on key issues, such as the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, getting grain out of Ukraine and in organising prisoner swaps, but no Ukrainian-Russian negotiations since March on the big issues. And Russia shows no signs of being ready to respect Ukraine’s sovereignty and pre-war borders. Notably, a grain deal brokered by the UN and Turkey in July aimed at easing global food shortages was [extended](#) for four months on 17 November, and Russia and Ukraine have carried out numerous prisoner of war exchanges.

For options of what a possible settlement for Ukraine might look like, see Cambridge University’s [Ukraine Peace Settlement Project](#).

Military and financial assistance to Ukraine and Russia

Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands [announced](#) on 7 February that they plan to provide Ukraine with at least 100 refurbished Leopard 1 battle tanks. (Other [reports](#) suggested that the number will be 178 tanks). In a [joint statement](#), their defence ministers said the shipment of the older Leopard 1 was part of an effort “to support Ukraine in their endeavour to withstand Russian aggression”. The delivery would occur “within the coming months” and include logistical support and training. In addition, Germany’s defence ministry [said](#) Leopard 2A6 battle tanks will be available to Ukraine by the end of March. The head of the German arms maker Rheinmetall has also said it expects to send 20 to 25 Leopard 1 tanks to Ukraine this year.

Several other states have yet to decide whether they can spare vehicles from their own stocks. In Europe, other than Berlin, only Poland and Portugal have so far made concrete promises to contribute Leopard 2 tanks (see NATO Watch [Update 42](#)). Canada’s Defence Minister Anita Anand shared an image of the first Canadian-donated Leopard tank arriving in Poland. “Alongside our allies, we’ll soon be training the armed forces of Ukraine in the use of this equipment”, she [tweeted](#).

Ukraine continues to rely heavily on international military and financial support from Western states. Most of the military assistance has come in the form of bilateral arms transfers, training and other support, which is being coordinated by the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which meets on an ad hoc basis and involves Ministers of Defence and senior military officials from Western-aligned states from around the world. The most recent meeting took [place](#) on 20 January in Ramstein Air Base, Germany. In addition, NATO agreed at its June [Madrid Summit](#) to strengthen a 2016 [Comprehensive Assistance Package](#) for Ukraine. The additional elements to the package include both short-term assistance (ranging from fuel, protective equipment to portable anti-drone systems and secure communications) and longer-term support (to help modernize the Ukrainian armed forces to NATO interoperability standards and strengthen its defence and security institutions).

The United States is the [largest](#) provider of military assistance to Ukraine, having committed roughly \$20 billion since the start of the Biden administration, with \$19.3 billion being provided since February 2022. In comparison, the top recipient in other years, Israel, received between \$3 and \$4 billion. European and other partners have [pledged](#) about \$12 billion in military support to Ukraine, with more to come. As the second largest source of arms, the UK has [committed £2.3 billion](#) in military assistance to Ukraine so far and has pledged to match that assistance in 2023. The UK is also hosting a training programme (Operation Interflex), which is supported by several allies, with the aim of training 10,000 new and existing Ukrainian personnel within 120 days.

Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, has [proposed](#) his country should provide \$7 billion in aid to Ukraine over five years. Half of the aid in 2023 will fund Kyiv's military requirements while the rest will go to humanitarian needs, although this split could change in coming years, he said. The announcement came after Støre's government came under [pressure](#) to increase support for Ukraine, after earning

billions in extra oil and gas revenue from Russia's war.

[The EU](#) is also providing non-lethal and lethal arms through its European Peace Facility (EPF). This is the first time the EU has approved the supply of lethal weapons to a third country. To date, the EU has committed €3.1 billion in assistance, and in October 2022, the EU also approved a new training mission for the Ukrainian armed forces.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu [warned](#) on 7 February that western arms supplies to Ukraine are effectively "dragging" NATO into the conflict, which could lead to an "unpredictable level of escalation". In remarks during a conference call with military officials, quoted by state-owned Tass news agency, Shoigu accused the US and its allies of "trying to prolong the conflict as much as possible" by supplying Kyiv with what he described as "heavy offensive weapons".

Military assistance to Russia

External military support to Russia so far has been limited to a handful of states, principally Belarus, [Iran](#) and [North Korea](#). Iran and Russia are looking to build a factory in Russia that could supply more than 6,000 Iranian-designed drones for the war in Ukraine, according to [reports](#). An Iranian delegation went to Russia in January to visit the planned site.

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

Humanitarian consequences of the war

Exact figures for the number of war fatalities, both military and civilian, are difficult to verify and confirm. [Undercounting and manipulation](#) of the data is common in war. Norwegian chief of defence Eirik Kristoffersen [estimated](#) 180,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded in over the course of the conflict, while the figure for the Ukrainians is 100,000

military casualties and 30,000 dead civilians. He gave the figures in a tv interview on 22 January, without specifying how the numbers were calculated. Ukraine [claims](#) to have killed more than 137,000 Russian soldiers in the war to date. Speaking on Ukrainian tv on 2 December, Kyiv's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak [said](#) up to 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed since Russia invaded in February, apparently based on official figures from Ukraine's general staff. However, at certain points in the war, Ukraine [said](#) that between 100 and 200 of its forces were dying each day on the battlefield, making Podolyak's estimate seem conservative.

According to [data](#) collected by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 5 February, 7,155 civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, including 438 children. The actual civilian casualty figures are likely to be considerably higher, as the receipt of information from some locations where intense hostilities have been going on has been delayed and many reports are still pending corroboration. According to [Action on Armed Violence](#) (AOAV) the number of civilian casualties from explosive violence in the Ukrainian conflict reached 11, 366 people by 8 February. From this number, 4,001 were killed and 7,365 were injured. Ninety-four per cent (10,678) of civilian casualties have occurred in populated areas.

Table: ACLED conflict-related fatalities data for Ukraine 2018-22

Event type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Battles	703	265	40	57	12163
Explosions/Remote violence	155	97	68	88	15025
Protests, riots and strategic developments	12	15	0	0	4
Violence against civilians	19	26	5	4	1165
Total	889	403	113	149	28357

Source: [ACLED dashboard](#); accessed 18 January 2023

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a disaggregated data collection, analysis and crisis mapping project, there were a total of 28,357 conflict-related fatalities in Ukraine in 2022 (see table).

A special adviser to the World Health Organization [said](#) on 9 February that a quarter of Ukrainians are at risk of developing a severe mental health condition as the country grapples with the year-long Russian invasion. Meanwhile, the number of refugees from the conflict have now surpassed 8 million. As of 7 February, there were 8,054,405 [refugees](#) from Ukraine recorded across Europe, 4,830,738 of whom were registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe. This gives them the right to live and work in any EU country and benefit from housing and schooling assistance.

Continuing concerns about nuclear facilities

Russian nuclear energy firm Rosatom [said](#) on 9 February that it is ready to continue work on creating a safety zone around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant after officials from the company met the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general Rafael Grossi. There have been ongoing fears Russia's relentless targeting of Ukraine's electricity grid will threaten the safety of the country's nuclear power plants. Most international concern has focused on the Zaporizhzhia plant, which is in Russian hands but operated by Ukrainian workers. It is Europe's largest, provided about a fifth of Ukraine's electricity before Russia's invasion, was shut down in September due to fighting in and around it, and has been forced to operate on backup generators several times since. These events raised concerns about the potential for a [nuclear accident](#). A 14-member IAEA [expert mission](#) carried out an inspection of the plant in early September. For further details see NATO Watch updates [23](#) through to [27](#). The IAEA now has a permanent presence at all five of Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

Further reading:

On outcomes and consequences of the war

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, [Report: Pentagon wants to revive top secret commando program in Ukraine](#), Responsible Statecraft, 10 February 2023

Connor Echols, [Diplomacy Watch: Lavrov shores up support for Russia in Africa](#), Responsible Statecraft, 10 February 2023

Paul Poast, [BRICS Is Aiding and Abetting Russia's War in Ukraine](#), World Politics Review, 10 February 2023 (paywall)

[NATO-Russia communication lines remain open - Russian official](#), Reuters, 10 February 2023

Blaise Malley, [Gaetz introduces 'Ukraine Fatigue' resolution](#), Responsible Statecraft, 9 February 2023

Hennadiy Maksak, [V4 in challenging times of war: how to preserve assistance to Ukraine](#), Globesec, 9 February 2023

Roman Vlasenko, [How should Ukraine's strategy of reintegration of temporarily displaced people look?](#) Globesec, 9 February 2023

Justin Bronk, [Giving RAF Typhoons to Ukraine Would Be a Very Expensive Symbolic Gesture](#), RUSI Commentary, 9 February 2023

David Isenberg, [The rise and fall of the Mozart Group](#), Responsible Statecraft, 8 February 2023

Jahara Matissek, Will Reno and Sam Rosenberg, [US-led Security Assistance to Ukraine is Working](#), RUSI Commentary, 8 February 2023

Mykhailo Soldatenko, [Constructive Ambiguity of the Budapest Memorandum at 28: Making Sense of the Controversial Agreement](#), Lawfare, 7 February 2023

[NATO forces put tanks through their paces, as Ukraine pins its hopes on Western-supplied armor](#), CNN, 7 February 2023

Gregory Shupak, [Iranian weapons are more newsworthy than Made in USA killers](#), Responsible Statecraft, 7 February 2023

[NATO role in Ukraine threatens 'unpredictable' escalation: Russia](#), Al Jazeera, 7 February 2023

Liana Fix, [U.S. Leadership on Ukraine Is Increasing European Dependence](#), World Politics Review, 6 February 2023 (paywall)

[Losses in Ukraine are 'out of proportion' to what NATO has been planning for, the alliance's top general says](#), Business Insider, 5 February 2023

Elie Cook, [The Weight of NATO Tanks May Pose a Problem in Ukraine](#), Newsweek, 5 February 2023

On the risk of nuclear war

There have been concerns for several months that the war in Ukraine might be approaching "a moment of [maximum danger](#)". In particular, there are worries that a cornered, desperate Vladimir Putin may resort to nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

Connor Murray, [There is no alternative: US-Russian nuclear arms control must restart. Now](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 6 February 2023

On investigations of war crimes in Ukraine

International fact-finding missions and investigations have identified clear patterns of violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February 2022. The violations are wide-ranging, including the conduct of fighting as well as treatment of prisoners of war, forced abductions, torture, restriction of civil and human rights, and denial of essential services. The United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Court of Human Rights, the ICC and Ukrainian national courts have all been active in attempting to hold criminals accountable.

The ICC, for example, opened an [investigation](#) into possible war crimes in Ukraine just days after Moscow's forces invaded and it dispatched dozens of investigators to the country to gather evidence. A substantial ICC investigative team [appears](#) to be working in Ukraine on a near permanent basis. Similarly, within the OSCE the Moscow Mechanism was activated to establish two expert missions to investigate violations and abuses committed in the war (see the subsequent [April](#) and [June](#)

reports). On 14 July, 45 countries [agreed](#) at a conference in the Hague to coordinate investigations into suspected war crimes in Ukraine. In October, a [report](#) published by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine found reasonable grounds to conclude that an array of war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine. Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified. Finally, a [report](#) published on 7 December by OHCHR said Russian forces killed at least 441 civilians in the early days of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The report documents attacks in dozens of towns and summary executions that it said might be war crimes. The actual number of victims in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions was likely to be much higher, the UN human rights office added. The report covers the period from the invasion's start on 24 February until early April, when Russian forces withdrew from those three areas.

[War as Crime of Aggression: Reed Brody on Prosecuting Putin & Probing Western Leaders for Other Wars](#), Democracy Now, 5 February 2023

On sanctions against Russia and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine

The EU [announced](#) new sanctions on 9 February on Russia's military and political leaders, targeting Kremlin disinformation and including additional export bans against Russia, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. On the same day, the UK and US [imposed](#) new sanctions on seven Russian nationals over their links to the development and deployment of ransomware, as part of a government crackdown on cyber criminals.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine galvanized the US, UK and EU, and a handful of other Western-aligned countries, to unleash a series of [sanctions](#) meant to punish Vladimir Putin's government and pressure him to pull his forces back. While the sanctions lists are sometimes difficult to interpret, the EU has [sanctioned](#) 1,236 individuals and 115 entities—an

approximate doubling of its entire sanctions portfolio across the dozens of sanctions regimes it implements; the UK Government has [frozen](#) more than £18bn of assets belonging to oligarchs and other Russians and UK [sanctions](#) have been imposed on 1,271 people according to [the annual review](#) of the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), published on 10 November; and the US has [sanctioned](#) more than 1,000 individuals or organizations since the invasion. The numbers, and the pace of the rollout, dwarf the sanctions lists for the likes of Iran, North Korea, Libya, the thematic counterterrorism lists, and all others.

The EU-imposed ban on Russian seaborne oil products came into force on 6 February (see NATO Watch [Update 42](#)). The 27-nation bloc is banning Russian refined oil products such as diesel fuel and joining the US and other allies in imposing a price cap on sales to non-western countries. A ban on Russian seaborne crude came into force on 5 December and the extension to oil products will mean that 70% of Russian energy exports will now be subject to sanction. Oil products represent a third of Russian oil exports. Russia's oil and gas revenues [plunged](#) 46% in January, compared with the same month in 2022, under the impact of the price cap on oil exports.

A group of ministers from 35 countries met online on 10 February to coordinate their [demand](#) for a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Lithuania's sports minister, Jurgita Šiugždinienė, said "Terror and Olympism are two opposites, they cannot be combined". The International Olympic Committee recently moved away from having an outright ban on athletes from Russia and Belarus and is investigating ways they can qualify for the Olympics under a neutral flag. President Zelensky took part in the online meeting attended by the 35 ministers and pointed out that 228 Ukrainian athletes and coaches had died as a result of the Russian aggression. Russia's sports minister, Oleg Matytsin, [said](#) Ukraine's call to ban Russian athletes from the 2024 Paris Olympics was "unacceptable", describing the call as "a blatant desire to destroy the unity of

international sport and the international Olympic movement”.

Andrii Chubyk, [Financial mechanisms for the green reconstruction of Ukraine to be more attractive for European banks and investors](#), Globesec, 9 February 2023

Agathe Demarais, [Sanctions on Russia Are a Long Game, Not a Quick Fix](#), World Politics Review, 9 February 2023 (paywall)

On energy security in Europe

Europe is striving to diversify its energy supply sources to curb its dependence on Russia. Gas shortages have been occurring across Europe and governments have been pushing to develop alternative supplies. The West accuses Russia of restricting energy supplies to boost prices in retaliation for sanctions imposed after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Russia denies it is to blame, and instead attributes responsibility to Western sanctions and various technical problems.

[Russia says NATO should hold emergency summit over Nord Stream blasts](#), Reuters, 12 February 2023

Federica Prandin, [Adapting EU energy efficiency targets to V4+ regional context](#), Globesec, 8 February 2023

On developments within Ukraine

The Ukrainian authorities have dismissed dozens of officials in recent weeks and opened investigations as part of a widespread drive against corruption. The EU says addressing corruption is a requirement for membership. Ukraine's parliament has approved the [appointment](#) of Ihor Klymenko as the new interior affairs minister and Vasily Malyuk as the new head of the security services, known as the SBU. Separately, the parliament also extended martial law and general mobilization in Ukraine for 90 days. Zelenskyy first imposed martial law in the country on 24 February 2022, the day Russia launched its invasion.

On developments within Russia

Zemfira, one of Russia's most popular singers, has been placed on a list of "foreign agents" on grounds that she supported Ukraine and criticised Russia's "special military operation" in that country, [according](#) to the Russian justice ministry. The ministry has added several other people to its "foreign agents" list, including opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov, political analyst Abbas Gallyamov, and activists Aleksandra Kazantseva and Tatyana Nazambaeva for "LGBT propaganda". Meanwhile, Marina Ovsyannikova, the former Russian state TV editor who [interrupted](#) a live news broadcast in March 2022 to protest against the start of the Ukraine war, has [described](#) her "chaotic" escape from house arrest in Moscow and how she fled across Europe to seek asylum in France.

On developments within NATO

Hot air over Chinese spy balloon?

The US and NATO on 8 February both criticized China over the network of suspected spy balloons like the one shot down off the eastern coast of the US the previous week. The White House [described](#) the balloon as part of a "fleet" that has spanned five continents and said it had been in contact with allies. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg both raised the issue in a [joint press conference](#) in Washington D.C. Stoltenberg said that NATO had to be "vigilant", and warned that China was drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, saying "what happens in Europe today could happen in Asia tomorrow", seemingly in reference to Taiwan or other potential Chinese aggression in the region. "The Chinese balloon over the United States confirms a pattern of Chinese behaviour where we see that China over the last years has invested heavily in new military capabilities", Stoltenberg said. However, most of this criticism can be best described as a lot of 'hot air'. For a more detailed, nuanced examination and a calibrated response to the incident, read [here](#).

NATO contributes to relief effort in Turkey

The number of known deaths from the devastating earthquakes that struck north-western Syria and southern Turkey on 6 February has climbed to over [24,000](#), with the toll expected to rise much higher in the coming weeks. Within Turkey, a NATO member state, more than 53,000 Turkish first responders are currently on the ground and some 7,000 rescue workers from 75 foreign countries have come to help. These [include](#) more than 1,400 emergency response personnel from more than twenty NATO allies and partners – including invitees Finland and Sweden.

The assistance from NATO allies and partners includes search and rescue teams with rescue dogs, fire fighters and structural engineering teams, medical personnel and supplies, and seismic experts. This support is being delivered through NATO's principal civil emergency response mechanism, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), which is active all year round and operates on a 24/7 basis. Further, on 9 February 2023 NATO [agreed](#) to deploy fully-equipped semi-permanent shelter facilities—normally used by NATO as a deployable headquarters complex for exercises and operations— to Turkey, in order to help accommodate people displaced by the earthquakes. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Christopher G. Cavoli, is directing the effort. The [Strategic Airlift Capability](#), an independent pool of twelve partnering nations (all NATO member states), is also providing [support](#) to international search and rescue efforts in Turkey.

[NATO's Stoltenberg will not seek another extension of his term, spokesperson says](#), Reuters, 12 February 2023

[Germany, US Bid on NATO Small Drone Program](#), Defense Post, 10 February 2023

[Earthquake response: NATO to deploy shelter facilities to Türkiye](#), NATO News Release, 10 February 2023

[US' Blinken, NATO's Stoltenberg rebuke China over balloon](#), Deutsche Welle, 9 February 2023

[Secretary General in Washington: NATO Allies are united like never before](#), NATO News Release, 8 February 2023

[Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Feb. 8 at the Pentagon](#), US Department of Defense News Release, 8 February 2023

[Spy balloon confirms 'pattern of Chinese behavior' that poses threat to NATO members, Stoltenberg says](#), CNBC, 8 February 2023

[NATO Leader Visits Austin in Advance of Brussels Meeting](#), US Department of Defense News Release, 8 February 2023

Secretary Antony J. Blinken and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at a Joint Press Availability, [Remarks](#) by Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 8 February 2023

[Press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the US Secretary of State, Antony J. Blinken, 8 February 2023

[NATO Allies and partners come to Türkiye's aid following devastating earthquakes](#), NATO News Release, 7 February 2023

[Deputy Secretary General reaffirms deepening of NATO's partnership with Moldova](#), NATO News Release, 7 February 2023

[Strategic Airlift Capability's C-17 Makes Relief Flight to Türkiye](#), NATO News Release, 7 February 2023

[Summit prepares ground for 'NATOisation of Europe' and continues collision course with China and high levels of military spending](#), NATO Watch Briefing No.96, 6 July 2022

On Finland and Sweden joining NATO

Finland and Sweden were invited to join NATO, after a [trilateral memorandum](#) with Turkey agreed on the eve of the NATO Madrid Summit assuaged Ankara's previous objections. The two Nordic countries will become NATO members after the Accession Protocol is ratified by all 30 member states. The invitation to Finland and Sweden represents a major geopolitical shift in Europe as the two countries move away from neutrality. To date,



28 NATO member states have ratified the decision. Hungary and Turkey are the two member states where parliaments have not yet been asked to vote on the issue. Hungary will ratify the bids early next year, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán [announced](#) on 24 November. The assumption is that Turkey is likely to wait until after a general election in June 2023, but ratification by Turkey is still by no means certain.

Turkey has made its approval conditional on Stockholm cracking down on exiled Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers a threat to its national security. Turkey's President Erdoğan [said](#) he will not support Sweden's NATO membership bid after a protest in Stockholm that included the burning of a copy of the Quran outside the Turkish embassy. Those protests in the Swedish capital on 21 January (see NATO Watch [update 40](#)) have heightened tensions with Turkey. Meanwhile, Finnish parliamentary groups [said](#) on 10 February that they may seek ratification of the NATO protocols in the coming weeks. Even though Hungary and Turkey have yet to ratify Finland's membership application, this would be a key step that could lead the country to proceed with NATO membership ahead of Sweden. Both had previously said they want to join ["hand in hand"](#).

[President: Finland will join Nato by July](#), YLE News, 11 February 203

[Finland's parliamentary parties agree to push ahead with Nato legislation](#), YLE News, 10 February 2023

[Finland debates NATO ratification that may leave Sweden behind](#), Reuters, 10 February 2023

Andreas Kluth, [How Finland, Sweden and NATO should deal with Turkey](#), Japan Times, 10 February 2023

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