LIVE Updated May 13, 2022, 4:20 p.m. ET

Ukraine Live Updates: Western Nations Take Steps to Frustrate Putin

Sweden moved closer to joining NATO, and the Group of 7 sought to bypass Russia's blockade of Black Sea ports. And Britain imposed new sanctions on Putin's inner circle, including a former gymnast rumored to be his girlfriend.

"I want the war to end," Maria Politaeva, 102, said in Pokrovsk, Ukraine, on Friday after evacuating from her hometown of Lyman. Ms. Politaeva had lived in Lyman, a small city west of Sievierodonetsk, for her entire life. Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

Pinned

Dan Bilefsky

Here are the latest developments in the war in Ukraine.

Western nations on Friday deepened their efforts to combat Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as Sweden signaled that it might join NATO; the world's wealthiest democracies sought ways to circumvent a Russian blockade of Ukrainian wheat; and Britain imposed new sanctions on the Russian president's inner circle.

The move that might sting President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia the most was Britain's imposition of sanctions on his former wife, Lyudmila Ocheretnaya, and a former gymnast long rumored to be his girlfriend, Alina Kabaeva.

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May 13, 2022, 4:20 p.m. ET
Cassandra Vinograd

The Ukrainian defense minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, said that heavy weapons have begun to arrive but warned that "we are entering a new, long phase of the war." "Extremely tough weeks are ahead," he said in a statement posted on the defense ministry's website. "No one can say for sure how many of them there will be."

May 13, 2022, 2:57 p.m. ET
Eric Schmitt

The Pentagon chief spoke to his Russian counterpart for the first time since Ukraine’s war began.

WASHINGTON — The American secretary of defense on Friday spoke with his counterpart in Moscow for the first time since Russia invaded Ukraine in February and plunged Europe into its most dangerous crisis since World War II.

The defense secretary, Lloyd J. Austin III, had last talked with Russia’s defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, on Feb. 18 — six days before the invasion. The call comes as fighting in Ukraine seems to have settled into what one American intelligence official described as “a bit of a stalemate.”

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May 13, 2022, 1:42 p.m. ET
Finbarr O'Reilly Reporting from Kharkiv, Ukraine

A Ukrainian mortar team alternated between shooting ordnance and sheltering in trenches from responding Russian fire in the village of Pytomnyk, near Kharkiv. The unit was part of a Ukrainian effort that has pushed back Russian forces from areas surrounding the northeast city of Kharkiv.

Finbarr O'Reilly for The New York Times

Finbarr O'Reilly for The New York Times

May 13, 2022, 1:14 p.m. ET
Cassandra Vinograd

President Sauli Niinisto of Finland said he discussed Russia's war in Ukraine and also his country’s “next steps” for NATO membership in a phone call with President Joe Biden and Sweden’s prime minister, Magdalena Andersson. “Finland deeply appreciates all the necessary support from the US,” he said on Twitter. Sweden has signaled it might follow Finland’s lead in joining the alliance.

May 13, 2022, 12:49 p.m. ET
Dan Bilefsky and Steven Erlanger

Turkey’s president signals his disapproval of Finland and Sweden joining NATO.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in Ankara this week. Adem Altan/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey suggested on Friday that his country would be reluctant to openly welcome Finland and Sweden into NATO, underscoring that their potential accession to the alliance might not be as swift and smooth as expected.

“Right now we are following developments regarding Sweden and Finland, but don’t have positive views,” he told reporters after attending Friday Prayer at a mosque in Istanbul.

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May 13, 2022, 11:17 a.m. ET
Eric Schmitt Reporting from Washington

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke on Friday with Sergei K. Shoigu, Russia's defense minister, for the first time since Feb. 18 — before the invasion of Ukraine. In Friday's call, Austin urged an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and emphasized the importance of maintaining lines of communication, according to John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman.

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>
> **May 13, 2022, 11:48 a.m. ET**
> Eric Schmitt Reporting from Washington
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> Russia’s defense ministry said in a statement that the call between Austin and Shoigu was “at the initiative of the American side.” Top Pentagon officials, including Mr. Austin, had repeatedly tried to contact their Russian counterparts in the aftermath of the invasion. Until Friday, those efforts had been unsuccessful.

May 13, 2022, 10:58 a.m. ET
Marc Santora

Ukraine decimated Russian forces trying to cross a river in the east, Britain’s defense ministry says.

An aerial photograph shared by the Ukrainian Airborne Forces showed smoke rising above a bridge across the Seversky Donets River in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian Airborne Forces Command

The British defense ministry on Friday said satellite imagery has confirmed that Ukrainian forces decimated a Russian battalion as it tried to cross a series of pontoon bridges over a river in northeast Ukraine earlier this week, a dramatic setback for Russian forces already struggling to make significant progress along the eastern front.

While it was not clear how many soldiers were killed trying to cross the Seversky Donets River, the numbers of burned-out and destroyed vehicles scattered along the riverside suggested that Russian forces suffered heavy losses.

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May 13, 2022, 9:00 a.m. ET
Ivan Nechepurenko

Russian court extends Brittney Griner's pretrial detention, her lawyer says.

A court in Russia on Friday extended the pretrial detention of the W.N.B.A. star Brittney Griner until June 18, her lawyer said.

Ms. Griner, one of the most decorated athletes in women's basketball, has been in Russian custody since mid-February on drug charges that can carry up to 10 years in prison. The charge is based on allegations that she had vape cartridges containing hashish oil in her luggage when she was stopped at the Sheremetyevo airport near Moscow in February.

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May 13, 2022, 8:51 a.m. ET
Ivan Nechepurenko Reporting from Tbilisi, Georgia

A court in Russia on Friday extended the pretrial detention of the W.N.B.A. star Brittney Griner by one month, her lawyer said. Ms Griner, one of the most decorated athletes in women's basketball, has been held in custody in Russia since mid-February on drug charges, raising fears that she will be used as a bargaining chip in high-profile diplomacy between Russia and the United States.

May 13, 2022, 7:28 a.m. ET
Mark Landler

Britain places new sanctions on Putin's inner circle, including his ex-wife and reputed girlfriend.

The British government announced new sanctions on members of President Vladimir V. Putin's family and inner circle on Friday. Kirill Kudryavtsev/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Britain imposed new sanctions on the family and inner circle of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Among those blacklisted: Lyudmila Ocheretnaya, Mr. Putin's former wife; and Alina Kabaeva, a retired Olympic gymnast, with whom he has long been rumored to be romantically involved.

The measures also hit Igor Putin, a first cousin, and two more distant relatives, Mikhail Putin and Roman Putin. All are businesspeople who the British government says have benefited from their ties to the president.

"We are exposing and targeting the shady network propping up Putin's luxury lifestyle and tightening the vise on his inner circle," said the foreign secretary, Liz Truss. Britain has imposed sanctions on more than 1,000 people since the invasion, including oligarchs with an aggregate net wealth of 117 billion pounds, or $142 billion.

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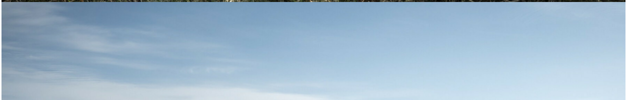
May 13, 2022, 7:10 a.m. ET
Marc Santora

Sweden says joining NATO would ‘have a deterrent effect’ for military conflict.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has raised broader European security concerns. Sweden, dragged along by Finland, is expected to apply to join NATO. Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

The Swedish government said on Friday that joining the NATO military alliance would provide a strong deterrent to further Russian attacks beyond its borders.

“Swedish NATO membership would raise the threshold for military conflicts and thus have a deterrent effect in northern Europe,” according to an analysis presented by Sweden’s foreign minister, Ann Linde. “If both Sweden and Finland were NATO members, all Nordic and Baltic countries would be covered by collective defense guarantees. The current uncertainty as to what form collective action would take if a security crisis or armed attack occurred would decrease.”

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May 13, 2022, 6:17 a.m. ET
Erika Solomon

Seeking to avoid a global food crisis, officials look for new routes for Ukrainian grain exports blocked by Russian forces.

A farmer working a field on Monday near Lviv, Ukraine. The Group of 7 is discussing new ways to get Ukrainian harvests to international markets while Ukraine’s ports remain under Russian blockade. Mykola Tys/EPA, via Shutterstock

Agricultural ministers from the Group of 7 major economies and Ukraine met on Friday in Stuttgart, Germany, to discuss new routes for getting Ukrainian harvests to world markets as the country's main seaports remain under Russian blockade.

Cem Özdemir, the German agricultural minister, said ministers would be seeking routes by land and rail, as well as via the Danube River. He called the blockade "part of Russia's perfidious strategy to not only take out a competitor, which they're not going to be able to do, but it's also economic war that Russia is waging."

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May 13, 2022, 6:15 a.m. ET
Valerie Hopkins and Matthew Mpoke Bigg

Ukraine begins a trial of a Russian soldier accused of a war crime, a first since the conflict began.

Sergeant Vadim Shishimarin, 21, at a court hearing in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Friday. He is accused of shooting a civilian on a bicycle in the village of Chupakhivka four days after the invasion began on Feb. 24. Efrem Lukatsky/Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine— The Ukrainian judicial authorities on Friday began a case against a Russian soldier accused of shooting a civilian, the first trial involving a suspected war crime by a Russian service member since the invasion began in February.

The soldier, Sgt. Vadim Shysimarin, is accused of shooting a 62-year-old man on a bicycle in the village of Chupakhivka in the Sumy region, about 200 miles east of Kyiv. The man was killed on Feb. 28, four days after the full-scale invasion began, and his body left on the side of the road.

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May 13, 2022, 5:36 a.m. ET
Valerie Hopkins Reporting from Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukraine's judicial institutions on Friday began processing the first war crimes trial of a Russian soldier since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February. The defendent, Vadim Shysimarin, 21, is accused of killing a civilian in a village of the Sumy region of northeastern Ukraine and faces up to 15 years in prison.

May 13, 2022, 4:14 a.m. ET
Monika Pronczuk Reporting from Brussels

The European Union will provide additional €500 million ($521 million) in military support to Ukraine, the bloc's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, said on Friday on the sidelines of a G7 meeting in northern Germany, bringing the total E.U. military aid for Ukraine to €2 billion. Asked whether the bloc would provide fighter jets that the Ukrainian authorities repeatedly asked for, Mr. Borrell said: "No, you cannot provide a lot of fighter jets with €500 million," adding that the extra funding would be spent on heavy weapons.

May 13, 2022, 4:05 a.m. ET
Andrew E. Kramer Reporting from Pryvilla, Ukraine

With a Ukrainian unit, the shout of ‘Air!’ means about three seconds to find cover.

A soldier shouldering a U.S.-made Stinger missile. David Guttenfelder for The New York Times

Through binoculars, the Ukrainian soldiers can see the Russian position far in the distance. But the single artillery weapon they operate at a small, ragtag outpost on the southern steppe has insufficient range to strike it.

These circumstances have imposed a numbingly grim routine on the Ukrainians, who are pounded daily by Russian artillery salvos while having no means to fight back. Every few hours, they dive into trenches to escape shells that streak out of the sky.

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May 13, 2022, 3:15 a.m. ET
Victoria Kim Reporting from Seoul

Ukrainian forces thwarted an attempt by Russian troops to cross the Donets River west of Sievierodonetsk in the Donbas region of Ukraine, Britain’s Defense Ministry said Friday. The Russians lost at least one battalion tactical group and the bridging equipment they were using to cross, the ministry said.

May 13, 2022, 3:00 a.m. ET
Ana Swanson

Russian shipping traffic remains strong, but the full force of global sanctions haven’t hit yet.

Tivos, a cargo ship from Russia, unloaded fertilizer last month at the Port of Santos, in São Paulo, Brazil. Victor Moriyama for The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Shipping traffic in and out of Russia has remained relatively strong in the past few months as companies have raced to fulfill contracts for purchases of energy and other goods before the full force of global sanctions goes into effect.

With the European Union poised to introduce a ban on Russian oil in the coming months, that situation could change significantly. But so far, data show that while commerce with Russia has been reduced in many cases, it has yet to be crippled.

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May 13, 2022, 2:00 a.m. ET
Alyssa Lukpat

An American diplomat offers a stark assessment of Russian detention camps.

Members of a family in Kyiv in April, after fleeing Russian-controlled territory. The women narrowly escaped what Ukrainian and U.S. officials have called “filtration camps.” David Guttenfelder for The New York Times

After weeks of American reports of Russian detention camps where thousands of Ukrainians have been interrogated and tortured, a senior American diplomat has offered an official assessment of the sites, called “filtration camps” by Ukraine and its allies.

In a speech in Vienna on Thursday, the diplomat, Michael R. Carpenter, the American ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said that Russian soldiers had forced thousands of Ukrainian civilians out of their homes and into camps in Russian-controlled territory.

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May 13, 2022, 1:09 a.m. ET
Alyssa Lukpat

Russia is pulling back from Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city.

Moscow appears to be withdrawing forces from around Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, where it has been losing ground, Ukrainian and Western officials say, in one of Russia’s biggest setbacks since its retreat from Kyiv last month.

Officials say the Kremlin will probably redirect troops to the southeast, where it is said to be bolstering its forces in Izium, a city it captured last month. Izium, about two hours southeast of Kharkiv, has become a crucial operations center for Russia, which is said to be making gains in the eastern Donbas region, where fighting has been relentless.

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May 12, 2022, 11:03 p.m. ET
Victoria Kim

Ukrainians are negotiating to evacuate badly wounded soldiers from the Mariupol steel plant.

Maria Zimareva, whose brother is a soldier trapped in a steel plant in Mariupol, Ukraine, joined a protest in Kyiv, the capital, on Thursday to demand a rescue operation. Carlos Barria/Reuters

Ukrainian officials say they are in talks to get the most badly wounded fighters out of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol in exchange for Russian prisoners, as relatives of the soldiers trapped in the besieged factory complex continue to make public pleas for their safety.

Officials are negotiating for the evacuation of 38 soldiers who are unable to walk, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereschuk said in a post on Facebook. In recent weeks, a couple of hundred civilians have managed to leave the plant with international assistance after sheltering there for weeks with dwindling food, water and medicine.

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May 12, 2022, 7:58 p.m. ET
Alyssa Lukpat and Emily Cochrane

Rand Paul holds up $40 billion in aid for Ukraine.

People receive humanitarian aid supplies in the eastern city of Kharkiv, on Thursday. Finbarr O'Reilly for The New York Times

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky on Thursday single-handedly delayed a bipartisan effort to quickly send $40 billion in aid to Ukraine, which Congress had tried to fast-track amid the escalating brutality of Russia’s war.

The Senate needed unanimous consent to waive procedural hurdles and approve the humanitarian and military aid package, which the House passed 368-to-57 on Tuesday. Mr. Paul, a Republican and a libertarian who generally opposes U.S. spending on foreign aid, objected, halting what had been an extraordinary effort to rapidly shepherd the largest foreign aid package through Congress in at least two decades.

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May 12, 2022, 7:43 p.m. ET
David E. Sanger

NEWS ANALYSIS

Finland and Sweden Move Toward NATO Membership. But What About Ukraine?

The Finnish Parliament on Thursday. The White House welcomed the announcement by Finnish leaders that their country should “apply for NATO membership without delay.” Mauri Ratilainen/EPA, via Shutterstock

[May 13: After this article was published, Sweden announced early Friday its plans to join NATO.]

WASHINGTON — In embracing Finland’s, and soon Sweden’s, move to join NATO, President Biden and his Western allies are doubling down on a bet that Russia has made such a huge strategic mistake over the past three months that now is the time to make President Vladimir V. Putin pay a major price: enduring the expansion of the Western alliance he sought to fracture.

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