



Monitoring of Xenophobia and Extremism in Ukraine March 2015

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Introduction

More than a month has passed since the Minsk II agreements were signed on February 11. Fighting in the Donbas has quieted, though Kyiv has tabulated over a thousand ceasefire violations since the ceasefire was agreed upon. Compared to Minsk I, signed on September 5, the second provides a significantly better political framework for peace. However, all sides have competing interests at stake, and as a result, frequently contradictory interpretations of this framework. Indeed, if Minsk II is successful and the conflict in the Donbas ultimately freezes, Moscow will likely continue to destabilize other parts of Ukraine to prevent it from reorienting toward the West.

Ukraine, Russia, and the West each have their own red lines, many of which are dictated by domestic political agendas. Kyiv, for example, can neither admit its defeat nor agree to a Russia-brokered peace with the separatists. Russia can neither admit its war against Ukraine nor let the rebels fail. The West can neither give Ukraine the means to defend itself militarily and avoid economic collapse nor admit that Russia has more at stake in the crisis. These competing agendas present long-term impediments to a resolution of the conflict.

Control over the town of Debaltsevo was the most contentious issue during the February 11 Minsk talks. The separatists' capture of the town gave Moscow and the Donbas rebels what they wanted: a transportation hub between Luhansk and Donetsk that allows Moscow to supply the regions and freeze the conflict. But there were also upsides for Kyiv when Debaltsevo fell. Most importantly, it consolidated Western solidarity and support for Ukraine's resistance efforts, which has become a key component of Ukraine's attempts to push back against Russian aggression.

The Minsk agreements are fragile. How effectively they are implemented will depend primarily on the Europeans' ability to convince Moscow to pressure separatists into observing the ceasefire, and on Kyiv's ability to keep nationalist militias in line. If either side fails to do so, the fighting is likely to resume. The fight for Ukraine's future could move into a new phase of hybrid warfare, increasing the risk of Russian-sponsored "soft" terrorism. Unless Kyiv can kick-start the country's ailing economy, attempts by some in Ukraine's leadership to isolate the country from Russia will make life even worse for those in the south-eastern regions who are most dependent on eastern markets.

Prognosis and polls

Poll: 40% of Ukrainians think annexed Crimea should be returned now, 03.03.2015

"The majority of the population of Ukraine, or 69% believe that it is necessary to raise the issue of returning the Crimea to Ukraine, and most of them, or 42.5% say that it is necessary to do this today, because the Crimea is an annexed territory, where the Ukrainians and Tatars live, who need protection. Another 27% of respondents believe that in general it is necessary to raise this issue, but not now," she said.

According to Bekeshkina, the only region of Ukraine where more than half of the population does not consider it necessary to return Crimea to Ukraine is the Donbas: 39% of the population of the region believe that the inhabitants of the Crimea exercised their right to self-determination, while another 16.5% believe that the Crimea has always been the Russian territory, which was transferred illegally to Ukraine in 1954.

At the same time, 37% of the residents of the Donbas support the idea of raising the issue of the return of the Crimea, of whom 15.5% believe that this is an urgent problem that should be solved without delay, while another 21.5% of respondents believe that it is possible to postpone finding a solution to this problem.

The poll was carried out by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the "Ukrainian sociology Service" from December 25, 2014 to January 15, 2015.

A total of 4,413 people were polled - 400 people each region of Ukraine, 401 people in Zakarpattya and Bukovyna, 402 people in the center, and 410 people in Polissya.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1051045-poll-40-of-ukrainians-think-annexed-crimea-should-be-returned-now.html>

Bloomberg: Ukraine ranked 4th among 'most miserable' economies in the world, 03.03.2015

According to the agency, the most "miserable" country in terms of economic performance, by a large margin, is Venezuela, followed by Argentina, South Africa, Ukraine and Greece.

As noted in the agency, Ukrainian economy is suffering the most from the war raging in the east of the country and strained relations with Russia. According to official data, last year inflation in Ukraine was 24.9%, while Bloomberg calculations were based on an inflation rate of 17.5% and an unemployment rate of 9.5%.

Russia placed seventh, just after Spain, according to the Bloomberg rating.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1051050-bloomberg-ukraine-ranked-4th-among-most-miserable-economies-in-the-world.html>

IMF predicts drop in Ukraine's economy by 5.5% in 2015, 04.03.2015

According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund, the key creditor of Ukraine, Ukrainian economic decline in 2014 was 6.9%, while in 2015 it is predicted at 5.5%, which corresponds to the forecast the Ukrainian government made when preparing changes to the state budget for 2015.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1051498-imf-predicts-drop-in-ukraines-economy-by-55-in-2015.html>

Ukrainian economy 'may return to 2014 level in 2018', 05.03.2015

The economy of the country and thus the level of income of Ukrainian citizens could return to pre-crisis level no earlier than in 2018, according to the most optimistic scenario, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration on holding administrative, social and economic reforms Dymtro Shymkiv has said, according to Ukrainian weekly political magazine Novoe Vremya.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1051943-ukrainian-economy-may-return-to-2014-level-in-2018.html>

Report: 76% of Ukrainians in Poland do not want to leave, 06.03.2015

About 373,000 Ukrainians applied to work in Poland in 2014

A new report has found that 76 percent of Ukrainians who are living in Poland wish to stay there permanently. According to Radio Poland, only around 15 percent of Ukrainians in Poland wanted to return home when their visas expire, with 39 percent actively seeking ways to stay. About 373,000 Ukrainians applied to work in Poland in 2014, 155,000 more than the previous year, according to Radio Poland. With the deteriorating economic situation in Ukraine and the war in the east, many Ukrainians are looking for options abroad.

<http://uatoday.tv/business/report-76-of-ukrainians-in-poland-do-not-want-to-leave-413741.html>

Year-over-year inflation in February in Ukraine accelerates to 34.5%, 06.03.2015

Inflation in Ukraine in February 2015 alone accelerated to 5.3% from 3.1% in January 2015, the State Statistics Service reported.

The data do not include statistics from the occupied peninsula of Crimea with the city of Sevastopol and the regions in eastern Ukraine where the anti-terrorist operation is under way. Inflation in February 2015 from February 2014 accelerated to 34.5% against 28.5% in January 2015 from January 2014.

Inflation in Ukraine in January through February 2015 was 8.6% year-over-year, the State Statistics Service said.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1052772-year-over-year-inflation-in-february-in-ukraine-accelerates-to-345.html>

School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland & Kiev International Institute of Sociology: The Ukrainian People on the Current Crisis, 09.03.2015

http://www.public-consultation.org/studies/Ukraine_0315.pdf

Ukraine CPI surges 5.3% m/m in February, 10.03.2015

Ukraine's consumer prices accelerated 5.3% m/m (34.5% yoy) in February compared to 3.1% m/m growth (28.5% yoy) in the prior month, according to state statistics released on March 6. Prices sped up for food (5.7% m/m in Feb., 4.7% m/m in Jan.), transportation (16.4% m/m in Feb., 1.2% m/m in Jan.), healthcare (4.5% m/m in Feb., 3.0% m/m in Jan.), education (4.1% m/m in Feb., 2.5% m/m in Jan.) and utilities (1.6% m/m in Feb., 0.5% m/m in Jan.).

Alexander Paraschiy: Consumer price acceleration was prompted by the latest devaluation wave, which started on Feb. 5 when the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) cancelled the indicative exchange rate regime. The government's planned price hikes of 2.9x for natural gas and 40% for electricity for households, as well as 67% increase in heating costs will add to inflation starting April.

However the hryvnia exchange rate will remain the main factor throughout the year. Under the assumption that the hryvnia will not sink much deeper than UAH 30/USD from March, we project CPI growing 30.7% yoy (23.8% YTD) in 2015, compared to the 22.8% yoy (14.0% YTD) growth that we estimated previously.

<http://concorde.ua/en/research/daily/ukraine-cpi-surges-5.3-m-in-february-13858/>

Our friendly neighbors? Poles' view of Ukrainians, 12.03.2015

There is no doubt that Ukraine is now facing the most difficult period of its nascent statehood, and Poles are closely following the drama just beyond their border. The Ukrainian conflict is commonly the focus of political debates and media coverage; Poles are talking about it in their everyday conversations and carrying out spontaneous humanitarian aid actions. Although it is too early to determine if this will be a turning point in the complicated relations between the two nations, some interesting indicators can already be seen, and it seems that the mutual relations are warming up.

<http://visegradrevue.eu/our-friendly-neighbors-poles-view-of-ukrainians/>

Total of 21% of surveyed Ukrainians against making any concessions to DPR, LPR, 13.03.2015

One third of surveyed Ukrainians think that the Ukrainian authorities should do whatever is necessary to stop the bloodshed in Donbas, and 20% say that no concessions should be made, according to the poll conducted by GfK Ukraine in February.

According to the poll, the results of which were announced on Friday, 21% of respondents think it's acceptable that the territories controlled by the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR) will receive special status for a certain period of time with Kyiv remaining in charge. A total of 12% of the respondents say it's acceptable to make Russian language the second national language of Ukraine by amending the Constitution. Another concession is the refusal to join NATO and stating Ukraine's neutrality in the country's Constitution, which was supported by 11% of the respondents.

At the same time, 21% thinks that authorities mustn't make any concessions, but that the country should mobilize, get help from the West, and liberate Donbas by military means.

The poll was conducted through February 2-15 by GfK Ukraine through personal interviews in respondents' residences. A total of 1,000 people over 16 years old were surveyed. They represent all the regions of Ukraine except for Crimea. In Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the poll was conducted in Ukrainian controlled territory. The poll's margin of error was 3.1%.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254994.html>

Poll: Most Russians think Euromaidan couldn't, shouldn't happen in Russia, 13.03.2015

In general, the Russians with high income (80%) and higher education (79%) believe that a Russian Euromaidan is impossible. People with low income (71%) and less educated (65%) are more likely to believe that such a scenario could occur in the country.

In addition, 94% of respondents said they did not want a repeat of Euromaidan in Russia. This opinion was expressed by respondents of all ages, different levels of wealth, both the townspeople and villagers. Only 2% of respondents said the opposite.

The survey also showed that the opinions of Russians have not changed in the year since a similar study was conducted.

The poll was conducted on February 21-22, 2015. A total of 1,600 people were questioned in 46 regions of Russia.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1055028-poll-most-russians-think-euromaidan-couldnt-shouldnt-happen-in-russia.html>

Ukraine's exports to EU drops by one third, Russia – by 60%, 18.03.2015

Ukraine's export and import fell by one third – 31.2% and 33.4%, to \$ 2,984 billion and \$ 3,009 billion in the first month this year, according to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

At the same time, Ukraine's negative trade balance dropped by more than 7 times, to \$ 25.1 million compared to \$ 183.1 million in the same period last year (January, 2014).

The State Statistics Service of Ukraine recorded a % 31 decrease of Ukrainian exports to the EU compared with January last year. The volume of exports to the EU amounted to \$ 1.0717 billion, or 35.9% of total exports. Imports from the EU amounted to \$ 1.1531 billion, or 38.3% of the total volume which is 21.2% less than the previous year.

http://mw.ua/ECONOMICS/ukraine-s-exports-to-eu-drops-by-one-third-russia-by-60-1482_.html

Imports to Crimea 21 times higher than exports in Jan – statistics, 18.03.2015

The State Statistics Service has began publishing data on the movement of goods between the Crimea free economic zone and the rest of Ukraine, and has said that imports were 21 times higher than exports in January.

According to the statistics, for the first month of the year goods worth \$37.266 million were imported to the Crimea free economic zone, while goods worth \$1.772 million were exported.

The service said that according to the law on the creation of the Crimea free economic zone and the peculiarities of economic activity in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, dated August 12 last year, goods moving across the administrative border of the Crimea free economic zone from January 1, 2015 are subject to customs procedures.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/255823.html>

Population of Ukraine decreases by 18,000 people since beginning of 2015, 19.03.2015

The data were presented without taking into account the occupied territory of Crimea and Sevastopol, and part of the Donbas conflict zone.

The number of births since the beginning of the year amounted to 34,900 people. The number of deaths totaling 55,300 people. The information was presented without taking into account the demographic situation in the area of the Anti-Terrorist Operation.

In annual terms, the population decline was 146,400 people.

As UNIAN reported earlier, Ukraine's population at the end of 2014 amounted to 42.928 million people, which was 144,182 less than at the end of 2013.

According to the forecast of the United Nations, the population of Ukraine may drop to 39 million people by 2030 if the current dynamics of population decline continue.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057544-population-of-ukraine-decreases-by-18000-people-since-beginning-of-2015.html>

Ukrainian economy contracts 6.8 pct in 2014 - statistics service, 20.03.2015

Ukraine's economy contracted 6.8 percent in 2014 after zero growth in 2013, the state statistics service said on Friday, due to the financial toll of a separatist conflict in the industrial eastern regions.

The International Monetary Fund, which has approved a new \$17.5 billion financing package for Ukraine, forecasts the economy contracting 5.5 percent this year and returning to growth in 2016, but has warned efforts to restore financial stability face "exceptionally high" risks from further fighting.

The statistics service revised its data for the fourth-quarter of 2014 to a contraction of 14.8 percent from 15.2 percent. (Reporting by Natalia Zinets; Writing by Alessandra Prentice; Editing by Richard Balmforth)

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3003944/Ukrainian-economy-contracts-6-8-pct-2014--statistics-service.html>

Poll: 65% of Russians sympathize with mercenaries of DPR and LPR, 20.03.2015

According to the survey, a total of 7% of Russians has friends who went to fight in the Donbas, while 90% of respondents said that there were no such people among their relatives.

A total of 65% of Russians approve of the actions of Russian citizens who joined the militant organizations in the Donbas, while 22% disapprove. A total of 40% do not approve of the work of Russian President Vladimir Putin, including 33% of Moscow and St. Petersburg citizens.

One third of respondents or 33% believe that there are a lot of idealists among those who left Russia to fight as militants in the Donbas, and who believe that they are involved in a "just war."

A quarter of respondents or 28% believes that the "advocates of Russia" went primarily there.

According to 16% of respondents, these people are better described as mercenaries. Other people call them adventurers (5% of respondents), bandits (3%), and "restless people" (4%).

A total of 45% of respondents would react positively to a decision by a relative or friend to fight in the Donbas, while another 45% would be negative about it. This news would be most positively taken primarily by men (55%) and Communist Party supporters (53%).

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057913-poll-65-of-russians-sympathize-with-mercenaries-of-dpr-and-lpr.html>

Poll: More than 66% of Ukrainians approve Western sanctions against Russia, 31.03.2015

Two thirds of Ukrainians or 66.7% approve of the Western sanctions against Russia, according to the results of a survey carried out by the Gorshenin Institute, LB.ua has reported.

Another 20.4% of Ukrainians oppose anti-Russian sanctions, while another 12.9% of respondents did not give an answer.

In general, according to the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Ukrainian population, a total of 2,000 people aged from 18 were questioned, except in Crimea, and in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The poll's margin of error is no more than 2.2%.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1061985-poll-more-than-66-of-ukrainians-approve-western-sanctions-against-russia.html>

Poll: Almost 40% of Russians have positive attitude to Stalin, 31.03.2015

According to the survey, a total of 30% of respondents respect Stalin, 7% have sympathy, 2% have admiration, while every third respondent was indifferent to him.

Stalin's perception differs considerably depending on the age of the respondent - among young people every 2nd person was indifferent, while older respondents (43%) tended to respect Stalin.

The attitude towards the dictator also depends on the type of consumer status - wealthy Russians 4 times more often expressed a negative attitude to Stalin than less well-off respondents.

In general, those Russians who believe that the suffering of Stalin's victims in Soviet times was justified by "great goals and results," has increased from 25% in 2012 to 45% in 2015.

However, Muscovites (64%) and Russians with high consumer status (66%) believe that any results, even if they are in the name of a great goal, can't be justified by the sacrifices.

The poll was conducted on March 20-23. A total of 1,600 people aged from 18 were questioned in 46 regions of Russia.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1062013-poll-almost-40-of-russians-have-positive-attitude-to-stalin.html>

Statements of officials

Ukrainian MP Honcharenko reports abuse and intimidation in detention in Moscow, 01.03.2015

Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Honcharenko, who was detained in Moscow on Sunday during a march in memory of recently killed Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, has been released, and a court hearing into a misdemeanor he is charged with is scheduled for Monday, he told Ukrainian online newspaper Ukrainska Pravda.

"They have just released me. A court hearing will be tomorrow," he said.

Honcharenko says he is accused of a failure to obey a police officer. "Though there was no failure to obey a police officer from my side," he said.

Honcharenko stressed that he had been beaten after detention. He asked to call the doctor, but it was not done.

"They were trying to make me sign certain protocols, attempting to intimidate me, saying that I would never be released and there was no Maidan here, and that the person who was interrogating me had got a blister on his finger from the trigger," Honcharenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050206-ukrainian-mp-honcharenko-reports-abuse-and-intimidation-in-detention-in-moscow.html>

Pyatt: US to allocate \$120 mln to equip Ukrainian army, 02.03.2015

The United States will allocate \$120 million for training the Ukrainian armed forces and the purchase of military equipment, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt said.

According to Pyatt, this money will only be spent on training Ukrainian soldiers and buying equipment for them, though not weapons.

"As for the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, it is still unknown if this will happen," he said.

"The only question that is being discussed just now is whether this should include defensive lethal weapons," Pyatt said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050361-pyatt-us-to-allocate-120-mln-to-equip-ukrainian-army.html>

US decision to give Ukraine defensive weapons '99% settled,' says Saakashvili, 02.03.2015

"The main thing we are trying to achieve in the United States is that Ukraine receives defensive weapons," Saakashvili said.

"Almost everyone is standing by us - public opinion on our side. Giving defensive weapons to Ukraine is a powerful signal to save thousands of lives, to stop further Russian aggression: We all know that now Putin will try to capture not only Mariupol, but the whole southern flank [of Ukraine, and] then he will try to bring down the government in Kyiv. The Ukrainian state needs to defend and protect its security."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050384-us-decision-to-give-ukraine-defensive-weapons-99-settled-says-saakashvili.html>

Kerry: Putin misunderstands US position on Ukraine and 'color revolutions', 03.03.2015

"I think [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin misinterprets much of what the United States is doing or trying to do. We are not involved in 'numerous color revolutions,'" as he says," Kerry said.

"In the case of Ukraine, such assumptions are also wrong," he said.

"The United States support international law with respect to the sovereignty and integrity of other people," Kerry said.

As reported earlier, Kerry said that the United States hoped that the Minsk agreements on Ukraine would be fully implemented in the coming hours and days, including the establishment of a real ceasefire and access for OSCE observers.

"If it does not happen, the Russian Federation will have inevitable consequences that will affect its economy," Kerry said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050921-kerry-putin-misunderstands-us-position-on-ukraine-and-color-revolutions.html>

EU intends to review its Neighborhood Policy, 03.03.2015

"EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and EU High Representative Federica Mogherini will present the future approach on the European Neighborhood Policy", spokesperson for the European Commission Margaritis Shinas said.

He also said that since the last revision, which took place in 2011, the region has undergone significant changes.

"Now it is important to carry out a fundamental review of the principles on which the policy is based, as well as how the appropriate tools can be used. The goal is to carry out extensive consultations with partner countries, as well as with the EU members by the end of June," the EC's press office said in a press release.

The proposals for the future direction of the European Neighborhood Policy are to be published in autumn after the carrying out of public consultations, the press service said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051067-eu-intends-to-review-its-neighborhood-policy.html>

US intelligence chief says militants could attack Mariupol in spring, 03.03.2015

Director of National Intelligence of the United States James Clapper has said that the Russian-backed militants could try to attack Mariupol in spring.

But the head of intelligence also said that he did not consider such a scenario inevitable.

"The militants aren't planning to occupy the whole territory of Ukraine. They need only Luhansk and Donetsk regions. An exception may be Mariupol, which has a strategic location on the sea," Clapper said - although Mariupol is actually in Donetsk region.

"The Russian-backed militants might wait for spring to start their active offensive operations," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051141-us-intelligence-chief-says-militants-could-attack-mariupol-in-spring.html>

Russia sending 17th 'aid convoy' to Donbas, 04.03.2015

The more than 160 trucks are carrying over 1,800 tonnes of what the Kremlin claims is "humanitarian aid" for Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The Kremlin's claims cannot be verified, as Russia has refused to allow Ukrainian officials and officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross to fully inspect any of the shipments.

Kyiv claims the convoys of trucks are used to supply arms, ammunition and other goods to Russian-backed militants fighting against Ukrainian government forces in the east of the county. According to Voronov, the column came from the Don rescue center.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1051430-russia-sending-17th-aid-convoy-to-donbas.html>

US, France, Germany warn of 'strong reaction' to Russia's violation of Minsk agreement, 04.03.2015

This was announced by the French president's press service following telephone talks between U.S. President Barack Obama, French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"All participants in the talks expressed full support for the package of measures adopted in Minsk on February 12. They reaffirmed their unity of views on the ways of resolving the crisis in the East of Ukraine," the leaders' statement reads.

The Western leaders "pointed to the close connection between the sanctions and the implementation of the whole Minsk Accord."

They said that "that a strong reaction from the international community would be necessary in the case of a major breach of the process put in place in Minsk."

During the negotiations, the parties "confirmed the important role of the OSCE in the monitoring the process - especially the ceasefire observance and the withdrawal of heavy weapons."

"In this regard, the negotiators were in favor of the expansion of the relevant funds at the disposal of the OSCE," reads the statement. They also intend to "continue to support the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities for the country's economic recovery."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051406-us-france-germany-warn-of-strong-reaction-to-russias-violation-of-minsk-agreement.html>

Mogherini: New sanctions against Russia being prepared, 04.03.2015

The European Union is continuing preparations to impose a fresh set of sanctions against Russia, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said. "It is in process. We are constantly working on [new sanctions]. After the attack in Mariupol, we decided that the foreign ministers would continue this work," Mogherini said.

She said that the EU is also focusing on measures to help the implementation of the Minsk agreement.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051626-mogherini-new-sanctions-against-russia-being-prepared.html>

Magnitsky Act may be extended due to Nemtsov murder – Nuland, 04.03.2015

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said that the U.S. would examine its blacklist at the end of the year with due regard for the information that would become known by that time about who committed that crime.

According to Nuland, the U.S. has clearly let the Russian Federation know that the international community will be waiting for an investigation that will meet international standards and will identify not only the one who shot but also the one who ordered this.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051713-magnitsky-act-may-be-extended-due-to-nemtsov-murder-nuland.html>

U.S. envoy alleges deployment of 'thousands' of Russian troops in eastern Ukraine, 04.03.2015

"I am not in a position to give you a definitive number in this unclassified setting. I would say it's in the thousands and thousands [of Russian troops in eastern Ukraine]," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said when testifying at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on Wednesday on Ukraine and its ongoing conflict with Russia.

"Since December, Russia has transferred hundreds of pieces of military equipment, including tanks, armored vehicles, rocket systems, heavy artillery," she said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1051794-us-envoy-alleges-deployment-of-thousands-of-russian-troops-in-eastern-ukraine.html>

Kasparov to West: Sanctions not enough to stop Putin, he will test NATO further, 05.03.2015

Kasparov said he believes that Putin will not stop his aggression with Ukraine.

"Ukraine must be defended, supported, and armed now. It may seem far away to you, but it is the front line of a war the United States and the rest of the free world is fighting whether it admits it or not," Kasparov said.

"Sanctions are important, but it was obvious six months ago they were not enough to deter Putin, and he must be deterred," he said.

Kasparov also called on the West to stop treating Putin as a person with whom they can negotiate.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1051935-kasparov-to-west-sanctions-not-enough-to-stop-putin-he-will-test-nato-further.html>

Decision to annex Crimea 'taken by Putin personally', 05.03.2015

The decision for Russia to annex the Ukrainian territory of Crimea was made personally by Russian President Vladimir Putin, without consulting Russia's Finance Ministry on the economic wisdom of the move, Russian Deputy Finance Minister Tatyana Nesterenko has said in an interview with the Russian magazine Forbes Woman.

"If we speak about whether the Ministry of Finance was asked about how much it would cost, I can say no - nobody asked. But to answer the question whether the price is appropriate or not, we need to know a lot [more]. The level of our competence is not enough to answer this question, and we don't know what information is possessed by the [leader] of our country," she said.

"I always remember the biblical truths: they say that there is a person who takes on this mission. He possesses full information and full responsibility for this. So I do not discuss this issue in general," Nesterenko said.

"Such decisions can only be taken by one person. I know the president and I can say that he does not make decisions lightly. But, in fairness, it was also unexpected for all of us," she said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052109-decision-to-annex-crimea-taken-by-putin-personally.html>

Republicans: Obama de facto imposes embargo on arms supplies to Ukraine, 05.03.2015

"The delay of deliveries of weapons is, in fact, a failure. Therefore, de facto we have an embargo on supplies of defensive weapons to Ukraine. It reminds me and many others the war in the Balkans, where we made every effort so that the Bosnians and Croats weren't able to defend themselves against the aggression of Milosevic. Now we see a repetition of the same policy in the case of Ukraine, our friend and ally," he said.

"Ukrainians need defensive weapons immediately. All the responsibility for the failure to deliver arms to Ukraine lies with President Obama," Smith said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051920-republicans-obama-de-facto-imposes-embargo-on-arms-supplies-to-ukraine.html>

Lukashevich: Ceasefire in Donbas at risk if US supplies weapons to Ukraine, 05.03.2015

"We again warn Washington about the enormous damage [that will be done] to our bilateral relations if the residents of the Donbas are killed by U.S. weapons. The supply of weapons is fraught with [dangers] not only of the disruption of the ceasefire and a new escalation in the east - they also threaten the security of the Russian Federation," he said.

"On the background of the successful implementation of the ceasefire in the Donbas, which was reached on February 12 in Minsk by the leaders of the 'Normandy Four' countries, we are very concerned about the continuing reports of the U.S. intention to launch a massive supply of weapons to Ukraine," Lukashevich said.

"The U.S. Congress had even drawn up a special law that provides for the allocation of \$1 billion for equipping and training Ukrainian troops, as if Washington is going to fully support them," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052068-lukashevich-ceasefire-in-donbas-at-risk-if-us-supplies-weapons-to-ukraine.html>

EU to lift sanctions on ex-presidential advisor, other Yanukovych associates, 05.03.2015

The decision concerns Andriy Portnov, an ex-adviser to Yanukovych, Olexander Yakymenko, a former head of the Security Service of Ukraine, Ihor Kalinin, ex-chairman of the Security Service of Ukraine, and Alexei Azarov, the son of former Prime Minister Mykola Azarov. At the same time, LB.ua has reported, citing its sources, that the EU has decided to extend from March 7 its sanctions against other former Ukrainian officials.

However, if there is no progress by May in investigations into the criminal cases against Yanukovych, Elena Lukash, the former Minister of Justice, Dmytro Tabachnik, the former Education and Science Minister, and Ukrainian businessman Sergiy Klyuev, the EU will lift its sanctions against them, according to EU officials.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052134-eu-to-lift-sanctions-on-ex-presidential-advisor-other-yanukovych-associates.html>

Russia won't support deployment of UN peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, 05.03.2015

Gatilov said Moscow believes that the Minsk agreement is currently a sufficient basis through which to reach a settlement of the crisis in Ukraine.

"We believe that the Minsk agreement ... clearly defines the monitoring role of the OSCE mission," Gatilov said.

"And now we need to ensure that this monitoring mission is effective in supervising the implementation of the Minsk agreement. At present, it is sufficient."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052142-russia-to-veto-deployment-of-peacekeeping-mission-in-ukraine.html>

Russian opposition leader to publish Nemtsov report alleging Russian troops are in Ukraine, 05.03.2015

Russian opposition activist Ilya Yashin has said he will publish documents acquired by murdered Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov with evidence that Russian troops are involved in fighting in eastern Ukraine.

Despite Nemtsov's computers, where the files of evidence had been stored, being seized by investigators after his death, Yashin said that other copies of the information is safe, according to the British newspaper the Times.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052191-russian-opposition-leader-to-publish-nemtsov-report-alleging-russian-troops-are-in-ukraine-video.html>

United States committing \$23.2 mln to counter Russia's propaganda, 05.03.2015

"And on Russia's propaganda, we're working with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to ramp up efforts to counter lies with truth. This year, the BBG is committing \$23.2 million to Russian-language programming, a 49 percent increase over FY14, and is requesting an additional \$15.4 million for FY16," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said in the testimony on Ukraine before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

<https://twitter.com/USEmbassyKyiv/status/573509570443755520>

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052290-united-states-committing-232-mln-to-counter-russias-propaganda.html>

General Staff: Ukrainian army ready for third phase of withdrawal of heavy weaponry, 05.03.2015

"Over the last day, in the second phase, the Ukrainian armed forces have withdrawn 2S3 Akatsiya self-propelled artillery to a certain distance. In the near future, we will start the third phase of withdrawal of heavy weapons - if the militants comply with the peace agreements," Stelmakh said.

"The withdrawal of [Ukrainian forces'] heavy artillery is constantly supervised by the OSCE special monitoring group and representatives of the world media," Stelmakh said.

"By their actions, the Ukrainian armed forces have once again demonstrated that they fully comply with the agreements, and they expect the same from the warring party," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051952-general-staff-ukrainian-army-ready-for-third-phase-of-withdrawal-of-heavy-weaponry.html>

NATO chief: Russia significantly ups support for militants in Donbas, 05.03.2015

Russia has significantly increased its support for pro-Russian militants in the Donbas, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at a joint press conference with Prime Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb in Helsinki on Thursday.

Stoltenberg said Russia has sent into Ukraine over 1,000 units of heavy weapons, including armored vehicles, artillery and modern air defense systems in recent months.

Some of the equipment could only have been supplied by Russia, according to the NATO secretary general.

In addition, Stoltenberg has stated that Russia also helps in training the militants and that there are Russian military personnel in eastern Ukraine.

According to Stoltenberg, NATO bases its statements on intelligence data, as well as materials available from open sources, including information from OSCE observers.

At the same time, he said that the international community considers any attempt of the Russian-backed militants to expand the occupied territories in the east of Ukraine as unacceptable.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052196-nato-chief-russia-significantly-ups-support-for-militants-in-donbas.html>

Putin seeks to destroy NATO using 'hybrid warfare' as in eastern Ukraine, 05.03.2015

"I am sure Putin wants to destroy our alliance, not by attacking it but by splintering it,"

Commander of the U.S. army in Europe, Lieutenant-General Frederick "Ben" Hodges said.

He also warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin could try to destabilize one of the NATO member states by using a rebel militia as in eastern Ukraine, or other forms of "ambiguous" warfare.

Hodges said he had proposed positioning some of U.S. tanks in the countries located along the eastern flank of NATO to make it a limiting factor for Putin. In particular, he said, these are Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

The US has already agreed to send troops to Poland and the three Baltic states, he added.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052269-putin-seeks-to-destroy-nato-using-hybrid-warfare-as-in-eastern-ukraine.html>

Bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers calls on Obama to arm Ukraine, 05.03.2015

Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives John Boehner's press office posted a signed copy of the letter at www.speaker.gov.

The letter was signed by eight Republicans and three Democrats.

The bipartisan group of House leaders and committee chairs calls on Obama to decide on lethal aid for Ukraine.

"In the wake of a cease-fire agreement that appears only to have consolidated Russian and separatist gains since the first Minsk agreement, and in anticipation of the near certainty that Russia and its separatist proxies continue their efforts to destabilize Ukraine and seize additional territory, we urge you to quickly approve additional efforts to support Ukraine's efforts to defend its sovereign territory, including through the transfer of lethal, defensive weapons systems to the Ukrainian military," the letter addressed to Obama reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052304-bipartisan-group-of-us-lawmakers-calls-on-obama-to-arm-ukraine.html>

Nemtsov's close aide shows his last note about Russian paratroopers in Ukraine's east, 05.03.2015

Boris Nemtsov's aide Olga Shorina shows Reuters a note written by him prior to his murder in Moscow last week, Latvian-based news outlet Medusa reported.

According to Shorina, she and Nemtsov were discussing an investigation he was preparing into Russia's support for mercenaries fighting in eastern Ukraine.

Fearing that their office was bugged by Russia's intelligence service, Nemtsov wrote down on a piece of paper: "Some paratroopers from Ivanovo have got in touch with me. 17 killed, they didn't give them their money, but for now they are frightened to talk."

"He was maintaining contact with them," Reuters quoted Shorina as saying. "How he was maintaining contact with them, I don't know, he did not put me in touch with anyone."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052316-nemtsovs-close-aide-shows-his-last-note-about-russian-paratroopers-in-ukraines-east.html>

NATO deputy head says Nemtsov's murder connected with events in eastern Ukraine, 06.03.2015

According to Vershbow, for many, Nemtsov was primarily an opponent of Moscow's military participation in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

"Before the murder of Boris Nemtsov, it became clear that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was less supported by Russian society," he said.

"It seems that the goal of President Putin is to weaken Ukraine and to suppress an alternative view in Russia in order to prevent the beginning of a Russian Maidan. After the brutal murder of Boris Nemtsov last Friday, we can see that the victims of the conflict are not only in eastern Ukraine," Vershbow said.

"Although we do not know who pulled the trigger, we understand that Boris Nemtsov was a defender of democracy and an opponent of Russia's intervention in the events in Ukraine. He was one of those, whom the official Russian propaganda calls 'traitors' and 'fifth columnists,'" he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052467-nato-deputy-head-says-nemtsovs-murder-connected-with-events-in-eastern-ukraine.html>

Tusk and Obama to discuss situation in Ukraine and relations with Russia, 06.03.2015

"President Tusk will meet with U.S. President Barack Obama at the White House on March 9 to discuss the agenda of the EU-U.S. relations. They will also discuss the crisis in Ukraine and relations with Russia," the report says.

In addition, the presidents will discuss trade issues, climate changes, energy security and the fight against terrorism.

Tusk earlier said that the European Union "should be ready for any development, good or bad." He reiterated that the EU would be ready to impose fresh sanctions against Russia over Ukraine if the Minsk agreements were not fulfilled.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052524-tusk-and-obama-to-discuss-situation-in-ukraine-and-relations-with-russia.html>

Poroshenko vows to release 204 Ukrainian soldiers from captivity, 06.03.2015

"We will definitely return home 204 Ukrainian prisoners held by the Russian-backed militants. I also believe that Ukrainian pilot Nadia Savchenko will also be home soon," he said.

"I do my best step by step so that Ukraine can live in peace. We need this peace to revive our economy," Poroshenko said.

"If the war in the east of Ukraine ends, 2016 could be a year of economic recovery," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1052680-poroshenko-vows-to-release-204-ukrainian-soldiers-from-captivity.html>

U.S. gives Ukraine \$120 mln in security assistance, 06.03.2015

"With regard to security systems, the United States has already provided about \$120 million in security assistance to Ukraine," U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

"We are looking at additional requests; we have additional money that's been provided by Congress," Blinken said.

According to him, the U.S. side is "working very actively on those right now."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052818-us-gives-ukraine-120-mln-in-security-assistance.html>

Ukrainian reforms are under threat – UN, 06.03.2015

The reforms Ukraine needs are under threat, UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic says.

According to him, the reforms Ukraine has needed long ago and that have been promised are now under threat, as the government is currently focused on other priorities.

Against the current economic background, the Ukrainian government needs to demonstrate its commitments when fighting against corruption and ensure the dispassionate execution of justice and punish those who are guilty of human rights violations, he said.

"This will restrain further violations of human rights", Simonovic said.

He also claims that those who are responsible for the violence that has killed many people should be brought to justice.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1052821-ukrainian-reforms-are-under-threat-un.html>

U.S. at UN Security Council accuses militants of murdering 500 civilians in Debaltseve, 06.03.2015

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power claims that bodies of 500 civilians killed in firing by pro-Russian militants have been found in the town of Debaltseve in Donetsk region.

Power announced this at a meeting of the UN Security Council in New York on Friday.

According to her, the separatists use the current ceasefire for redeployment, and Russia continues to provide them with unrestricted access to weaponry.

Describing the situation around the village of Shyrokyne, she expressed concern that the nearby city of Mariupol, which is currently under the Ukrainian government's control, could become the next target for separatists and the Russian military.

Power also drew attention to the situation in Debaltseve, where "hundreds of bodies" have been found. In particular, referring to data provided by the UN, the U.S. Ambassador said 500 bodies had been found in the cellars of residential buildings in Debaltseve after the attack by militants on the town. According to her, people were hiding in the cellars and houses from firing by pro-Russian separatists.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1052832-us-at-un-security-council-accuses-militants-of-murdering-500-civilians-in-debaltseve.html>

Putin turning Crimea into giant military base – human rights activist, 07.03.2015

Independent Crimean journalist, editor-in-chief of blackseanews.net and human rights activist Andriy Klymenko, who is a co-author of a report on human rights violations in the annexed Crimea, shared his opinion with Voice of America, krymr.org reported.

"Since the beginning of the annexation, Putin has set himself the most important task – to create a giant military base in Crimea rather than a gaming zone or a tourist paradise, where, in addition to the fleet, there will be strategic aviation, air defense, aerospace forces, coastal battery and nuclear weapons," Klymenko said.

People who are not loyal to the new authorities won't be allowed to remain on the Crimean peninsula, which is expected to become a home station for about 100,000 troops in the next year or two, Klymenko says.

"These are Crimean Tatars, journalists, civil activists – all those who do not want to change their Ukrainian passport for the Russian one. Unfortunately, this will go on. In Putin's Russia, as the saying goes, they have been 'turning the screw' for 15 years, whereas in Crimea it took them a year to put the screws on. And they have tried so hard that it may go too far," the human rights activist said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052991-putin-turning-crimea-into-giant-military-base-human-rights-activist.html>

Britain's Foreign Secretary: no change in Putin's intentions towards Ukraine, 08.03.2015

British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond told BBC on Sunday he saw no change in Russian President Vladimir Putin's strategic intentions towards Ukraine. However, Hammond noted a "big reduction" in violence in eastern Ukraine since the truce was agreed in Minsk in February.

"There has been a reduction in violence since the new agreement was signed but I don't detect that Mr Putin's strategic intentions have changed. This is just a question now about what tools he uses to achieve those objectives," he said in an interview on BBC television.

According to Hammond, Britain and Russia will continue to have a "prickly relationship" if Putin doesn't change his position on Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053154-britains-foreign-secretary-no-change-in-putins-intentions-towards-ukraine.html>

Putin admits Kremlin's orchestration of annexation of Crimea, 08.03.2015

"I invited the chiefs of our special services, the Ministry of Defense to the Kremlin, tasked them with saving the Ukrainian president's life – he simply might have been eliminated," Putin said in a trailer of an Andrei Kondrashov film produced by Channel Rossiya-1 and entitled 'Crimea. The Way Home.' According to him, the preparations started when Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was fleeing Ukraine in the early hours of February 23, 2014.

"Heavy machine guns were installed there to act without further parley. We got ready to pick him up directly from Donetsk – by land, by sea and by air. It was the night from [February] 22 to [February] 23, we finished at about seven o'clock in the morning. And when parting, I told all my colleagues: 'We'll have to start work to bring Crimea back into Russia,'" Putin said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1053203-putin-admits-kremlins-orchestration-of-annexation-of-crimea.html>

European Official Not Ready to Stiffen Russia Sanctions, 08.03.2015

BRUSSELS — Rattled by a newly aggressive Russia but still loath to confront the reality of violent conflict, Europe needs to draw clear lessons from the war in Ukraine in order to respond to a new and dangerous era, according to Donald Tusk, the former prime minister of Poland who took over recently as representative of the European Union's 28 leaders.

Mr. Tusk, who will meet President Obama in Washington on Monday in his role as president of the European Council, said in an interview that Europe was not yet ready to further tighten sanctions against Russia despite continuing provocations by President Vladimir V. Putin.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/09/world/european-official-not-ready-to-stiffen-russia-sanctions.html?_r=4

German Ambassador Says Obama Pledged Not to Arm Ukraine, 09.03.2015

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama agreed last month not to send lethal defensive aid to Ukraine, a top German diplomat said Monday, as lawmakers from both parties continued to press the president to shore up Ukraine's beleaguered military in its fight against Russian-backed separatists.

The German ambassador to the U.S., Peter Wittig, said in an Associated Press interview that Obama agreed to hold off during a White House meeting in February with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He said Obama had concurred with Merkel that it was important "to give some space for those diplomatic, political efforts that were underway."

"The two leaders exchanged views on that issue and there was unity by them not to impose, or not to go forward with, the delivery of lethal defensive weapons at this time," Wittig told the AP.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2015/03/09/german-ambassador-obama-agreed-not-to-send-arms-to-ukraine>

Kyiv expects legitimate elections in Donbas to get legal representatives from region – official, 09.03.2015

"We understand that in the current situation there is a need "to sew" Ukraine, from which our neighbors tear off pieces, and we are ready for a compromise, take into account the opinion of the local population in these regions. But we cannot and will not talk to field commanders.

There are elections for this purpose and whoever is elected [even Plotnytsky or anyone else legitimately elected] he will represent the region and participate in the further political process. It's not fair to shove some Russian citizens or mercenaries and make them the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk," Ukraine's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vadym Prystaiko said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254174.html>

Tusk: Even though Ukraine ceasefire violated, 'impossible' for EU to agree on new sanctions against Russia, 09.03.2015

Despite the ceasefire in the Donbas already having been violated more than 1,000 times, it is currently "impossible" for the European Union to achieve unanimity on imposing new sanctions on Russia, former Polish prime minister and current President of the European Council Donald Tusk said. "To build consensus between 28 democracies — because it's not only states — but democracies" is very "difficult," Tusk said in an interview published on March 9.

He said he feared that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not give up his attempts to interfere in Ukraine's internal affairs.

"Some politicians in Europe are ready to believe that there is a chance of good will" from Russian President Vladimir Putin and from Russia, Tusk said.

"I am more skeptical.

"Either by military or economic or other tools, I am afraid that Russia wants to rebuild control over the whole of Ukraine."

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053262-tusk-even-though-ukraine-ceasefire-violated-impossible-for-eu-to-agree-on-new-sanctions-against-russia.html>

Orban: Hungary does not want border with Russia, 09.03.2015

The destabilization of Ukraine goes against the national interests of Hungary, which does not want to end up "with a common border with Russia," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said at a meeting with diplomats in Budapest on Monday.

The conflict zone in the Donbas is far from the Hungarian border, but Hungary "has two hundred thousand reasons" to seek peace in Ukraine, said Orban, according to a BBC report.

He said the survival and territorial integrity of Ukraine was in the fundamental interests of Hungary, which, according to Orban doesn't want to have "a common border with Russia."

Speaking about relations with Russia, Orban said that his country will always remain "a partner who pays on time."

For a thousand years there have been three states that were of particular importance for the foreign policy of Hungary - Germany, Turkey and Russia, the prime minister said, asking Hungarian diplomats to remember this.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053356-orban-hungary-does-not-want-border-with-russia.html>

Poroshenko: Quarter of Ukraine's industry stopped because of war, 09.03.2015

"There are conditions of war in the occupied territories – we have to face the truth," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said in an interview aired on Ukraine's First National channel on Monday evening.

"About 25% of the industrial potential of the country has stopped, and 10% has been physically destroyed. Defense spending as of today is more than UAH 90 billion.

"All the same, the country has the strength to secure itself. [But] as long as there is war, investment will not come to Ukraine, and people need to speak the truth."

He said reforms could not be carried out quickly and that their implementation only really began after the parliamentary elections in late October last year.

"We will build a different economy, overcome corruption. And overcoming corruption is not only about voting for an anti-corruption bureau or laws against corruption. Corruption has a specific name, the specific name of a person who should be in prison [for corruption]."

"We can survive only if we are united - not only the government, parliament and the president – but all the people," Poroshenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1053369-poroshenko-quarter-of-ukraines-industry-stopped-because-of-war.html>

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/quarter_of_ukrainian_industry_stopped_due_to_war_poroshenko_329637

Putin Grants Russian Citizenship to 35 Military-Age Ukrainian Men, 09.03.2015

President Vladimir Putin issued a decree Monday granting Russian citizenship to 35 Ukrainian men of military age, state news agency Interfax reported.

In total, the decree cleared the way for more than 50 individuals to receive Russian citizenship, 35 of them men born in Ukraine between 1953 and 1984. In Ukraine, men between the ages of 18 and 65 can be recruited to join the military.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putin-grants-russian-citizenship-to-35-military-age-ukrainian-men/517188.html>

Orban: Hungary does not want border with Russia, 09.03.2015

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<http://www.unian.info/world/1053356-orban-hungary-does-not-want-border-with-russia.html>

Ukraine's Poroshenko says rebels have withdrawn significant amount of heavy weapons, 09.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on Monday pro-Russian rebels had withdrawn a significant amount of weaponry from the front-lines in eastern Ukraine in accordance with a three-week-old ceasefire deal.

Attacks have fallen significantly, but accusations of continued violence on both sides show the fragility of the peace accord agreed in Minsk last month, which calls for the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline.

"There is a ceasefire, or there isn't. It depends on how you look at it. We can say that we managed to halt the offensive drive of the aggressor. Ukraine has withdrawn the lion's share of its rocket and heavy artillery systems. The Russian-backed fighters have also withdrawn a significant amount," Poroshenko said in a televised interview.

<http://www.trust.org/item/20150309203938-cfmzi/?source=search>

Briefing Paper: Russian Forces in Ukraine, 09.03.2015

While the annexation itself of Crimea was relatively peaceful, the actions of Russian and Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine turned into an increasingly fierce fight as the Ukrainian government launched its own 'anti-terrorist operation' against the Russian-supported rebels.

In this way, the comparatively bloodless Russian spring gave way to a Russian winter of fierce combat. The first operational successes of Ukrainian forces in late June and early July 2014 first prompted Russian artillery fire from within Russian territory, targeted against advancing Ukrainian troops on their own soil, from mid-July onwards. Direct intervention by Russian troops in combat roles then followed in the middle of August, when the prospect of rebel defeat had become realistic. The presence of large numbers of Russian troops on Ukrainian sovereign territory has, more or less, since become a permanent feature of the conflict.

This briefing explores the Russian military involvement in Ukraine. It argues that the operation is instructive, having been waged in accordance with the Gerasimov Doctrine of Ambiguous Warfare but also because it has revealed some of the constraints on Russia's exercise of military power; primarily, its limited capacity to sustain an operation of this size.

<https://www.rusi.org/publications/other/ref:Q54FDBCF478D8B/>

Lawful Donbas authorities should be consulted on constitution – Hroisman, 10.03.2015

"The legitimately elected authorities should be involved in the consultations," Verkhovna Rada Head Volodymyr Hroisman said.

"In my opinion, only those governments should be deemed legitimate, even in occupied territories, which were elected by voters in the 2010 local polls. This is what I consider to be the legitimately elected authorities of Donbas," Hroisman said.

He also said that after new local elections are held in Donbas the newly elected representatives of the regions will have the right to join the discussion on constitutional amendments.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254309.html>

Kyiv says Ukraine completes fourth stage of weaponry removal, 09.03.2015

Ukraine has completed four stages of heavy weaponry removal, but will not pull them back entirely unless it receives confirmation of the enemy having done the same, military operation spokesman Andriy Lysenko has said.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/kyiv-says-ukraine-completes-fourth-stage-of-weaponry-removal-382969.html>

Spain: Russia sanctions 'beneficial for no one', 10.03.2015

Spain on Tuesday (10 March) joined a list of EU countries which are publicly critical of Russia sanctions and keen to mend ties.

The Spanish foreign minister, Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, told press in Moscow after meeting his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that "keeping or lifting sanctions depends on whether the agreements on Ukraine are being implemented or not. They [sanctions] are beneficial for no one".

Referring to the recent "Minsk" ceasefire accord, he added: "The Minsk agreements are [being] observed, there's good news, [heavy] weaponry is being withdrawn ... so, I don't see [any reason for] expanding sanctions".

He also noted that Russia's counter-ban on EU food imports is hurting the Spanish economy and said the EU must take Russia's interests into account in its relations with Ukraine.

<https://euobserver.com/foreign/127940>

Testimony on Ukraine Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 10.03.2015

Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland said that Russia had transferred more weapons to separatists in recent days despite an ongoing cease-fire. Today Ukraine is central to our 25 year Transatlantic quest for a "Europe whole, free and at peace." My interagency colleagues and I are pleased to update you today on U.S. efforts to support Ukraine as it works to liberate the country from its corrupt, oligarchic past, chart a more democratic, European future, and bring an end to Russian-fueled violence. In my remarks, I'll focus on two areas: first, the work Ukraine is doing—with U.S. and international support—to reform the country, tackle corruption and strengthen democratic institutions; second, I will give an update on our efforts to support implementation of the February and September Minsk Agreements, including our readiness to impose further costs on Russia if the commitments Moscow made are further violated. My colleagues from DoD—Principal Deputy Under Secretary McKeon and Vice Admiral Pandolfe—will address our security relationship in greater detail. A/S Toloui will speak more to our macroeconomic assistance in coordination with our international partners.

<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2015/mar/238722.htm>

Tusk: Unity of Europe and US can put end to Russia's aggression, 10.03.2015

"Our opponents - with their propaganda, violence, violation of the sovereignty of our neighbors - are [trying] to weaken the foundations of the political community of the Western world," Tusk said. "Today, we can see quite clearly that they are trying to divide us, within Europe, as well as Europe and America. If we are united, we will put an end to Russia's aggressive policy towards its neighbors," he said.

He said that during his meeting with the U.S. president he intended to discuss the crisis in relations with Russia in the context of Ukraine, the threat of terrorism, the acts of the so-called Islamic State militant group, as well as partnership in transatlantic trade and investment.

"The past has already shown that only when we're united we're able to successfully fight against terrorism. We were also able to succeed due to our joint work in economic trade," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053525-tusk-unity-of-europe-and-us-can-put-end-to-russias-aggression.html>

EC vice-president: Ukraine needs more financial assistance than expected, 10.03.2015

Ukraine is likely to need more than the expected \$41 billion in financial support over the next few years, Vice-President of the European Commission Kristalina Georgieva has in an interview with the German publication Der Tagesspiegel, Deutsche Welle has reported.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1053560-ec-vice-president-ukraine-needs-more-financial-assistance-than-expected.html>

Obama: West should support sovereignty of Ukraine, despite threat of Russian aggression, 10.03.2015

"The main topic of our talks will be Ukraine. We must maintain strong unity in sanctions against Russia," Obama said.

"The West should support Ukrainian sovereignty, even if it faces a threat of aggression," he said. Obama also drew attention to the serious challenges that face Ukraine in the area of its economy. "We must ensure there is economic development in the 90% of the territory of Ukraine controlled by the government in Kyiv," he said.

In addition, European Council President Donald Tusk said there was a need for unity between the United States and the EU over Russian aggression against Ukraine.

"We can see quite clearly that they are trying to divide us, within Europe, as well as Europe and America," he said.

"Now it is the best time to revive the faith in our community," Tusk said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053537-obama-west-should-support-sovereignty-of-ukraine-despite-threat-of-russian-aggression.html>

Obama decided not to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine 'after talks with Merkel', 10.03.2015

"Angela Merkel brought convincing arguments about the importance of continuing diplomatic and political efforts to resolve the armed conflict in the Donbas. Barack Obama agreed with these arguments," Wittig said.

"The leaders of the U.S. and Germany are confident that now is not the time to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine," Wittig said.

After the February meeting at the White House, Barack Obama told the press that he supported a diplomatic resolution of the situation in the Donbas, but he had not yet made a final decision on the supply of weapons to Ukraine.

However, the U.S. president did not rule out such a possibility in the future.

The reported meeting between Obama and Merkel came days before the Minsk peace talks on February 12, which were a diplomatic initiative by Germany and France.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1053544-obama-decided-not-to-supply-lethal-weapons-to-ukraine-after-talks-with-merkel.html>

Ukraine Says Rebels Violating Cease-Fire, 10.03.2015

Ukrainian officials say Russian-backed separatists have violated a cease-fire by shelling government positions in eastern Ukraine, including attacks near the southeastern port of Mariupol.

Ukrainian army spokesman Vladyslav Seleznyov said in Kyiv on March 10 that in the past day separatists had fired upon the Donetsk region towns of Pisky, Vodyane, Tonenke, Opytne, Avdiivka, Troitsk, Luhanske, and near the Dutivska mine.

In the Luhansk region, he said rebels attacked army positions in Sokolnyky and Krymske.

Ukrainian officials said rebels attacked the village of Shyrokyne, near Mariupol, for several hours late on March 9 with tanks and mortars but were repelled.

Rebel attacks near Mariupol have raised concerns that the separatists may seek to seize the Azov Sea port city and push further westward toward Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in March 2014.

A rebel defense official, Eduard Basurin, accused Ukrainian forces of violating the cease-fire by conducting attacks.

In Kyiv, President Poroshenko said on March 9 that 64 soldiers had died since the cease-fire -- part of a peace deal agreed in the Belarusian capital, Minsk -- went into effect on February 15.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-fighting-resumes-donbas-mariupol-ceasefire/26891430.html>

Russia Says Has Right to Deploy Nuclear Weapons in Crimea, 11.03.2015

Russia has the right to deploy nuclear arms in the annexed Black Sea peninsula of Crimea.

"I don't know if there are nuclear weapons there now. I don't know about any plans, but in principle Russia can do it," said Mikhail Ulyanovsk, the head of the Foreign Ministry's department on arms control.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/517281.html>

Russia Says Ready for Talks on a New European Arms Treaty, 11.03.2015

MOSCOW — Russia is ready to hold talks on a new agreement to control conventional arms in Europe, a Russian Foreign Ministry official said on Wednesday, after Russia announced the end of its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

"We are ready to look at the possibility and carry out corresponding talks on a new agreement which would adequately address new realities... and take into account the interests of the Russian Federation," Mikhail Ulyanov, director of the ministry's department on arms control, told the Interfax news agency.

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/03/11/world/europe/11-reuters-russia-europ-arms.html?ref=world>

Sweden provides \$100 million interest-free loan for Ukraine, 11.03.2015

Interest on this loan will be paid by the Swedish government, Poroshenko said.

"This will be a very significant and important contribution of Sweden to the coordinated actions of our most trusted, most solid and consistent supporters on which we can rely," the Ukrainian president said, extending his gratitude to the Swedish prime minister for the decision.

In turn, Leven said details regarding the loan interest would be discussed further. He said he believed this assistance would be of use to Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1054194-sweden-provides-100-million-interest-free-loan-for-ukraine.html>

IMF agrees to lend \$17.5 bln to Ukraine, 11.03.2015

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved the Extended Fund Facility program for Ukraine.

"I am pleased to announce that the IMF Executive Board today approved an Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of SDR 12.348 billion (about \$17.5 billion, EUR15.5 billion) for Ukraine, based on a comprehensive economic reform program supported by the Fund as well as by additional resources from the international community," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said on Wednesday.

The change in the IMF-supported program from Stand-By Arrangement to Extended Arrangement under the EFF, which is consistent with the more protracted nature of Ukraine's balance-of-payment needs, will provide more funding, more time, more flexibility, and better financing terms for Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1054278-imf-okays-175-bln-bailout-program-for-ukraine.html>

Tusk: Decision on extending EU sanctions against Russia to be made in June, 11.03.2015

Tusk is in the United States on a two-day visit. At a press conference in Washington, Tusk said that the European Union is not ready today to impose tougher sanctions against Russia, as there is no consensus in Europe on this issue.

"My efforts are directed towards [retaining the sanctions]," Tusk said.

"In the European Union, the predominant view is that a decision about the practical extension of the [sanctions] must be taken in June [at the EU summit]. This is the position of several countries. Some countries think [a decision] should be taken in March," Tusk said.

According to Tusk, on the issue of sanctions against the Russian Federation "the minimum that will satisfy Washington will be a firm position, warning [Russia] that sanctions will remain in place if there are violations of the Minsk agreement, or if it is not implemented."

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054043-tusk-decision-on-extending-eu-sanctions-against-russia-to-be-made-in-june.html>

Russia in Donbas does whatever it likes, Ukraine limited by law – SBU adviser, 11.03.2015

"The [POW swap] process is very complicated because we represent the state, we abide by laws. We observe both national and international legislation. But the other side is not a subject of international law, and does not recognize these standards. Therefore, the swap of prisoners, hostages is rather complicated and time-consuming," SBU Chairman Adviser Markiyanyan Lubkivsky said.

According to him, international law and the Geneva Convention for the opposite side are something like 'rocket science.'

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054352-russia-in-donbas-does-whatever-it-likes-ukraine-limited-by-law-sbu-adviser.html>

Joint press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Phillip Breedlove, 11.03.2015

NATO SG Stoltenberg said on March 11 that NATO has "seen the withdrawal of some heavy weapons, but it's unclear to what destination." He also said: "We ... still see Russian presence and strong support for the separatists in eastern Ukraine."

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_118046.htm

U.S. blacklists more Ukrainian rebels, expands non-lethal aid, 11.03.2015

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The US announced \$75 million in non-lethal aid for Ukraine on Wednesday and placed sanctions on a handful of Ukrainian separatists, a Russian bank and others after accusing Russian-backed rebels of breaking a European-brokered ceasefire. The aid does not include the anti-tank, anti-air and other weapons requested by Ukraine and by lawmakers in both parties of the U.S. Congress who want a tougher response from President Barack Obama to claims by U.S. intelligence agencies of Russian tanks and artillery crossing into Ukraine.

Radios, unmanned aerial vehicles, counter-mortar radars, night vision devices, first aid kits, ambulances and other medical supplies are included in the aid package. About 200 unarmed Humvees and 30 with armor will also be delivered.

The announcement follows accusations by Ukraine and Western governments that Russia is sending troops and weapons to support separatists in eastern Ukraine despite a ceasefire deal reached Feb. 12 in Minsk. The Kremlin denies the accusations.

<https://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/u-send-more-non-lethal-aid-ukraine-u-144132576.html>

General designer of Su-25 says aircraft couldn't have shot down MH17, 11.03.2015

"The Su-25 could attack a Boeing at a height of three or four thousand meters, but it can't shoot down a plane flying at an altitude of 10,500 meters," he said.

According to Babak, he was engaged in the construction of this attack aircraft for about 30 years.

"Our team has designed this plane so that it can be used only at low and medium altitudes," he said.

"The aircraft can briefly rise to high altitude, but in order to destroy the Boeing, which at the time of the disaster broke apart in the air, there would have to have been heavy missiles on the Su-25," Babak said.

"Air-to-air missiles could only cause damage to the Malaysian aircraft, but they could not lead to what happened," he said.

"Many more factors indicate that the Boeing 777 was hit by a ground-to-air missile that was launched from a Buk missile system," Babak said.

"I believe that all allegations of the Su-25 involvement in the tragedy are an attempt to cover tracks. I can't explain it in any other way. We do not understand how a Su-25 could shoot down a Boeing," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1054085-general-designer-of-su-25-says-aircraft-couldnt-have-shot-down-mh17.html>

Statement by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde on Ukraine, 11.03.2015

Ms. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), issued the following statement today in Berlin, Germany:

"I am pleased to announce that the IMF Executive Board today approved an Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of SDR 12.348 billion (about \$17.5 billion, €15.5 billion) for Ukraine, based on a comprehensive economic reform program supported by the Fund as well as by additional resources from the international community. Building on the actions taken under the earlier stand-by arrangement, this new four-year extended arrangement will support immediate economic stabilization in Ukraine and a set of deep and wide-ranging policy reforms aimed at restoring robust growth over the medium term and improving living standards for the Ukrainian people.

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2015/pr15105.htm>

Sweden will support Ukraine on the path to reforms and the EU – the results of the meeting between President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Lofven, 11.03.2015

President Petro Poroshenko has held a meeting with Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven. In the course of the meeting, the parties have signed the Association Agreement in the sphere of development, under which Sweden allocates EUR 175 million in support of reforms in Ukraine and integration to the EU.

Following the meeting, the President has noted that the signature of the given Agreement was a continuation of Sweden's powerful assistance to Ukraine. The President has emphasized that Sweden was the firmest advocate of Ukraine's position in the European Union. "The entire Ukrainian nation and me, as President, are very grateful to you for this position," President said.

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32446.html>

Moscow Has Right to Place Nuclear Weapons in Crimea, 11.03.2015

MOSCOW (Sputnik) — Moscow has the right to place nuclear weapons in Crimea, but is not currently planning to do so, the head of the Department for Nonproliferation and Control of Arms of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mikhail Ulyanov said Wednesday.

"Obviously, Russia has the right to place nuclear arms on its territory, if it considers it necessary, in any region. I am not aware of any presence of nuclear weapons in Crimea, I do not know anything about plans of placing them there, but in principle we presume that we have this right, obviously, but Kiev, of course, believes differently," Ulyanov said at a press conference in Moscow.

<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150311/1019337061.html>

Budget decentralization should be completed by 2016 – PM, 12.03.2015

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk has said that the process of budget decentralization should be completed by the end of 2015.

Speaking in Kyiv on Thursday during the government's report on its first 100 days, he said that the first phase of budget decentralization was over.

"We hope that the constitutional commission will draw up a new wording of the Constitution, which will ensure additional authority and responsibility for the regions," he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/254664.html>

Kremlin says Ukraine moving too slowly to fulfill peace deal, 12.03.2015

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia accused Ukraine of dragging its feet on implementing last month's peace deal, citing a wide range of areas in which Kiev is allegedly failing to meet its obligations. President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told The Associated Press that Ukraine was failing in its pledge to declare an amnesty for fighters and to set the stage for local elections in the east. He also accused Ukrainian authorities of being reluctant to restore financial and social services to the east.

"Unfortunately, we witness unwillingness," Peskov said, "and we are concerned about that."

<http://news.yahoo.com/kremlin-says-ukraine-moving-too-slowly-fulfill-peace-185405827.html>

Russian opposition politician: Putin betting on internal destabilization of Ukraine, 12.03.2015

Russian President Vladimir Putin is counting on the internal destabilization of Ukraine, Russian opposition politician Vladimir Milov said.

"[Putin] is going to rely on internal destabilization, both socio-economic and political," he said.

"Of course, the Russian authorities are rubbing their hands at all of your economic difficulties. I think they will do a lot to add to them through hand wringing from Gazprom and through arm-twisting for the repayment of loans to Russia."

According to Milov, Russia will send emissaries who will try to destabilize the social and political situation in the country from inside Ukraine.

"Putin's strategy on the territories controlled by the separatists is to create a permanent source of tension, which can divert attention, resources, and will not allow there to be any successful reforms in the country. I think that he will have such tactics," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1054573-russian-opposition-politician-putin-betting-on-internal-destabilization-of-ukraine.html>

Ukraine to get \$5 bln in first tranche of IMF's loan, 12.03.2015

The first tranche Ukraine will get from its key donor, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), under a new four-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) will total \$5 billion, according to an IMF statement.

The approval of the EFF for Ukraine foresees the allocation of the first tranche worth \$5 billion, \$2.7 billion of which will be funneled into support for the country's budget, the IMF said.

The conditions and amounts of new tranches will be determined as long as Ukraine carries out reform.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1054315-ukraine-to-get-5-bln-in-first-tranche-of-imfs-loan.html>

Yatseniuk demands confiscation of \$1.4 bln on accounts of Yanukovych officials, 12.03.2015

Yatseniuk made the call while giving a public report from the government on the first 100 days of activity in Ukraine's parliament on Thursday.

"The government has arrested \$1.4 billion on accounts of Yanukovych's associates," he said.

"The arrest has lasted for six months. And we have appealed to the prosecuting authorities to immediately start confiscation of these assets."

Yatseniuk said the funds could be an additional resource for the economy and the state budget.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1054665-yatseniuk-demands-confiscation-of-14-bln-on-accounts-of-yanukovych-officials.html>

Europe tells Mogherini to draw up plans to counteract Russia propaganda, 12.03.2015

"The European Council stresses the need to challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns and invites the High Representative...to prepare by the June European Council an action plan on strategic communication in support of media freedom and EU values," the draft said.

It is expected that the document will be adopted at the EU summit scheduled for March 19-20.

The next meeting of European leaders will take place in June.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1054511-europe-tells-mogherini-to-draw-up-plans-to-counteract-russia-propaganda.html>

OSCE Mission says violations of ceasefire are decreasing, 12.03.2015

"Over the last week, observers of the OSCE mission witnessed a certain number of positive things in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions," Hug said.

"The mission observed the withdrawal of a large number of heavy weapons from the front line.

"We have also observed a decrease in the frequency of ceasefire violations with the use of such weapons. This shows that the second stage – the withdrawal of heavy weapons – stipulated in the package of measures signed in Minsk on February 12 is gradually implemented."

According to Hug, the assessments related to the third stage of the Minsk agreements, that is the verification of weapons withdrawal, are less positive.

"All parties know that heavy weapons should not only be withdrawn, but also remained withdrawn," Hug said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1054673-osce-mission-says-violations-of-ceasefire-are-decreasing.html>

Ukraine to get \$16.3 bln in international bailout package in 2015, incl. \$10 bln from IMF, 12.03.2015

Ukraine will be able to obtain about \$16.3 billion in bilateral and multilateral financing in 2015.

This includes \$10 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), according to IMF Country Report No. 15/69, available on the IMF's website.

In particular, financing from the European Union will total \$1.8 billion, while the U.S. government will provide \$2 billion.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1054832-ukraine-to-get-163-bln-in-international-bailout-package-in-2015-incl-10-bln-from-imf.html>

Poland says talks ongoing on supplies of weapons to Ukraine, 12.03.2015

"Such negotiations are underway. The Ministry of National Defense is often visited by the representatives of Ukrainian ministries and experts," Koziej said.

"Poland is considering the sale of weapons to Ukraine, as well as in some cases their provision for free," Koziej said.

"As of today, we're having intensive talks at different levels, but decisions will be made only after the issue is studied in detail by both parties," he said.

"We fully agree with the opinion that the stronger the Ukrainian army, the higher the chances of a de-escalation of the conflict," Koziej said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1054524-poland-says-talks-ongoing-on-supplies-of-weapons-to-ukraine.html>

OSCE Chairperson welcomes extension of Ukraine Mission mandate, calls for unfettered access, 12.03.2015

Today's decision by the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna to extend the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and allocate necessary resources confirms the support and commitment of all 57 participating States to implementing the Minsk agreements and to the Mission, said OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić.

"We must seize the momentum if we are to reach the goal which I am certain we all share, to see the end of hostilities, verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and boost national dialogue that leads to a normalised situation and better life for all those affected by the conflict," he said.

"It is crucial for all parties to ensure unfettered access to our monitors and to guarantee their security, which is the prerequisite for the SMM to implement its mandate on the ground," he added.

The decision extends the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission until 31 March 2016. It further allows for the number of SMM monitors to be increased from the currently approved level of 500 up to 1,000, as necessary, according to the situation and the needs on the ground.

<http://www.osce.org/cio/144786>

Ukraine ceasefire on 'thin ice': OSCE, 12.03.2015

The ceasefire in eastern Ukraine between Kiev's forces and pro-Russian rebels is largely being observed but is still on "thin ice," an OSCE monitor said Thursday, one month after both sides agreed to the truce.

"The ceasefire holds broadly along the long contact line" in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions, with crossfire continuing in some places but at a lower level, said Alexander Hug, deputy chief of the special monitoring mission the OSCE has dispatched to Ukraine.

The most critical locations were the village of Shyrokyne east of southeastern port of Mariupol and the areas surrounding the Donetsk airport, Hug said.

"In general it is positive that most of this fighting is being conducted with small arms and smaller calibre weapons and it's an indication that heavy weapons have actually been withdrawn and are not being used as often," he said in Kiev.

The OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) has been trying to monitor the pullback of large artillery but the mission was still being hindered by both sides, Hug said, and did not have full inventories of weapons nor full access to sites where they may be stored.

<http://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-ceasefire-thin-ice-osce>

Economic Development and Trade Ministry to cut 50% of employees this year, 12.03.2015

The number of Economic Development and Trade Ministry of Ukraine employees will be cut by half by the end of 2015, Minister of Economic Development and Trade Aivaras Abromavicius said during the public report on the government's 100 days of work in Kyiv on Thursday.

He said that 30% of the staff would be cut in a month and a half; another 20%— would be laid off by autumn.

Abromavicius also said that the most important task, deregulation, would be implemented simultaneously, saying it will allow business to "breathe" freely.

He said that the number of functions performed by his ministry would be reduced as well.

"247 functions is surely a nightmare," he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/254813.html>

Up to seven months needed to deploy peacekeepers in Ukraine – Foreign Minister Klimkin, 13.03.2015

"I've been to New York recently, talked to almost all the representatives of the UN Security Council's member states. There is general understanding that we should work on a peacekeeping option. The problem is that from six to seven months are needed to deploy the mission," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said.

The minister said Kyiv was mulling different options. "Among them are UN peacekeepers, an EU police mission," he said. At the same time, according to him, it is "more complicated politically" for the EU to send peacekeepers to Ukraine, as this mission should in any case be authorized by the United Nations.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254865.html>

U.S. to help reform Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office – U.S. Ambassador, 13.03.2015

The governments of Ukraine and the United States signed an agreement on assistance in law enforcement and criminal justice on Friday and the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation will aid the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office in reform, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt has said.

The point at issue will be a long-term support for the reform of law enforcement agencies in Ukraine, Pyatt said at a press conference after the signing of the agreement in Kyiv, an Interfax-Ukraine correspondent has reported.

According to Pyatt, the agreement covers \$26 million in financing from the U.S. government under the Agreement on Police Reform in Ukraine and long-term support by the United States of the Ukrainian people and the government of Ukraine in their work to implement the expectations of Maidan.

The ambassador said that document signed by him and Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov underscores the shared values of Ukraine and the United States.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255054.html>

EU extends validity of sanctions over action against Ukraine's territorial integrity, 13.03.2015

The Council has prolonged the application of EU restrictive measures targeting action against Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

The asset freeze and travel bans against 150 persons and 37 entities have been extended for a further 6 months, that is until 15 September 2015.

This decision gives legal effect to a political decision taken at the Foreign Affairs Council on 29 January 2015.

The legal acts are available in the EU Official Journal of 14 March 2015.

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/03/13-eu-extends-validity-sanctions-ukraine/>

McCain says Steinmeier 'in the Neville Chamberlain school of diplomacy' on Ukraine, 13.03.2015

"The foreign minister of Germany is the same guy that refuses - and his government - to enact any restrictions on the behaviour of Vladimir Putin, who is slaughtering Ukrainians as we speak," McCain said in Washington on Friday, according to German Deutsche Welle.

"He doesn't have any credibility in any way to me," McCain said.

McCain was responding to criticism from Steinmeier of a letter written by McCain and other 46 Republican senators.

According to the letter, which was sent to the Iranian leadership, the senators warned that without the ratification of the U.S. Congress a possible agreement on Tehran's nuclear program might be canceled after the end of Barack Obama's presidential term in 2017.

However, Steinmeier said that the letter of the Republicans could undermine the credibility of Tehran to six international mediators.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1055055-mccain-says-steinmeier-in-the-neville-chamberlain-school-of-diplomacy-on-ukraine.html>

Steinmeier calls for 'strategic patience' with Russia, 13.03.2015

"Despite the Ukrainian conflict, the West should make efforts to establish cooperative relations with Russia," he said.

However, Steinmeier said that this process could take "years or even decades."

At the same time, he stressed the particular importance of transatlantic cooperation between Europe and the United States.

In addition, Steinmeier reiterated Berlin's negative attitude to the possible supplies of weapons to Ukraine. He said that the proposals of some representatives of the U.S. administration to provide Kyiv with the defensive weapons could bring the conflict to a new level.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1055039-steinmeier-calls-for-strategic-patience-with-russia.html>

US insists on deployment of OSCE mission in occupied Crimea, 13.03.2015

"Ambassador Baer called upon Ukraine, Russia, and the Russia-backed separatists to ensure that the members of the Special Monitoring Mission have unfettered access throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, including access to Crimea, and to guarantee the safety and security of the monitors as they carry out their duties," the press service said in a statement.

It is emphasized that the United States reaffirms its firm commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity of its internationally recognized borders, and again called for the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055061-us-insists-on-deployment-of-osce-mission-in-occupied-crimea.html>

US Ambassador to Ukraine denies Obama's refusal to supply weapons to Ukraine, 13.03.2015

President Barack Obama has not made a final decision regarding the lethal weapons' supply to Ukraine, announced the US Ambassador to Ukraine, Jeffrey Payette.

"We do not exclude any support for Ukraine's defense and security sector. And statements that we, the President of my state has made any final decision on the issue, are not true," – reassured the Ambassador Payette.

<http://mw.ua/WORLD/us-ambassador-to-ukraine-denies-obama-s-refusal-to-supply-weapons-to-ukraine-1443.html>

Ukraine Govt Sees No Links Between 6 Former Regime Suicides, 13.03.2015

Ukraine's interior minister says he sees no links between a series of recent alleged suicides of officials who served during the regime of deposed President Viktor Yanukovich.

Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said Friday that any suggestion that the deaths were connected was "speculation."

In the most prominent case, a leading official with Yanukovich's now-defunct former ruling Party of Region, Mikhail Chechetov, in late February fell to his death from his 17-story apartment in Kiev. Police said they found a suicide note. Chechetov was facing criminal investigation for abuse of office.

Five other former Ukrainian government officials in the past two months have died in various circumstances that police have said were most likely suicides.

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/03/13/world/europe/ap-eu-ukraine-suicides.html?ref=world&_r=1

Slovak PM: Sanctions against Russia would not help Ukraine ceasefire, 13.03.2015

New or extended European Union sanctions against Russia would not help the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said on Friday, though he added he would not go against the bloc's consensus.

EU leaders are due to discuss sanctions on Russia, imposed over the Ukraine conflict, at a summit next week.

Some member states are pushing for a decision on extending sanctions due to expire in July.

A senior EU official said on Friday there was no unanimity yet on the issue.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/13/ukraine-crisis-sanctions-slovakia-idUSL5N0WF1SU20150313?feedType=RSS&feedName=rbssEnergyNews>

Deploying UN or EU peacekeepers in east Ukraine essential for successful OSCE monitoring –minister, 14.03.2015

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said on Friday that the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would be unable to conduct normal monitoring in Donbas without UN or European Union peacekeepers being deployed there.

At a meeting with the ambassadors of member countries of the Group of Seven and EU, Klimkin cited the mission as confirming it had been able to conduct unrestricted monitoring of Ukraine's implementation of its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255106.html>

Donbas situation gradually de-escalating – Poroshenko, 14.03.2015

"The fact that we have not had combat losses for several days now, with us having preserved the lives of the Ukrainian heroes, is a very bright attestation that a gradual de-escalation is beginning," Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko said.

"Today we can state, cautiously state, that a gradual de-escalation is taking place," he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255097.html>

Poroshenko threatens with lethal weapons, more sanctions in case of further aggression, 14.03.2015

President Petro Poroshenko is certain that the European Union, the United States and other countries will continue supporting Ukraine in its fight for sovereignty and territorial integrity, including with weapons, if need be.

"If a new wave of aggression begins against Ukraine, I can state with confidence that we will immediately get both lethal weapons and a new wave of sanctions against the aggressor. Our action will be tough and coordinated," the president said in an interview with the "1+1" television channel, his press office said on Friday evening.

Ukraine has contracts with several EU countries for supplies of weapons, including lethal ones, Poroshenko said. The EU has lifted its official embargo on arms supplies to Ukraine, he recalled.

He also called "pivotal" the U.S. president's decision to supply defensive weapons to Ukraine, including armored vehicles, tactical drones and counter-battery radar. These will raise the precision of the Ukrainian weapons, while thermal cameras and motion-sensing radars will help counter the enemy's reconnaissance and sabotage groups.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255091.html>

Poroshenko happy with results of fourth mobilization, 14.03.2015

"The fourth round of mobilization is the first mobilization campaign organized at an acceptably high level," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said.

According to him, unlike previous rounds of mobilization, the current one has considerably fewer dodgers, better materiel support and training.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1055576-poroshenko-happy-with-results-of-fourth-mobilization.html>

Peacekeepers in Donbas by no means alternative to Minsk process – Poroshenko, 14.03.2015

President of Ukraine has said that an intention to send international peacekeepers to the east of Ukraine by no means contradicts Minsk Deals.

"We don't view peacekeepers as an alternative to the OSCE, which today physically can't cope with its observation and monitoring mission," the president said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255096.html>

Ukraine to import lethal arms from EU – Poroshenko, 14.03.2015

Ukraine has signed contracts to import lethal weapons from the European Union, President Petro Poroshenko said in a television program on Friday evening.

"We've signed contracts for imports of weapons, including lethal, with 11 EU countries," Poroshenko told the 1+1 channel without naming any of those countries.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255105.html>

Ukraine's president says truce not working, urges more Russia sanctions – newspaper, 15.03.2015

Ukraine's president accused Russian-backed separatists in the east of failing to respect a ceasefire with Ukrainian troops and called for further sanctions on Russia in comments to a German newspaper to be published on Monday.

Attacks have become less frequent since the latest ceasefire came into force in mid-February, but both sides accuse each other of violations. Ukraine's military said last week that pro-Russian rebels were using the truce to amass heavy weapons.

An agreement signed in Minsk in September called with the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line.

"Ukraine has fulfilled every single point of the Minsk agreement. The ceasefire has been implemented immediately on our part, but the Russian fighters have done the exact opposite," Petro Poroshenko told the Bild newspaper.

"Every day, there is shooting from the Russian side, often more than 60 times a day. In total, the ceasefire has been broken 1,100 times," he said. "The truth is that the agreement is not working."

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/03/15/us-ukraine-crisis-ceasefire-idUKKBN0MBOOE20150315>

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055692-poroshenko-minsk-accords-dont-work-tougher-sanctions-needed.html>

Putin admits to personally orchestrating military seizure of Crimea, 15.03.2015

Comments made by President Putin in a new documentary about Crimea confirmed that the troops subordinate to the main intelligence directorate of the Russian General Staff had been sent to Crimea to disarm the Ukrainian military, Russian News Agency TASS reported.

Putin also confessed that he had personally orchestrated the annexation of the Black Sea peninsula – an order which the opposition argues, opens the way for a war crimes tribunal for military aggression. That's according to Ilya Yashin, a key Russian opposition figurehead and ally of murdered Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov.

In the documentary called 'Crimea. Homeward Bound,' Putin attempted to claim that the terms of the Black Sea fleet's lease in Sevastopol allowed for around 20,000 Russian troops to be deployed to the peninsula. However, there are likely to be suggestions that the terms of the lease are unlikely to cover the seizure of airports, government infrastructure and media outlets, as well as the blockade of Ukrainian army bases. Putin also declared that Russia's nuclear forces were fully operational, in case of any 'unfavorable' developments.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055699-putin-admits-to-personally-orchestrating-military-seizure-of-crimea.html>

China Premier says respects Ukraine integrity, won't be drawn on Crimea, 15.03.2015

"On the issue of Ukraine, China has adopted an objective and just position. We respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," Li told a news conference at the end of the annual meeting of parliament, adding that he had recently told this to Ukraine's president.

"At the same time, the Ukraine issue has added to the complexity of the geopolitical situation and has affected the process of the global economic recovery. We still hope that this issue can be resolved via dialogue, negotiations and consultations," Li added.

"As for Crimea, there are complicated contributing factors. We also hope that it can be resolved politically via dialogue and hope that neighbors can peacefully coexist," he said, when asked about China's position on who owns Crimea.

<http://news.yahoo.com/china-premier-says-respects-ukraine-integrity-wont-drawn-051226816.html>

Latvian foreign minister: "We knew or suspected – Crimea was planned", 15.03.2015

Latvia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics says Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent confession regarding Crimea has only confirmed what was known or suspected – the annexation of Crimea was planned in advance.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055708-latvian-foreign-minister-we-knew-or-suspected-crimea-was-planned.html>

European Parliament head: Putin wants to split Europe, 15.03.2015

Chairman of the European Parliament Martin Schulz said this in an interview with German weekly Die Zeit, Deutsche Welle reported.

"We have to by all means resist Putin's attempts to split the EU and exert influence within the European Union," he said.

He also mentioned that the unpredictability of the Russian side had increased.

According to Schulz, the EU's common policy in introducing sanctions against Moscow over the Donbas conflict is in fact a significant foreign policy success. "However, Russian propaganda among some Europeans seems to have been successful," he added. Schulz cited France's far-right National Front party as an example, which receives loans from Russian banks. He also mentioned "these or other prime ministers who more or less openly seek to be in Putin's good graces."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057122-european-parliament-head-putin-wants-to-split-europe.html>

STATEMENT BY JEN PSAKI, SPOKESPERSON, 16.03.2015

On this one year anniversary of the sham "referendum" in Crimea, held in clear violation of Ukrainian law and the Ukrainian constitution, the United States reiterates its condemnation of a vote that was not voluntary, transparent, or democratic. We do not, nor will we, recognize Russia's attempted annexation and call on President Putin to end his country's occupation of Crimea. A year ago, as covert Russian military forces took control of key government buildings and infrastructure, the population of Crimea was forced to go to the polls facing a false choice of either joining Russia or calling for Crimea's independence. Two days later, the Russian Federation attempted to annex sovereign Ukrainian territory, disrupting 70 years of international order and drawing the condemnation of free, democratic societies across the globe.

Over the last year, the human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated dramatically, with mounting repression of minority communities and faiths, in particular Crimean Tatars, and systematic denial of fundamental freedoms. Local residents have been detained, interrogated, and disappeared and NGOs and independent media have been driven out of the peninsula. These brutalities are unacceptable and we call on Russia to stop further abuses.

<http://ukraine.usembassy.gov/statements/psaki-crimea-03172015.html>

McCain: 'Peace through strength' shows way to stop Putin, 16.03.2015

"We show our strength, we can help Ukraine to protect itself, and we send NATO forces in the countries, which are located nearby - Poland, Romania, the Baltics, and others," McCain said. "And here we give a very clear message to Vladimir Putin - the price he will pay for the aggression is above the goals that he set," he said.

"Putin must understand who he is. He is an old KGB apparatus worker who, in his own words, wants to restore the Russian empire. And, first of all, he sees in Ukraine a key element, because Russia came from Kyiv," McCain said.

"While Ukraine carries out reforms, the current situation could end very quickly," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055872-mccain-peace-through-strength-shows-way-to-stop-putin.html>

Tusk: EU to be united against Russian aggression if France and Germany agree, 16.03.2015

"When we have a shared [opinion] of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande, we will have a real chance of reaching a common position among the 28 EU member states," Tusk said.

"My first task is to reach a compromise between Berlin and Paris. It is easier to achieve this than reach agreement between all 28 EU member states," Tusk said.

"I know that their recommendations will be accepted by Lithuania, as well as by Greece," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1055902-tusk-eu-to-be-united-against-russian-aggression-if-france-and-germany-agree.html>

Klimkin: About 180 Ukrainian soldiers still in militant captivity, 16.03.2015

"The militants of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics continue to hold 180 prisoners from the Ukrainian armed forces," Klimkin said.

"We gave them [back] all [of the militants held captive by the Ukrainian authorities] who had been 'cleared' and prepared for transfer in the framework of all legal procedures," he said.

"However, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry doesn't know the exact number of the prisoners," Klimkin said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055868-klimkin-about-180-ukrainian-soldiers-still-in-militant-captivity.html>

Polish Foreign Ministry: We can speak about 'frozen conflict' in Ukraine, not about tightening sanctions, 16.03.2015

According to Schetyna, over the last weeks nothing has happened that could cause there to be calls to tighten sanctions, Ukrainian newspaper Ukrainska Pravda has reported.

"Nothing has happened, so that we could talk about the intensification of sanctions. The last such a difficult situation was the attack on Mariupol," he said.

"Now it seems that the conflict is frozen, and we have to respond flexibly to this situation. It is not necessary to radicalize it," Schetyna said.

"For today, the EU countries have faced an issue of extending the existing sanctions, which is to be considered at the summit of the EU leaders this week," he said.

"The key to the extension of sanctions is a common position of all countries," Schetyna said.

"As for the resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, I think that we must look for new formats, in particular the Geneva one. I believe that U.S. participation would be effective," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055960-polish-foreign-ministry-we-can-speak-about-frozen-conflict-in-ukraine-not-about-tightening-sanctions.html>

McCain: Russia could attack Ukraine from Transnistria, 16.03.2015

"I'm very concerned that now that Putin has got Donetsk, the east of Ukraine and Mariupol could be soon his next target," the senator said.

When asked about the possibility of attack on Kharkiv and Odesa, McCain said, "If Vladimir Putin thinks that he will get over the Ukraine crisis easily, without a price, then he will try to attack Odesa from the separatist part of Republic of Moldova. Russia has 1,400 soldiers, a so-called peace-keeping force, in Transnistria. He has put incredible pressure on the Baltic states. And besides, he has often said that the biggest disaster of the twentieth century was the collapse of the Soviet Union. He wants to restore the Russian empire."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055905-mccain-russia-could-attack-ukraine-from-transnistria.html>

Press statement by the President following the first official visit to Germany, 16.03.2015

We have pretty intensive dialogues with Mrs. Chancellor. We have counted more than 60 phone conversations since my inauguration, more than 11 meetings. Today is my first official visit to Germany. Thank you for an amazing organization of the visit and increasingly useful, intensive and fruitful negotiations.

Never have Ukrainian-German relations been at such a high level as now. Never have we felt such a powerful and firm support from Germany and the entire EU.

I would like to particularly underline the crucial role of the Federal Chancellor and President of France Francois Hollande in the signature of the Minsk agreements of September 5, Memorandum of September 19 and Minsk agreements of February 12 achieved in exhausting 17-hour negotiations.

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32487.html>

Supplying lethal weapons to Ukraine 'a decision for NATO members', 16.03.2015

"NATO is not deciding whether to provide or not to provide weapons to Ukraine - such a decision is made exclusively by NATO member countries within the framework of their own defense or foreign policies," Chumak said.

"NATO can provide these countries with analytical and intelligence information, but NATO in no case makes [such] a decision as a collective body," Chumak said.

"Without a doubt, our conversation concerned, in principle, that there were relevant recommendations of NATO to member countries on how to provide supplies to Ukraine, including those of lethal weapons," according to the deputy.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056029-supplying-lethal-weapons-to-ukraine-a-decision-for-nato-members.html>

Poroshenko says ceasefire not working, calls for new Russia sanctions, 16.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said in an interview with German newspaper Bild that the current ceasefire agreement signed in Minsk this February is "not working" and urged the West to impose more sanctions on Russia, adding that the current ceasefire has been broken 1,100 times by the Russian-backed militants.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056085-poroshenko-says-ceasefire-not-working-calls-for-new-russia-sanctions-video.html>

Yatseniuk says army should be put on full combat alert, 16.03.2015

Yatseniuk was speaking during a meeting of the Government Commission for Emergency Situations.

"The situation is difficult. The Russian terrorists and Russia are not going to retreat at this stage, and it requires from all of us responsibility and discipline," Yatseniuk said.

The prime minister has also said reports should be submitted to the government on officials responsible for failing to fulfil the tasks related to the civil protection of citizens, and on strengthening of measures to fight against the terrorist threat.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056065-yatseniuk-says-army-should-be-put-on-full-combat-alert.html>

Kiev hopes EU to say more sanctions if Russia doesn't stick to peace deal, 16.03.2015

BERLIN, March 16 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on Monday that he wanted European Union leaders to make clear at a summit this week that they would impose further sanctions against Russia if Moscow does not implement the Minsk agreement.

"If the commitments are not fulfilled, and I really hope that on (March) 19th at the summit, that it will be said just as clearly, then the sanctions will continue to be imposed and will be stepped up," he said at a joint news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin.

(Reporting by Michelle Martin and Stephen Brown; Editing by Michael Nienaber)

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2997178/Kiev-hopes-EU-say-sanctions-Russia-doesnt-stick-peace-deal.html>

Kiev uses idea of peacekeepers to divert attention from implementation of Minsk agreements, 16.03.2015

Ukraine is raising the topic of deploying peacekeepers in south-eastern Ukraine to divert attention from the implementation of the Minsk agreements, Russian State Secretary and Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin told TASS on Monday.

"Peacekeepers is an absolutely different subject invented to divert attention from the clear and honest implementation of liabilities Kiev undertook under the Minsk agreements," he said.

The geographical borders of Donbas districts to fall under the law on Donbas' special status were clearly defined in the Minsk agreements of February 12, Karasin went on to say.

"We continue to insist on Kiev's fulfilling the Minsk agreements of February 12," he said. "They clearly define the geographic parameters of the districts in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are covered to the law on Donbas' special status."

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/783145>

Crimea leader says it will never again be part of Ukraine, 16.03.2015

Sergei Aksyonov said the annexation of the peninsula by Russia one year ago had been a "democratic act".

In a pre-recorded interview which aired on Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he had been ready to put nuclear weapons on standby at the time.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31901966>

Putin admits sending Russian troops to seize Crimea and mulling nuke deployment, 16.03.2015

In a three hour long documentary "Crimea – the Way Back Home" Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed plans to put Russia's nuclear forces "on alert" during the takeover of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula last February.

Ukrainian officials and Russia's opposition have called for the feature, which aired on Russian state TV this Sunday, as evidence in a war crimes tribunal, calling for a trial against Putin for military aggression, Ukraine Today reports.

Besides admitting being ready to use nuclear weapons had the West interfered in the Kremlin's operation, Putin also said he had deployed Russian Special Forces, marines and paratroops to block and disarm the Ukrainian military in Crimea at the time.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056098-putin-admits-sending-russian-troops-to-seize-crimea-and-mulling-nuke-deployment-video.html>

Ukrainian army receives night vision devices worth \$226,000 from Canada, 17.03.2015

"[The aid comprises] 60 night vision devices. The total value of the goods is \$226,890,"

Mazepa said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056352-ukrainian-army-receives-night-vision-devices-worth-226000-from-canada.html>

Latvia to strengthen security on border with Russia, 17.03.2015

"Within four years, we are planning to establish on the eastern border a border strip 12 meters wide, equipped with modern security systems. It will improve the response time of Latvian border guards," Latvian Interior Minister Rihards Kozlovskis said.

"In addition, Latvia needs a new project to fight with the growing number of illegal border crossing. Investment of about EUR 15 million is required to implement this initiative of the Latvian authorities," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1056343-latvia-to-strengthen-security-on-border-with-russia.html>

US State Department: Putin admits Russian military intervention in Crimea, 17.03.2015

"A year ago, President Putin announced to the world that the Russian armed forces did not intervene in the situation in the Crimea. Today, he admits to the whole world that the Russian troops actually intervened - and these are his own his own words," Psaki said.

"I think that the Russian Federation has admitted to the whole world not only its military intervention, but also that they were ready to take more aggressive actions," Psaki said, commenting on Vladimir Putin's words that he was ready to place Russia's nuclear forces on alert in March 2014.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1056327-us-state-department-putin-admits-russian-military-intervention-in-crimea.html>

Wałęsa: Russia uses brute force, while West plays political games, 17.03.2015

"Putin, Russia, broke the principles on which Europe stands - freedom, treaties, and agreements. If something breaks down, only force can be used," Wałęsa said.

"More and more people realize that the Russians can't be allowed to take such actions," he said.

"The West should help Ukraine in the fight against Russian aggression, including with the supplies of weapons to defeat the 'little green men,' who are breaking the country," he said. According to Wałęsa, Russia is using brute force in Ukraine, while the West is trying to play some kind of political game.

"How can we play and win, if Putin is engaged in boxing, and we play chess?" he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1056397-wasa-russia-uses-brute-force-while-west-plays-political-games.html>

Romania supports sanctions against Russia until full implementation of Minsk agreements, 17.03.2015

"During our talks we emphasized the importance of the immediate and unconditional implementation of the package of Minsk agreements reached on February 12. The package has to be implemented fully, immediately and unconditionally," Iohannis said.

"Romania's position is to facilitate the continuation of the sanctions regime of the European Union against the Russian Federation until the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, and if the situation in the region continues to deteriorate," he said.

According to Iohannis, Ukraine has found strong partners, represented by the EU member states that are committed to the principles of international law and treaties that were violated with the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056476-romania-supports-sanctions-against-russia-until-full-implementation-of-minsk-agreements.html>

PACE says no 'civil war' in Ukraine, but Russian involvement, 17.03.2015

"It is absolutely clear that there is no civil war in the eastern regions of Ukraine. [There are] no religious or ethnic reasons for the conflict, as in other parts of the world," according to the information note prepared based on the results of her visit to Ukraine on February 15-18, 2015, Ukrainian newspaper Zerkalo Nedely has reported.

Zelienkova stressed that a number of people she spoke with said they believed there was a war going on between Russia and Ukraine.

"Russia's participation is not limited to the supply of heavy weapons and fighters (on a "voluntary" basis or with help of those deemed as laid-off or gone on vacation, or in the form of a regular army), but is also represented in the command structure and political decision-making process," Zelienkova said in her report.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056576-pace-says-no-civil-war-in-ukraine-but-russian-involvement.html>

Foreign Ministry: Over 400 Ukrainian enterprises illegally 'nationalized' in Crimea, 17.03.2015

"Russia has been plundering Ukraine in a targeted way. More than 400 Ukrainian enterprises have been illegally nationalized. The adventurist and criminal policy of the occupation authorities is leading Crimea towards economic, social and environmental catastrophe," the statement reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056550-foreign-affairs-ministry-over-400-ukrainian-enterprises-illegally-nationalized-in-crimea.html>

Klimkin: EU slow on visa-free regime with Ukraine because of war in Donbas, 17.03.2015

According to Klimkin, Ukraine is moving "very well" along its schedule of reforms.

"We started to issue biometric passports, and we have all the necessary systems and databases," said Klimkin.

"But what bothers European capitals? Some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions are controlled by the Russian-backed militants. The EU is afraid that they will also be able to enjoy the visa-free regime. So the question is not how successful we are implementing reforms."

Klimkin also said that the EU had concerns about security.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056443-klimkin-eu-slow-on-visa-free-regime-with-ukraine-because-of-war-in-donbas.html>

Putin claims of Polish training of Ukrainian nationalists 'absurd propaganda', 17.03.2015

Polish Foreign Minister Grzegorz Schetyna has dismissed as absurd claims made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in a Russian documentary that Poland and Lithuania trained Ukrainian protesters with support from the United States.

Schetyna compared the film, "Crimea: Path to the Motherland," which covered the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea and the Euromaidan events, to Soviet propaganda from the 1950s and 1960s, Ukraine Today reports.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk has called for the film to be sent to the International Criminal Court in The Hague as evidence of an international crime, as the Russian president admitted in it to planning to annex the peninsula even before Russia invaded Crimea with its troops and organized a sham referendum on joining it to Russia.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056562-putin-claims-of-polish-training-of-ukrainian-nationalists-absurd-propaganda-video.html>

Top U.S. General in Europe: Arming Ukraine 'Isn't a Strategy', 17.03.2015

The top U.S. Army commander in Europe questioned whether Washington should provide weaponry to Ukraine to help in its fight against Russian-backed separatists, a proposal gaining increasing support among American officials alarmed by the rebels' ongoing gains in eastern Ukraine.

Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges conceded to reporters Tuesday that arming Ukraine could help its fragile pro-Western government on the battlefield, at least in the short term. But he said that wouldn't be enough to fundamentally ensure that Ukraine doesn't lose more territory to Russia in the wake of Moscow's annexation of Crimea last year.

Instead, the general said Washington and its allies should use diplomatic means to protect Ukraine's sovereignty, and ensure that the NATO alliance doesn't splinter, while at the same time leaving Russia a path to eventually rejoining the international community.

"Providing weapons is not a strategy," Hodges said. "There are great arguments for giving weapons to them to help raise the cost for the Russians. I think that is a valid argument. But saying that's a valid argument is different from saying that this ought to be the policy."

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/17/top-u-s-general-in-europe-arming-ukraine-isnt-a-strategy/>

British experts: Russia must fulfill four conditions for lifting of sanctions, 17.03.2015

First of all, Russia should do everything possible to allow the Ukrainian authorities to regain full control over the country's borders. It also must withdraw all illegal armed groups and weapons from Ukraine, including its military and equipment. These processes must take place under international supervision.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056538-british-experts-russia-must-fulfill-four-conditions-for-lifting-of-sanctions.html>

Ukraine to file case against Russia with Hague tribunal over aggression, Crimea annexation – PM, 18.03.2015

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk has said that the findings of Kyiv Institute of Forensic Examinations indicate that the statements of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Crimea contain clear signs of the violation of international law.

"At the government's request, the Justice Ministry turned to Kyiv Institute of Forensic Examinations. I have been informed that yesterday the Forensic Examinations Institute made conclusions regarding the statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu concerning the annexation of Crimea. According to the institute's findings, such statements contain clear signs of violation of international law – in particular the issue of direct orders regarding the annexation of Crimea and carrying out the military intervention against Ukraine," the prime minister said while opening a meeting of the cabinet in Kyiv on Wednesday.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255717.html>

Kopacz: Putin trying to influence EU by flexing Russia's military muscles, 18.03.2015

"Russia is making such gestures on the eve of the next EU summit on March 19-20 to get a lever of influence on the decisions of the European Council on sanctions," Kopacz said.

"We're observing increased activity in the Baltic Sea and in the airspace above it, but there is no reason yet to sound the alarm," Kopacz said.

As reported earlier, the Russian Iskander tactical mobile ballistic missile systems were redeployed to Kaliningrad region during of a sudden check of a combat readiness that began on March 16 on the orders of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1056832-kopacz-putin-trying-to-influence-eu-by-flexing-russias-military-muscles.html>

Minister Nicholson Announces Support for Ukrainian Democracy, 18.03.2015

The Honourable Rob Nicholson, P.C., Q.C., M.P. for Niagara Falls, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Honourable Christian Paradis, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, announced today three initiatives to support Ukraine's efforts in building a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for its people.

Canada has been a global leader in supporting the ongoing democratic and economic transition in Ukraine through a broad range of projects that support free and fair elections, decentralization, free media, religious freedom, the rule of law and economic growth.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=952259>

Budget of Council of Europe's Action Plan for Ukraine is EUR 45 mln – Klimkin, 18.03.2015

Speaking at the presentation of the plan in Kyiv on Wednesday, Klimkin described the document as "the best milestone, the best logic for the next three years of reform in Ukraine." According to him, the document envisages the "logic of the reforms" in Ukraine, supported by the Council of Europe. "So it is our common responsibility – not only to present the plan, but to report that it has been fulfilled and over-fulfilled," Klimkin said.

"Achieving these ambitious goals requires considerable resources. Therefore, taking this opportunity I'd like to thank all those who have worked on the content of this ambitious plan, which should become truly unprecedented – this is about EUR 45 million," he added.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255677.html>

Almost 33% of debris from Malaysian Boeing shows signs of missile strike, 18.03.2015

A third of the wreckage of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 shows signs of the plane being hit by a powerful ground-to-air missile, with counter-intelligence data indicating that the weapon used came from Russia, Chief of the Main Investigation Department of the Security Service of Ukraine Vasyliy Vovk said at a briefing in Kyiv on Wednesday.

He also said numerous Web pages on the Internet examined by investigators have provided valuable information about the incident.

"Based on the counterintelligence data, the weapon [used to shot down the aircraft] was transported from the Russian Federation," Vovk said.

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was a scheduled international passenger flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur that crashed on July 17, 2014, allegedly after being shot down by a Buk anti-aircraft missile system, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew on board.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1056956-almost-33-of-debris-from-malaysian-boeing-shows-signs-of-missile-strike.html>

First definite proof: MH17 plane downed by BUK missile, 19.03.2015

This is proven by a forensic investigation into ammunition fragments from debris of the airplane, ordered by Dutch RTL News.

An RTL correspondent who took with him some fragments of the weapon from the crash site sent them for examination. Out of the seven fragments examined by independent experts from Warsaw, London and Munich, four were fragments of the plane and three were remains of a BUK missile, Ukraine's TSN news program reported.

"This possibility [that a BUK missile brought down MH17] was considered for some time, but as of today there is physical evidence of the murder weapon," RTL wrote on Thursday.

"For the first time there is evidence that flight MH17 was taken down by a missile. This is proven by a forensic investigation into ammunition fragments from debris of the airplane, ordered by RTL News," the investigative article said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057679-first-definite-proof-mh17-plane-downed-by-buk-missile.html>

<http://www.rferl.org/content/dutch-experts-visit-mh17-ukraine-crash-site/26912046.html>

Poroshenko expects EU to grant visa-free access to Ukrainians at Riga summit in May, 19.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko expects the European Union to make a decision on granting visa-free access to the EU to Ukrainian citizens at an Eastern Partnership summit in Riga in May, so that it could be put into practice by the end of 2015.

"I would like to discuss the Eastern Partnership's Riga summit to be held on May 21-22 with the European commissioner. It is extremely important to us, and our main expectation from the summit is a positive political decision of the EU, opening opportunities to us for the practical and technical introduction of visa-free regulations for Ukrainian citizens as early as by the end of this year," Poroshenko told journalists before negotiations with EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn in Kyiv.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/251580.html>

UK MILITARY TRAINERS IN UKRAINE FOR MEDICAL, TACTICAL DRILLS, 19.03.2015

Around 30 British military personnel have arrived in Ukraine to provide medical and tactical training to the country's troops, officials said Thursday.

Britain's defense ministry said it aims to boost Ukrainian armed forces' defensive capability in their armed campaign against Russian-backed separatists in the east.

The fragile cease-fire in place since mid-February has largely held, although sporadic small arms clashes continue to be reported daily. Separatist leaders have warned they could abandon the truce over what they say is Ukraine's failure to live up to a guarantee to grant autonomy to eastern regions.

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU_UKRAINE?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255902.html>

Obama and Merkel agree not to weaken sanctions against Russia, 19.03.2015

"The leaders of both countries agreed on the need for the full and immediate implementation of three Minsk documents in order to achieve a strong and peaceful resolution of the conflict," the report says.

At the same time, Obama and Merkel confirmed that they have the same position.

"If Russia does not fulfill its obligations under the Minsk agreements, the sanctions imposed on it will not be eased," the report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057320-obama-and-merkel-agree-not-to-weaken-sanctions-against-russia.html>

Canada to allocate CAD 7 mln for reforms in Ukraine, 19.03.2015

"Canadian Foreign Minister Rob Nicholson has announced another initiative of the Canadian government to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future of the Ukrainian people," the report says.

"In particular, he announced the allocation of funding for three projects totaling CAD 7.1 million," the report reads.

According to the report, a total of CAD 1.2 million will be allocated to the OSCE to support the organization and to coordinate the electoral process in Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057324-canada-to-allocate-cad-7-mln-for-reforms-in-ukraine.html>

Ukraine 'has chance' to get visa-free regime with EU in May, 19.03.2015

"Ukraine and Georgia have a chance to sign a visa-free agreement with the European Union by May," the report says.

However, both countries must first meet several requirements of Brussels.

As Reuters reported earlier, the German government slightly cooled the expectations of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko that Ukraine would receive a visa-free regime with the European Union at a summit of EU countries with its eastern partner countries in mid-May in Riga.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057329-ukraine-has-chance-to-get-visa-free-regime-with-eu-in-may.html>

EU likely to keep Russia sanctions after Merkel weighs in, 19.03.2015

European Union leaders look likely to keep economic sanctions on Russia in place until a Ukraine ceasefire deal is fully working, after German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Thursday it would be wrong to ease pressure on Moscow prematurely.

EU governments have until now been divided on whether to act now to renew those sanctions, which expire in July.

Merkel's comments suggest Germany will strongly encourage leaders meeting at a Brussels summit later on Thursday to commit Europe to maintaining sanctions until Russia meets the terms of the deal it struck last month with Kiev to lay down arms.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/19/ukraine-crisis-eu-idUSL6N0WL2FO20150319?feedType=RSS&feedName=rbssEnergyNews>

Kiev's request of peacekeeping mission contradicts Minsk deal — Russian UN envoy, 19.03.2015

Recently repeated Kiev's statements concerning the introduction of an international peacekeeping mission in the east of Ukraine contradict Minsk agreements on the conflict settlement, Russian UN envoy Vitaly Churkin said.

"How do the peacekeeping talks, which had been underway in Kiev over the past few weeks, correlate with the Minsk agreements as of February 12?" Churkin said on air of Russia's LifeNews television channel. "What was the initial concern?"

<http://tass.ru/en/world/783746>

Biden: US military to train Ukraine's National Guard soldiers soon, 19.03.2015

Speaking by phone with Poroshenko, Biden said U.S. President Barack Obama had decided to send U.S. servicemen to conduct the training of 780 Ukrainian soldiers of the Ukrainian National Guard in the near future.

The Vice President also said that a first shipment of U.S. military vehicles, which Washington is sending to enhance the country's defense, would arrive in Ukraine in late March.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057334-biden-us-military-to-train-ukraines-national-guard-soldiers-soon.html>

Deployment of Russian missiles in Crimea risks large-scale conflict in Black Sea region, says Poroshenko, 19.03.2015

"[Crimea] has become a military base, and as I understand it, Russian President [Vladimir Putin] himself said that they have placed there missiles that can carry nuclear weapons," Poroshenko said. Another problem from Crimea is the humanitarian situation on the ground "I think that here we are not [just] talking about Ukraine's independence or the sovereignty of Ukraine over Crimea. This has significantly increased the risk of a full-scale conflict in the Black Sea region.

"[That is] because these missiles have a range of 500 kilometers and could easily reach the territory of several NATO member countries, and there should be some kind of reaction [from NATO]."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057388-deployment-of-russian-missiles-in-crimea-risks-large-scale-conflict-in-black-sea-region-says-poroshenko.html>

Russia uses snap drills to increase forces in Crimea and Kaliningrad, 19.03.2015

"In accordance with the schedule of the military exercises carried out in the framework of a snap inspection of the combat readiness of the Russian armed forces, we planned to strengthen our groups of troops in the Crimean peninsula and the Kaliningrad special district," General of the National Control Defense Centre of the Russian Federation, Major-General Yevgeniy Sokolov said.

According to Sokolov, ten aircraft will be redeployed to Crimea, and the Iskander tactical mobile ballistic missile system will be sent to Kaliningrad region.

"A total of 43 ships and six submarines are now involved in the exercises, while 144 combat aircraft and helicopters are located at forward airfields," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057493-russia-uses-snap-drills-to-increase-forces-in-crimea-and-kaliningrad.html>

Polish President: EU Council to 'pave way' for new sanctions against Russia, 19.03.2015

"I think there are high chances of keeping the sanctions," he said, commenting on the possible decisions of the EU Council meeting on March 19-20.

"There will be no decision to impose new sanctions against Russia at this meeting. The EU Council will rather 'pave the way' for them," Komorowski said.

The issue of sanctions will depend on the Ukrainian-Russian relations development.

"If Russia rejects the [kind of] triumphalism it demonstrated yesterday during the 'Festival of Joy' in honor of its annexation of the Crimea and other parts of Ukraine, and if it strives for peace, the EU Council will probably take other decisions, in a different atmosphere. But today, I think, a decision to keep the policy of sanctions at this level is very likely," Komorowski said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057364-polish-president-eu-council-to-pave-way-for-new-sanctions-against-russia.html>

Peskov: Crimean Tatars have same rights as other Crimeans, 19.03.2015

"There is no problem of the Crimean Tatars... There is no division of the inhabitants of the Crimea between the Tatars and non-Tatars. They all have the same rights," he said.

"And if they have any problems with the economic life, banking institutions or others, these are the same problems that all the inhabitants of the peninsula face. And all these issues were discussed today at a meeting," Peskov said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1057341-peskov-crimean-tatars-have-same-rights-as-other-crimeans.html>

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry worried about xenophobia, extremism in Russia, 19.03.2015

"Anti-Ukrainian sentiments that are actively fueled by Russian mass media have become everyday realities of Russian life. The spread of such sentiments is a threat to personal safety of Ukrainians and, in some cases, leads to tragic consequences, for example, a brutal murder of Ukrainian citizen Roman Muzychenko by a group of young nationalists in Moscow region on February 14, 2015," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry demands that the Russian side immediately conduct a thorough investigation of this crime, identify and punish those responsible for the murder of the Ukrainian citizen.

The ministry says it also expects that the Russian side will take comprehensive measures to prevent any future acts of intolerance for Ukrainians and other ethnic groups based on nationality."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057719-ukraines-foreign-ministry-worried-about-xenophobia-extremism-in-russia.html>

Post-Soviet security bloc ready to send peacekeepers to Ukraine, 19.03.2015

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is ready to send its peacekeepers to Ukraine if necessary decisions are passed, CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha said. "We have peacekeeping potential. Our peacekeeping forces regularly undergo corresponding training. In case the United Nations passes a decision to this effect, we are ready to commission concrete units, Belarus' BELTA news agency quoted him as saying. He noted that peace keeping missions of any of CSTO member countries depended on the decision of the CSTO Collective Security Council. "But only when it rules it expedient," he said.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/783808>

NATO advisers are already in Ukraine, 20.03.2015

There are 8 NATO advisers working in Ukraine as of today, reports the Director of the NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine Marcin Kozhiel.

"Allies have already sent an expert advisory group, composed of high-class professionals, to work on various issues in Ukraine. Their role in Ukraine is to help the Ukrainian government, Defense Ministry, Ukrainian Armed Forces and other security sector institutions to reform the Ukrainian defense sector based on Euro-Atlantic standards," – announced Kozhiel.

http://mw.ua/UKRAINE/nato-advisers-are-already-in-ukraine-1510_.html

UN stresses importance of monitoring human rights in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, 20.03.2015

The participants in the UN Security Council meeting on Crimea on Thursday discussed the issues of human rights in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, as well as the need for international monitoring of the situation in the occupied regions.

Permanent representative of Lithuania to the United Nations, ambassador Raimonda Murmokaite said that to an Ukrinform correspondent after the meeting.

"Today, we stressed the importance to continue focusing on human rights violations in Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine, controlled by illegal militants" the diplomat said.

She noted that emphasis had also been put on the "need for unfettered access of international monitors to the territory of Crimea and the areas, occupied by militants, to continue monitoring the situation on the ground."

The delegations of Russia, China, Angola and Venezuela were not present at the meeting.

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/un_stresses_importance_of_monitoring_human_rights_in_crimea_eastern_ukraine_329944

Tusk: Russian sanctions to remain until Minsk accords fully implemented, 20.03.2015

"This evening we discussed Ukraine and Russia. Leaders decided to align our sanctions regime to the implementation of the Minsk agreements brokered by [German] Chancellor Merkel and [French] President Hollande. The European Council agreed that the duration of economic sanctions will be clearly linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, bearing in mind that this is only foreseen by the end of 2015," Tusk said.

"Additionally, the European Council stands ready to take further decisions if necessary," he said.

"We also stress the need to challenge Russia's ongoing campaign of public disinformation about the conflict in Ukraine. The High Representative will prepare an action plan on strategic communication for the June European Council," he said.

"In the meantime, the European Union stands ready to support the ceasefire process and to respond positively to progress made. And we will continue to support Ukraine's internal reform program, including financially," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057733-tusk-russian-sanctions-to-remain-until-minsk-accords-fully-implemented.html>

<http://www.rferl.org/content/european-union-ukraine-russia-sanctions-brussels-summit/26910898.html>

Psaki: Russian military exercises in Crimea put brakes on further diplomacy, 20.03.2015

"Any Russian military exercises or deployment of weapons in the Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, undermine the peaceful diplomatic resolution of the crisis, which was initiated by Russia, as well as the continued occupation of the peninsula," U.S. State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said.

As reported earlier, Russia began military exercises from the Baltic Sea to Sakhalin. On March 16, an unscheduled inspection of the combat readiness began for the Northern Fleet.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057847-psaki-russian-military-exercises-in-crimea-put-brakes-on-further-diplomacy.html>

Russia and three other members of UN Security Council boycott discussion of human rights in Crimea, 20.03.2015

The meeting was held at the initiative of Lithuania in the so-called "Arria formula" that involves not only the members of the Security Council, but also the representatives of other agencies and organizations, according to Russian news agency TASS.

Russia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations announced before the meeting that Russia would not participate in it, describing the meeting as "counter-productive and provocative, [and] not within the purview of the Security Council."

"Russia has always been very fast with criticism of Ukraine, accusing it of violating human rights, but, at the same time, Russia itself completely ignores human rights violations under its control or management," Lithuania's permanent representative to the UN Raimonda Murmokaitė told journalists.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057863-russia-and-three-other-members-of-un-security-council-boycott-discussion-of-human-rights-in-crimea.html>

Turkey to further defend Crimean Tatars' rights in international arena – Erdogan, 20.03.2015

The Turkish president announced this at a joint press conference with his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv on Friday, an UNIAN correspondent reported. Erdogan expressed hope that Ukraine would also continue to support and safeguard the rights of all ethnic and religious groups, including the Crimean Tatars.

"We have closely been monitoring the situation around the Crimean Tatars, who have been under constant pressure for a year already. And we will continue to include our brothers' problems in the agenda of both bilateral relations and any other international platform," Erdogan said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058157-turkey-to-further-defend-crimean-tatars-rights-in-international-arena-erdogan.html>

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32518.html>

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32517.html>

U.S. to review arming Ukraine if new acts of violence in Donbas, 20.03.2015

Nuland says that U.S. President Barack Obama hasn't decided on arms supplies to Ukraine yet.

According to her, the United States is monitoring the situation on the ground and is working to achieve the best result – the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. If this does not happen and there is a new outbreak of violence, the U.S. will change its position.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058174-us-to-review-arming-ukraine-if-new-acts-of-violence-in-donbas.html>

Stoltenberg: Ukraine's bid for NATO membership, if submitted, to be processed in standard way, 20.03.2015

According to him, it's up to Ukraine to decide on NATO membership. If Ukraine submits its application, it will be processed the way any other country's bid is handled, Russian Federal Information and Analytical Agency Rosbalt reported with reference to Stoltenberg.

Responding to questions from Forum attendees, Stoltenberg said he saw no contradiction between the "strengthening of collective defense" of NATO member countries and their "desire to restore constructive and predictable relations with Russia."

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058193-stoltenberg-ukraines-bid-for-nato-membership-if-submitted-to-be-processed-in-standard-way.html>

Putin getting ready for new large-scale advance – Turchynov, 20.03.2015

This was announced by Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council Oleksandr Turchynov at an official ceremony of awarding officers and men from the Kulchytsky volunteer battalion on the occasion of the its 1st anniversary, an UNIAN correspondent reported.

"Firing [in eastern Ukraine] has significantly reduced, but it continues. And we're well aware that the enemy hasn't stopped – the enemy is getting prepared for new aggression. For the first time since the Minsk agreement was signed, those on the other side in the past 24 hours started moving their multiple rocket launcher systems forward. We know that there isn't much time, that Putin is getting ready for a new large-scale military operation. And that is why our task is not to waste either a day or an hour when strengthening our army, the National Guard, and building a strong line of defense," Turchynov said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058202-putin-getting-ready-for-new-large-scale-advance-turchynov.html>

Moscow Will Not Vote on UN Peacekeepers to Ukraine at UNSC – Lavrov, 21.03.2015

Moscow will abstain from voting in the UN Security Council on the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

On Tuesday, the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada) approved Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's proposal to appeal to the UN Security Council and the Council of the European Union for an international operation to maintain peace and security in Ukraine, where Kiev launched a military operation against independence supporters in April, 2014.

"We will not even vote," Lavrov said on Saturday, in an interview broadcast on Russia's Rossiya-1 television channel.

<http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150321/1019814946.html>

Pyatt: Situation with change of Ukrtransnafta head should be resolved in accordance with law, 21.03.2015

The situation with changing the head of PJSC Ukrtransnafta should be resolved strictly in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt considers.

"It is important to resolve this situation in accordance with Ukrainian law and Ukrainian justice," he said on Radio Vesti.

According to the ambassador, he expressed his position in a conversation with Head of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Ihor Kolomoisky, who became one of the parties to the conflict.

"He understands, like most of the political leaders of Ukraine, that the circumstances and the environment in Ukraine have changed. And the law of the jungle that existed under Yanukovich is a recipe for disaster and tragedy for Ukraine ... It is not suitable for Ukrainian realities," Pyatt said.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/pyatt-situation-with-change-of-ukrtransnafta-head-should-be-resolved-in-accordance-with-law-384077.html>

Mogherini: EU to review Minsk accords implementation in July, 21.03.2015

"Sanctions are related to this, because we have decided yesterday night that the lifting of the sanctions or keeping the sanctions will be linked only to the full implementation of the Minsk agreement. So the decision of the heads of state and government is that in the coming months, as you know, we don't have to take decisions these days because the sanctions we have in place are expiring at the end of July. Before the end of July we will make an assessment of where we are with the implementation," she said at the Brussels Forum.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058336-mogherini-eu-to-review-minsk-accords-implementation-in-july.html>

Russia wants proof of its military presence in Ukraine, 21.03.2015

Chairman of RF Council Committee on International Affairs Konstantin Kosachev says that Russia asks Ukraine to demonstrate proof of Russian military presence in Ukraine.

He announced this at the Brussels Forum, an UNIAN special correspondent reported.

"You would remember how Mr. [Ukrainian President Petro] Poroshenko presented five or six passports, Russian passports, for the audience. The same day, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs sent an official request to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine: Please, give us any details, names, numbers, copies, anything. Until now, there is no answer. So everybody believes that that was evidence, but that was not evidence," he said.

"Same goes for very many other reports delivered by Mr. [Gen. Philip] Breedlove [who is Commander of the Supreme Allied Command Europe and U.S. European Combatant Command] or other Americans who are very much in favor of proving that Russia is involved. Russia is not involved with regular forces in southeastern Ukraine," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058339-russia-wants-proof-of-its-military-presence-in-ukraine.html>

Poroshenko: firm hope for peace, but Ukraine will defend, 21.03.2015

"What is happening now? War is here now, but firm hope for peace exists. And I as the Ukrainian president and Ukraine as a state are doing our best to ensure the restoration of peace. But we are also readying ourselves to defend the state, we are not daydreamers and we are doing everything if, God forbid, there is active offensive action against Ukraine, we could repeal the enemy with all the force and defeat it," President Poroshenko said.

Poroshenko reiterated that Ukraine strictly and consistently fulfills the Minsk agreements.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058364-poroshenko-firm-hope-for-peace-but-ukraine-will-defend.html>

Turkey wants to help rebuild Donbas – Erdogan, 21.03.2015

"When Ukraine overcomes this difficult period, we are ready for Turkish construction firms' engagement in rebuilding [infrastructure] in territories that have suffered from this conflict," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

Erdogan said he was sure that the Ukrainian government would support the Turkish companies in every possible way.

In his words, when Ukraine establishes fair competition regime, "Turkish companies will put their signature under huge and unprecedented successes."

According to Erdogan, Turkish construction firms have already implemented projects worth UAH 4.5 billion in Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058366-turkey-wants-to-help-rebuild-donbas-erdogan.html>

Estonian President: Europe needs Plan B as sanctions on Russia ineffective, 22.03.2015

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves announced this at the Brussels Forum.

"As for the Ukrainian crisis, it's about security of the entire Europe rather than of a separate nation. In this connection, Europe must take a clear point of view, show its determination and strength. We are now discussing whether to arm Ukraine or step up sanctions against Russia. If it is decided not to do any of these things, has Europe Plan B?" Estonian news portal Rostimee quoted Ilves as saying.

Speaking about security in the Baltic States, Ilves said that the countries in the region should spend 2% of their GDP on defense, following Estonia's example.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058538-estonian-president-europe-needs-plan-b-as-sanctions-on-russisa-ineffective.html>

NATO responds to Russia's threats to aim nuclear missiles at Denmark, 22.03.2015

NATO's top military commander, U.S. Air Force General Philip Breedlove says that Russia is making an attempt to put pressure on all countries wishing to join NATO's missile defense system, euointegration.com.ua reported with reference to Reuters.

"Romania came under great pressure when they became a part of the [missile shield]. Poland is coming under great pressure and now anyone else who wants to join in to this defensive capability will come under this diplomatic and political pressure," Breedlove said, commenting a statement by the Russian ambassador to Denmark that Russia could aim nuclear missiles at Denmark if it joins NATO's missile defense system.

In an interview in the newspaper Jyllands-Posten, the Russian ambassador to Denmark, Mikhail Vanin, said he did not think Danes fully understood the consequences of joining the NATO program, Reuters wrote. "If that happens, Danish warships will be targets for Russian nuclear missiles," Vanin told the newspaper.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058539-nato-responds-to-russias-threats-to-aim-nuclear-missiles-at-denmark.html>

Putin unhappy with costs of Ukraine conflict – CIA chief, 23.03.2015

"I don't believe he's happy with the situation," U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan told Fox News Sunday. "I think there are signs that the discomfort that is associated with this is becoming more uncomfortable."

"I think President Putin has a view of what sort of Russian nationalism is, that, unfortunately, I think he has put some of the personal interests of himself and some of the senior members of the Russian government ahead of the best interests of the Russian people," Brennan said.

"What Mr. Putin himself needs to do is to understand how he can extract himself from this situation, because it is coming at the cost of the Russian economy and the Russian people being hurt," he added.

According to Brennan, Putin has already demonstrated that he's going to continue to push as far as what his objectives are inside of Ukraine.

Brennan is sure that more pressure should be put on Putin. "What we need to do is to continue to put pressure on Mr. Putin so that the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government can have a future that is going to be peaceful and safe and secure," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058572-putin-unhappy-with-costs-of-ukraine-conflict-cia-chief.html>

Breedlove: West must wage information war with Russia, 23.03.2015

The West must wage an information war with Russia in order to counter its "false stories" in social networks, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Philip Breedlove said. "As a Western group of nations or a union we should participate in this information war. The method of dealing with false information is to unveil the lie and expose it," Breedlove said. As reported earlier, Breedlove said that the West should consider the use of all tools to help Ukraine, including the supply of defensive weapons.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058661-breedlove-west-must-wage-information-war-with-russia.html>

Dzhemilev: Crimea finds 'Russian world' short of cash, but plenty authoritarian, 23.03.2015

If a referendum were to be held in Crimea today no more than 20% of Crimeans would choose Russia as their homeland, leader of the Crimean Tatars and representative of the President of Ukraine on the Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev said on Sunday at the United Nations.

"But now even talking about a free choice, according to the law of the Russian Federation, is a criminal offense," Dzhemilev said.

Fewer Crimeans now want to enjoy what he described as "an upside-down world."

"The anniversary of the coming of the 'Russian world' was met by the inhabitants of the peninsula with empty wallets and high prices," he said.

"The desired high pensions and salaries were erased - they cannot keep up with rising prices. The roads to the resorts are overgrown without holidaymakers, the railroads are rusting without trains, and fields are drying without the water of the Dnipro.

"The Kerch Bridge remains a chimera. Crimea is sobering up."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058677-dzhemilev-crimea-finds-russian-world-short-of-cash-but-plenty-authoritarian.html>

Bildt: We warned about Putin's plans, but Brussels was asleep, 23.03.2015

"I think we should have reacted more strongly towards Russia when they started to misbehave in the summer of 2013," Sikorski said.

"Clearly, when they started the sanctions against Ukraine, we didn't see clearly the implications of that, and I remember that [former Polish Foreign Minister] Radek [Sikorski] and myself were trying to alert Brussels, and Brussels was more or less asleep. Would that have made a difference? I don't know. But that was clearly a mistake," Bildt said.

In the near future Vladimir Putin intends to turn the occupied territories into enclaves.

"I think at the moment [Putin] is keen to build up the enclaves - these "people's republics" virtually without people, by the way, but nevertheless - strengthen them militarily," Sikorski said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1058738-bildt-we-warned-about-putins-plans-but-brussels-was-asleep.html>

Exiled President Yanukovich's junior son reportedly dies in Lake Baikal accident, 22.03.2015

"Viktor Yanukovich Junior has tragically died. [He] died as he lived – driving a car," Shufrych wrote on Facebook. He didn't give other details about the accident.

On March 22, there were conflicting reports about the circumstances of Viktor Yanukovich Junior's death, though it appears he was killed in a car accident. Initial reports suggested he and five other passengers crashed through ice on the lake while he was driving, although this has not been confirmed by Russian authorities. The five passengers were rescued, the reports said.

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was unable to provide any information about Viktor Yanukovich Junior several hours ago.

Russian mass media reported with reference to the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry that the name of the driver who died in the Lake Baikal accident was Viktor Davydov whose age was the same as the younger Yanukovich's – 33. Sources also mentioned that the maiden name of President Viktor Yanukovich's wife and Viktor Yanukovich Junior's mother was Liudmyla Davydova.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1058518-exiled-president-yanukovychs-junior-son-reportedly-dies-in-lake-baikal-accident.html>

Kolomoiskiy: Scandal over Ukrtransnafta instigated by Yeremeiev's Continuum Group, 23.03.2015

The struggle for control over the state company Ukrtransnafta was instigated by the Continuum group of companies, controlled by businessman and MP Ihor Yeremeiev, prominent Ukrainian oligarch and governor of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Ihor Kolomoiskiy said on Ukrainian TV channel 1+1 on Sunday.

"Ukrtransnafta [represents] the blood vessels of the system. If these blood vessels stop working, for whatever reasons, the whole complex [of refineries in Ukraine] will cease working," Kolomoiskiy said.

"And I know those who want this [to happen]. In our oil business, there is such group called Continuum, which is controlled, I dare say it, by an organized criminal group, headed by the deputy Yeremeiev, who is behind all these events."

Kolomoiskiy said interest Continuum's in Ukrtransnafta is obvious, as the company is "within the scope of the vital interests of those businesses that do not have public or semi-public ownership and who are directly dependent on the activities of Ukrtransnafta."

"I am talking about a single refinery - Kremenchukh refinery, and the only major oil company in the country - Ukrnafta. It is an enterprise with mixed ownership, where the stake is divided approximately 50% to 50% between the state and private shareholders," said Kolomoiskiy.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1058703-kolomoiskiy-scandal-over-ukrtransnafta-instigated-by-yeremeievs-continuum-group.html>

Poroshenko orders Defense Ministry not to make arms contracts public, 24.03.2015

During the meeting Poroshenko interrupted Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak, who was about to answer a journalist's question regarding the supply of arms.

"Cameras are working here. I'm not going to report to the enemy and the aggressor about what contracts we have signed. I can tell you only the relative position. As of today, we have signed 70% of the agreements, which are scheduled for the whole year," Poroshenko said.

He also said that Poltorak had been provided with 100% of the funding required for previous agreements.

According to Poroshenko, this information is contained in the state defense order, which is a top secret document.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059194-poroshenko-orders-defense-ministry-not-to-make-arms-contracts-public.html>

Pashynskiy: Poroshenko had no concerns about Kolomoiskiy as governor, 25.03.2015

"Without a doubt, Ihor Kolomoiskiy took up this office at a difficult time for Ukraine, and he withstood the pressure. And as far as I know, the Ukrainian president has no criticisms of the [former] governor of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration," he said.

"The president, as both Interior Minister and SBU Chairman, has concerns about the armed people who say that they don't take orders from anyone," Pashynskiy said.

As reported earlier, Kolomoiskiy resigned from the post of governor of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration late on March 24.

Hennadiy Korban, Kolomoiskiy's deputy, has also resigned.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059663-pashynskiy-poroshenko-had-no-concerns-about-kolomoiskiy-as-governor.html>

Poroshenko assumes responsibility for Dnipropetrovsk region after Kolomoiskiy's resignation, 25.03.2015

"Mr. Poroshenko takes personal responsibility for the situation not only in the Dnipropetrovsk region, but also in the south-eastern part of Ukraine," Kupriy said.

"De-oligarchization" – something that the society has long awaited – effectively started in Ukraine.

"I believe that this courageous step will be [the first of] similar actions against Mr [Rinat] Akhmetov, [Viktor] Pinchuk and Poroshenko [himself], who still owns significant business assets," Kupriy said, adding that he would try to consolidate a group of MPs to bring forward this issue for consideration in parliament.

He said that Kolomoiskiy's resignation had come about by "mutual consent."

"I think a compromise was reached in this situation. Under no circumstances will Dnipropetrovsk follow the path of the DNR and LNR by declaring itself a breakaway region," the MP said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059734-poroshenko-assumes-responsibility-for-dnipropetrovsk-region-after-kolomoiskiys-resignation.html>

Putin: Someone else might become Russian president in 2018, 25.03.2015

Putin dropped the hint while discussing the possible Kazan World Championship on working trades, which is to be held in 2019, according to Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

"The event we are talking about should take place in 2019. The presidential elections in Russia will be held in 2018. But I'm sure whoever is the head of the Russian state will be happy to take part in these events," Putin said.

Putin's third presidential term is scheduled to end in 2018.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1059687-putin-someone-else-might-become-russian-president-in-2018.html>

Brzezinski: Putin's next targets may be Baltic States, Moldova and Poland, 25.03.2015

"I do not want to be a prophet of doom, but there is a risk that the Russian aggression in Ukraine will not end. A analysis of the sequence of actions in Putin's policy indicates this," he said.

According to Brzezinski, further developments depend on how the conflict develops in Ukraine.

"If the war in Ukraine becomes a light military success for Russia, or a victory, it is necessary to take into account the possibility of something like it in the Baltic States," he said.

"The next hot spots may appear in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan. This could be the logic of events. And later, Poland could be the target of Russian aggression," Brzezinski said.

"Russia is now carrying out an expansive policy, and each [of these] scenarios is, unfortunately, realistic."

<http://www.unian.info/world/1059867-brzezinski-putins-next-targets-may-be-baltic-states-moldova-and-poland.html>

Venice Commission: No sense in federalization of Ukraine, 25.03.2015

"We're speaking about decentralization, rather than federalization. Federalism as a system works well in some countries, but in the case of Ukraine, there is no sense in devolving from a highly centralized state to federalism," Venice Commission President Gianni Buquicchio said. Moreover, he said, the federalization of Ukraine is not allowed by the Ukrainian Constitution, and that part of it is very difficult to be changed.

"I don't think a proposal to adopt an amendment that would designate Ukraine as a federal state will be broadly supported," he added.

According to him, fears that decentralization in Ukraine will lead to its disintegration are groundless.

"It does not lead to separatism. It is rather an alternative to separatism," Buquicchio said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059929-venice-commission-no-sense-in-federalization-of-ukraine.html>

European Parliament overwhelmingly supports EUR 1.8 bln aid for Ukraine, 25.03.2015

The decision was passed at a plenary session of the European Parliament following debates on a report by Gabrielius Landsbergis (MEP from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Lithuania), an UNIAN special correspondent reported from Brussels. The decision was supported by 492 MEPs, while 107 voted against and 13 abstained.

"The result of today's vote is a strong political message, not only to Ukraine to show that the EU stands firmly by it, but also to those countries which seek to see us divided in helping Ukraine," Landsbergis said.

Thus, the proposal put forth by the European Commission passed its first reading. To come into force, it should be approved by the EU Council at any of its future meetings.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1059953-european-parliament-overwhelmingly-supports-eur-18-bln-aid-for-ukraine.html>

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060105-mep-europe-passes-test-of-its-unity-in-support-of-ukraine.html>

Russia's Lavrov Calls For New Four-Country Meeting On Ukraine, 26.03.2015

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has called for a new meeting of officials from France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine who are trying to mediate a peace agreement in Ukraine.

Lavrov said on March 19 he had already been in touch with the foreign ministers of France and Germany to urge a new round of talks take place as early as next week "to prevent the situation from deteriorating."

Lavrov's call comes after Ukraine's parliament voted on March 17 to confer special status on rebel-controlled eastern regions and grant them limited self-rule, but only after local elections are held under Ukrainian law.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-ukraine-lavrov-normandy-meeting/26910165.html>

NATO chief: We have to be prepared for the unexpected, 26.03.2015

"... in the last year, Russia's annexation of Crimea, its aggressive actions in Ukraine and the rise of violent extremism in North Africa and in the Middle East have really changed our security environment dramatically," Stoltenberg said.

"So we have to face the facts. These challenges will not go away any time soon. So we have to be prepared for the unexpected and stand ready to sustain our efforts for the years to come," he added.

"Today, we do not have the luxury to choose between collective defense and crisis management. For the first time in NATO's history we have to do both at the same time," Stoltenberg emphasized.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1060000-nato-chief-we-have-to-be-prepared-for-the-unexpected.html>

While Europe slept, 26.03.2015

The sleep of reason brings forth monsters, says the Spanish proverb, which is also the idea behind Goya's etching from his Caprichos cycle. The sleep of Europe's reason brought forth a monster in the Putin regime of the current chief of the Kremlin. That was almost directly the thought voiced recently by Swedish ex-Foreign Minister Carl Bildt.

Bildt said that "Brussels was somewhat asleep at the wheel when Russia started its actions against Ukraine." The attempts by former foreign ministers of Sweden and Poland, Carl Bildt and Radek Sikorski (the ones who initiated the Eastern Partnership project) to shake the leaders of the EU into wakefulness appear to have been in vain.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060083-while-europe-slept.html>

Germany ratifies Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, 26.03.2015

"The Bundestag has ratified the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine!!! Danke, Deutschland!" Melnyk tweeted.

Ukraine and the EU signed the political part of the Association Agreement on March 21 but postponed the signing of its economic part, which foresees the establishment of a free trade zone, ahead of the presidential elections in Ukraine.

After the elections on May 25, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed the full version of the Association Agreement with the European Union on June 27.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060221-germany-ratifies-ukraine-eu-association-agreement.html>

Poroshenko: 'Great Wall of Ukraine' remains priority for government? 26.03.2015

"We have partially allocated the funding for this project. It remains a priority for the government," Poroshenko said.

"At the same time, today our main task is to build defensive fortifications on the line of contact with the illegal armed groups in the Donbas," he said.

According to Poroshenko, the Ukrainian government has already allocated over UAH 800 million for the construction of these fortifications.

"There is the biggest danger there, and Russia must explain to the world the reason for its crossing the border," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060304-poroshenko-great-wall-of-ukraine-remains-priority-for-government.html>

Putin calls on FSB to stop Russian militants returning from 'hot spots', 26.03.2015

Putin was speaking on Thursday at the board meeting of the Federal Security Service of Russia. The full text of his speech was published on the Russian president official Web site.

"Immigrants from Russia and other CIS countries are being trained in a number of hot spots, including in the ranks of the so-called Islamic state in Syria and other countries, and they may be exploited against us, against Russia and our neighbors" Putin said.

"It is important to take additional measures to eliminate the global connections and resource base of terrorists, cut off their channels of entry and exit from Russia, prevent them from moving across regions, namely - to penetrate into the new Russian administrative areas - Crimea and Sevastopol," the Russian president said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060352-putin-calls-on-fsb-to-stop-russian-militants-returning-from-hot-spots.html>

Poroshenko and Kolomoisky: neither conflict, nor misunderstanding, 26.03.2015

Former head of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Ihor Kolomoisky will be engaged in social and economic activity, President Poroshenko announced at the press conference, presidential press secretary Sviatoslav Tseholko said.

"Poroshenko [said]: 'I, as President, I cannot allow private firms to use weapons. Kolomoisky will be engaged in social and economic activity,'" Tseholko wrote, quoting the president. Poroshenko thanked Kolomoisky for the work done, noting his contribution to the country's development at the hard times for the nation.

According to Poroshenko, Kolomoisky's team would often play it close to the edge, however, they manage to withstand all hardships and keep the country from a break-up.

"This is due to the whole team, all the residents of Dnipropetrovsk," Poroshenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060438-poroshenko-and-kolomoisky-neither-conflict-nor-misunderstanding.html>

43 UNHRC member countries call on Russia to implement Minsk accords, 26.03.2015

They call on Russia to make Russian-backed illegal armed formations in Donbas implement the Minsk agreements and immediately stop attempts to violate the truce.

"We call on the Russian Federation which signed the Package of Measures and joined the Declaration, to use all of its influence to press the illegal armed groups to fully comply with the Minsk Agreements and immediately halt their ceasefire breaches as documented by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. We condemn in the strongest terms the violence and abuses committed by the aforementioned illegal armed groups. We further call for unfettered access by all legitimate humanitarian actors to all affected areas as well as for prompt and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance while strictly adhering to international principles and Ukrainian law," the statement reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060453-43-unhrc-member-countries-call-on-russia-to-implement-minsk-accords.html>

Parubiy: Putin may start large-scale military operation in Ukraine by May 9, 27.03.2015

"Huge forces are now lined up next to the border between Ukraine and Russia. According to many reports, and it is no longer a secret, there is a high risk of a large-scale military operation in the next weeks. According to Putin, it should pass off brilliantly before May 9 and demonstrate the power of the Russian army," Parubiy said.

"Ukraine needs supplies of lethal weapons from the West in order to increase the power of the Ukrainian armed forces. First of all, we are talking about Javelin anti-tank missiles," Parubiy said.

"The representatives of the United States say that if Russia attacks Mariupol, then they will decide on this issue. I told them: 'Guys, then you may tell me that you will decide this if Russia attacks Kharkiv, and then Kyiv. We need the weapons today. If a full-scale attack begins, we will need the technical means to stop it.'"

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060725-parubiy-putin-may-start-large-scale-military-operation-in-ukraine-by-may-9.html>

Soros: EU ignoring financial situation in Ukraine, 27.03.2015

"Europe is preoccupied with Greece, but Ukraine is a very different case which requires different treatment," the billionaire investor said in an interview with the BBC.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Ukrainian government have been visiting European capitals and the United States to try to hammer out a deal on restructuring Ukraine's large national debt.

The Ukrainian government has had some recent successes in raising cash to support the Ukrainian economy. Two weeks ago, the IMF Board of Governors made a decision on allocating over \$17 billion for Ukraine within the framework of a new four-year loan program. But Ukraine is thought to need much more than that to be able to ward off financial collapse: The country has to pay nearly \$8 billion on its debts in 2015 alone, unless a restructuring deal can be agreed with creditors.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1060633-soros-eu-ignoring-financial-situation-in-ukraine.html>

Stoltenberg: Putin's allegations another example of propaganda, 27.03.2015

"It's just another example of the type of propaganda that Russia is doing in many different frameworks," Stoltenberg said.

"The truth is what NATO does is a response to the aggressive actions we have seen by Russia in Ukraine. We're doing that in a defensive and proportionate way, totally in line with all our international obligations," he said.

Stoltenberg also called on Russia to lower tensions by meeting its obligations under the February 12 Minsk Agreement, which he insisted was still "the best basis for finding a peaceful solution to the conflict" in Ukraine, despite the numerous current violations.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060701-stoltenberg-putins-allegations-another-example-of-propaganda.html>

Poland says Russian controllers to blame for plane crash that killed Kaczynski, 27.03.2015

According to the head of the District Military Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw Ireneusz Shelonk, they are accused of creating the situation that led to a direct hazard and unintentionally causing the air crash.

As reported, Warsaw is planning to call the controllers for questioning as suspects.

According to the report, the Polish Military Prosecutor's Office still said that the main reason of the tragedy was the insufficient qualification of the crew members of the crashed Tu-154 and their mistakes in assessing the situation.

"Among the team of the aircraft only the engineer had the skills that were necessary to service the aircraft, and the captain of the plane did not have the appropriate training that would allow him to land the plane in bad weather conditions, and he wrongly assessed the situation. The crew repeatedly violated instructions, [and] the pilots ignored reports of dense fog in the area of the airport," the report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060773-poland-says-russian-controllers-to-blame-for-plane-crash-that-killed-kaczynski.html>

Stoltenberg: It's not NATO moving east—it's the east wanting to join NATO, 27.03.2015

"I think that's a completely wrong statement. It's independent nations that have knocked on the door and wanted membership. It's not NATO in any way moving east—it's the east wanting to join NATO and/or the European Union. And that's the sovereign right of every sovereign nation to decide," Stoltenberg said.

According to him, "the idea that this is something that is lost for Russia and gained by the European Union is the wrong concept."

"No one has been forced to become a member of the European Union or NATO; everyone who has joined the European Union and NATO has joined because of their own free democratic will," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1060930-stoltenberg-its-not-nato-moving-eastits-the-east-wanting-to-join-nato.html>

Poroshenko: Era of justice should begin in Ukraine, 28.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko says that order and justice should replace corruption in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity.

He announced this in an interview on ICTV, the presidential press service said.

"What should the country look like after the Revolution of Dignity? Remember a novel by the Vayner Brothers? It's not an 'era of mercy.' It's not an era of mercy after the Revolution of Dignity. And it's not an era of retaliation or revenge, as someone wants it to look like – that we'll do away with everybody. I'm sure it must be an era of justice," Poroshenko said.

According to him, the authorities have succeeded in making corrupt officials feel insecure.

"The only thing we've already achieved is that those who are engaged in corruption should not and will not, I promise you, feel secure," Poroshenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061078-poroshenko-era-of-justice-should-begin-in-ukraine.html>

NATO Secretary-General: It would be wrong to speculate about Ukraine's NATO membership, 28.03.2015

"It would be wrong of me to speculate. Ukraine has emphasized that this will take some time," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"Some years ago, they [Ukraine] applied for membership, and I respected that. Then they decided to be a non-bloc country. Now they have started the process of reforming with the aim to apply for membership later on. If and when they apply, we will assess that application," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061045-nato-secretary-general-it-would-be-wrong-to-speculate-about-ukraines-nato-membership.html>

German Foreign Ministry urges to immediately end ceasefire violations in Donbas, 29.03.2015

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he is concerned about OSCE reports about new fighting in Donbas, the German Foreign Office wrote on Twitter.

"We should closely watch that the Minsk agreements are being implemented smoothly," German DW.de quoted Steinmeier as saying.

All open issues should be resolved quickly within the contact group, otherwise it will be almost impossible to avoid a new military escalation of the Donbas conflict. The politician also called on Russian-backed militants and the Ukrainian army to immediately cease attacks.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061216-german-foreign-ministry-urges-to-immediately-end-ceasefire-violations-in-donbas.html>

Ukraine Navy Chief: Russia's got enough forces to attack Ukraine from the sea, 29.03.2015

Russia has got forces to attack Ukraine from the sea, but they're not enough for a massive landing of these forces, Chief of Staff of Ukraine's Navy, Rear Admiral Andriy Tarasov said.

"If there are forces that could be brought, if there are landing craft, then of course there is a threat. Our unfriendly state has got such forces. These are amphibious assault ships, military transport aircraft and marines brigades," he said.

Both ground combat units and airborne troops could be also involved in the amphibious assault operation, as they can be brought not only by aircraft, but also by ships, he added.

"This means that such a threat exists, and it is real," Tarasov emphasized.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061229-ukraine-navy-chief-russias-got-enough-forces-to-attack-ukraine-from-the-sea.html>

U.S. Congresswoman Kaptur: Obama needs more time to decide on arms for Ukraine, 29.03.2015

U.S. President Barack Obama may soon decide on arms supplies to Ukraine. This was announced by U.S. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur.

According to her, Obama is deeply concerned about the losses the Ukrainian people have been sustaining, however, he needs more time to decide on the arms supplies.

According to her, it is very important that Ukraine demonstrates its wish to assure the world that its military units don't have anybody who has turned to be there due to the Russian government and that there are no information leaks. "We, as a country, help the Ukrainian army to get trained, therefore the soldiers know how to counteract the enemy even barehanded. And I think that the president wanted to be given more time," she said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061238-us-congresswoman-kaptur-obama-needs-more-time-to-decide-on-arming-ukraine.html>

Yatseniuk denies disagreements with president, 30.03.2015

Yatseniuk announced this in an interview on ICTV Channel, Ukrainska Pravda wrote.

"There is no split between the president and the prime minister. Recent developments in the country have demonstrated that we have been acting as one team," he said.

"What's been going on lately – one has been suspended, the other has been dismissed ...

When you have announced war on mafia, what do they do? They start seeking support in parliament, from mass media, they have waged war on me personally and on the government. This is what we had in 2005," he added.

"I believe we're on the only right track. <...> This is the last chance for Ukraine, and we will make it reality," Yatseniuk said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061342-yatseniuk-denies-disagreements-with-president.html>

US Congresswoman Kaptur says unity best weapon against Russian aggression, 30.03.2015

"Unity is really important. We see that Russia, even with its closest neighbors, is very noticeably slanted in its television broadcasts in different countries, and it attracts native speakers to its propaganda machine," Kaptur said.

"And the cup of patience for the whole of Europe is already full. I think it's very clear what President Putin is," she said.

"Putin is engaged in Russian expansion and it is very, very dangerous," Kaptur said.

"I think that we have [a problem] to deal with. And I believe that for the UN and for NATO this role is very important, and all the nations around the world should assume responsibility and take the side of Ukraine as a free and independent state."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061362-us-congresswoman-kaptur-says-unity-best-weapon-against-russian-aggression.html>

US fears worst scenario of Russia against Ukraine, 30.03.2015

The U.S. fears the worst scenario with regard to Russia's plans for Ukraine and is preparing for such events, U.S. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur said.

"I'm very concerned about the situation near Mariupol. I think that we should take care of the security architecture to protect Ukraine, its border, buffer zone, etc.," Kaptur said.

"This is what Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko should ask at [his] most important meetings with the representatives of different countries," she said.

According to Kaptur, the issue is not just one of cooperation with NATO, but also about agreements with all peoples who love freedom.

"Poroshenko should not lose any opportunity to talk about it, to involve the presidents of other countries," Kaptur said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061396-us-fears-worst-scenario-of-russia-against-ukraine.html>

Soros says he's ready to invest \$1 billion in Ukrainian economy, 30.03.2015

There are already specific investment projects, in particular in the agricultural sector or infrastructure, suitable for investment, Soros said.

Earlier, according to Reuters, Soros urged the governments of developed countries to help Ukraine, and bring a financial aid package of up to \$50 billion.

"I stand ready. There are concrete investment ideas, for example in agriculture and infrastructure projects," Soros said.

"I would put in \$1 billion. This must generate a profit. My foundation would benefit from this... Private engagement needs strong political leadership.

"The West can help Ukraine by increasing attractiveness for investors. Political risk insurance is necessary. This could take the form of mezzanine financing at EU interest rates -- very close to zero."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061432-soros-says-hes-ready-to-invest-1-billion-in-ukrainian-economy.html>

Shokin explains difficulties in 'getting' Yanukovych and Co., 30.03.2015

Asked whether there was a realistic opportunity to prosecute in Ukraine the runaway officials and Yanukovych himself, Shokin said that unfortunately this issue involved a lot of difficulties.

"The first problem is that they have taken the citizenship of other states, including that of Russia. There are some countries with which we haven't extradition treaties. Moreover, Russia does not extradite its citizens. So, we have some problems," Shokin said.

"But despite this, we will take all measures prescribed by law so that those people, citizens of Ukraine or not, who have committed crimes on the territory of Ukraine, and if it is proven, (and this will be proved), that their actions were criminal, I will do everything possible so that they are punished in accordance with the law of Ukraine," Shokin said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061370-shokin-explains-difficulties-in-getting-yanukovych-and-co.html>

Ukraine's chief prosecutor: no untouchables – be it president or premier, 30.03.2015

"There are no untouchable persons for me – be it, God forbid, the president, prime minister or other government officials and civil servants. If that person has committed a crime, the punishment will follow," Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin said.

The chief prosecutor stressed that his office would take all necessary measures to ensure that Ukrainian or foreign citizens be brought to justice if they are guilty.

Deputy head of the General Prosecutor's Office main department Pavlo Zebrivsky, who is in charge of investigation into corruption-related crimes, said on Channel 5 that the facts of alleged corruption at the Cabinet would be checked within a month.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061253-ukraines-chief-prosecutor-no-untouchables-be-it-president-or-premier.html>

Danish Foreign Minister: Russia propaganda 'disgusting', 31.03.2015

"Together with the Baltic countries and the UK, we are working on a response to the Russian propaganda," Lidegaard said.

"We have written a letter to the European Commission and the European Council with a request to establish independent Russian-language media," he said.

"The Russian propaganda machine is so massive and, to be honest, just disgusting," Lidegaard said.

"We have to make sure that Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine and other countries have access to the relevant information," he said.

Lidegaard again described as unacceptable a statement of Russian Ambassador to Denmark Mikhail Vanin, who threatened the country with a nuclear attack.

"I told Russian Ambassador very frankly that this statement was unacceptable to us. In addition, it is unreasonable," Lidegaard said.

"Everyone knows that the missile defense system is a defensive system, and it has nothing to do with Russia," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061780-danish-foreign-minister-russia-propaganda-disgusting.html>

Congressman: US to strengthen sanctions against Russia, if EU agrees, 31.03.2015

Discussions about tightening sanctions against Russia in the United States are continuing, but any action has to be agreed with the European Union, the member of U.S. House of Representatives from Texas, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Republican Mac Thornberry said at a briefing in Kyiv on Tuesday, according to an UNIAN correspondent.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061917-congressman-us-to-strengthen-sanctions-against-russia-if-eu-agrees.html>

US general says new Russian offensive in Donbas 'possible after Easter', 31.03.2015

"It seems that the resumption of a wider conflict is inevitable, but I hope that the United States will take all necessary measures to prevent this," Clark said in his speech on Monday.

When he visited Ukraine, Clark said, "Minsk II was roughly in place. Some artillery was pulled back by the separatists, but some, according to sources, was concealed in forward positions."

"What is happening now is preparations for a renewed offensive from the east," and this could take place following Orthodox Easter, on April 12, and most probably before VE Day on May 8," Clark said, citing multiple local sources he spoke with on a recent fact-finding mission to Ukraine.

"Maybe if the Allies decide to boycott the celebrations, which are of great significance for [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin, he would wait," said Clark.

Clark said it was necessary now to send weapons to Ukraine to get it prepared by the time of the next Russian-backed militant offensive.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1062027-us-general-says-new-russian-offensive-in-donbas-possible-after-easter.html>

Poroshenko ready to put to referendum issue of federalization of Ukraine, 31.03.2015

"I'm ready to put to a referendum the question of a second state language and the issue of federalization, and I am sure that the Ukrainian people will say a resounding 'No!'" Poroshenko said.

"Russia's plans against Ukraine and its dreams that Ukraine is a conflicted nation that will destroy itself have failed," he said.

He also said that 62% of those who fought in the Donbas were Russian-speaking citizens.

"But their Russian language does not prevent them to love Ukraine, as I love it in Ukrainian," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1062036-poroshenko-ready-to-put-to-referendum-issue-of-federalization-of-ukraine.html>

Actions of Ukrainian Authorities

Ukraine denies entry to seven Russian citizens due to new border crossing regulations, 01.03.2015

Government resolution No. 23, which was passed in Ukraine on January 30, 2015, became effective on March 1, 2015, and repealed certain clauses of the Ukrainian-Russian intergovernmental agreement on visa-free travels between the two states.

This was announced by the media liaison office of the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service's administration.

At the same time, the situation at the border crossing points on Ukraine's border is usual, despite the recent changes in the travel regulations for Russian citizens, and there have been no incidents related to this, the announcement said. Most of Russian citizens knew about the changes and took respective measures.

Thus, the announcement said, entry to Ukraine as of 1500 Kyiv time on Sunday had been denied to a mere seven people who were attempting to cross the border having their Russian internal passports only. Five such citizens were identified by officers of the Kharkiv border guard detachment, one was located at the airport of Odesa, and another one at a border crossing point handled by the Chernihiv border guard detachment. Entry to Ukraine was denied to all of them.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050192-ukraine-denies-entry-to-seven-russian-citizens-due-to-new-border-crossing-regulations.html>

Poroshenko enacts NSDC decision to appeal to UN and EU for peacekeepers, 02.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has signed a decree to enact the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of February 18 "On an appeal to the United Nations and the European Union on the deployment of an international peacekeeping and security mission on the territory of Ukraine," the official Web site of the President reported on Monday.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050441-poroshenko-enacts-nsdc-decision-to-appeal-to-un-and-eu-for-peacekeepers.html>

Poroshenko submits bill to Verkhovna Rada to increase size of Ukraine's army to 250,000 men, 02.03.2015

The corresponding bill, No. 2269, was registered in the Verkhovna Rada on Monday, according to the Web site of the parliament.

According to the bill, "from the beginning of the special period and taking into account all threats to the national security of Ukraine in the military sphere, which could be long-term, two control operational commands, 11 teams, four regiments, 18 battalions, 16 separate companies and 13 platoons for various purposes will be formed in the Ukrainian armed forces." "For the timely deployment of a certain grouping of troops, the Ukrainian armed forces should consist of 250,000 people," the bill reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050534-poroshenko-submits-bill-to-verkhovna-rada-to-increase-size-of-ukraines-army-to-250000-men.html>

Supreme Court allows arrest of judges Tsarevych, Vovk and Kytsiuk, 03.03.2015

Chairman of the Supreme Court of Ukraine Yaroslav Romaniuk has approved the arrest of three judges who heard high-profile cases during the regime of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, MP from the Bloc of Poroshenko faction Serhiy Leshchenko wrote on FB. "On Monday night, the Verkhovna Rada received consent for their arrest, signed by the Chairman of the Supreme Court of Ukraine. The voting will be held in the next few days. If they manage to disappear, it will be a failure of all of the intelligence services of Ukraine."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050920-supreme-court-allows-arrest-of-judges-tsarevych-vovk-and-kytsiuk.html>

Ukraine starts second phase of fourth wave of mobilization, 03.03.2015

"According to the main department of defense and mobilization planning of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the first stage of the fourth wave of mobilization is 90% implemented," she said.

"The second phase of the fourth wave of mobilization is now beginning," Kushnir said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1050988-ukraine-starts-second-phase-of-fourth-wave-of-mobilization.html>

Ukraine closes local border crossing points with Russia, 04.03.2015

The Ukrainian government has decided to unilaterally suspend the agreement on local border traffic between Ukraine and Russia, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk said.

"From March 16 it will be possible to cross the border only through international border crossings that are fully controlled by the Ukrainian authorities. The agreement on local border traffic between Ukraine and Russia is terminated by the Ukrainian side," he said.

According to Yatseniuk, the control of the movement of people, first of all, from the Russian Federation, is an issue of national security.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051582-ukraine-closes-local-border-traffic-with-russia.html>

Three judges of Kyiv Pechersk court under threat of arrest, 04.03.2015

Three Ukrainian judges who convicted former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko two years ago face arrest if the Verkhovna Rada approves the measure on March 4.

Lutsenko, now an MP, said he would not vote as he had "no will to exact revenge".

Oksana Tsarevych, Serhiy Vovk and Volodymyr Kytsyuk work in Kyiv's Pechersk District court, which is notorious in Ukraine for corruption and politically motivated convictions.

<http://www.unian.info/kyiv/1051593-three-judges-of-kyiv-pechersk-court-under-threat-of-arrest-video.html>

Rada votes to increase size of Ukraine's army to 250,000 men, 05.03.2015

The corresponding bill, No. 2269, was supported by 270 out of 314 MPs registered in the session hall. The votes of 226 MPs are required to pass a bill in the Rada.

According to the explanatory memorandum to the bill, in 2012 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the size of the Ukrainian armed forces at 184,000 men.

This law provides for an increase of the size of the Ukrainian armed forces to 250,000 people, including 204,000 combat personnel.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052052-rada-increases-size-of-ukraines-army-to-250000-men.html>

Sweden to send humanitarian convoys to Ukraine, 11.03.2015

Ukraine and Sweden have agreed that several humanitarian convoys will be sent to Donbas.

This was announced by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko at a joint press conference with Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, an UNIAN correspondent reported.

Poroshenko thanked Lofven for Sweden's support of Ukraine, in particular, for upholding the idea of dispatching an UN peacekeeping mission to Donbas.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1054343-sweden-to-send-humanitarian-convoys-to-ukraine.html>

President at the meeting with U.S. Congressmen: We are fighting for freedom and democracy of the entire Europe, 11.03.2015

The Head of State has thanked the American Congressmen for a strong, lasting and persistent support of Ukraine. "Dear friends of Ukraine, thank you for everything you've been doing for us for many years. In the course of the last year, this support has become an issue of survival of Ukraine," the President said.

Petro Poroshenko has noted that Ukraine was currently fighting for its real independence. "We are in a state of war against barbaric aggression. We are struggling not only for our territorial integrity after the annexation of Crimea. We have centuries of history, 23 years of independence, but true struggle for independence is taking place now," the President emphasized.

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32453.html>

Security and Defense Council approves borders for some Donbas districts with local self-government, 12.03.2015

NSDC has supported a decision to draw the line of demarcation of certain districts where the special local government procedure will be introduced under the law of Ukraine on local government in certain districts in Donetsk and Lugansk regions along with the demarcation line sealed in the Minsk agreements dated September 19, 2014, first NSDC Deputy Secretary Mykhailo Koval said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1054877-security-and-defense-council-approves-borders-for-some-donbas-districts-with-local-self-government.html>

Another charge will be brought against Major General Nazarov, a suspect of IL-76 crash - Military Prosecutor's Office, 11.03.2015

Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine considered a complaint of Kyiv Forensic Institute Director Oleksandr Ruvin regarding Major General Viktor Nazarov's lawyers intimidating the Armed Forces officers, members of the expert group to investigate IL-76 crash at the airport in Luhansk, where the Ukrainian military transport aircraft was shot down during landing approach by the terrorists using Igla portable anti-aircraft missile system.

Ruvin's statement was recorded by Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine in the Unified Register of pre-trial investigations March 10. Main Military Prosecutor's Office investigator of major crimes Petryshyn informed about this in an official letter. "It's an offence against the state. Joint Staff General Nazarov threatens to dismiss Ukrainian armed forces officers to conceal his guilt in the IL-76 downing,"

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/328085/another_charge_will_be_brought_against_major_general_nazarov_a_suspect_of_il76_crash_military_prosecutors

Former MP, the Counting Commission secretary who signed the dictatorial laws, arrested, 11.03.2015

The statement reads: "The Prosecutor General's Office served a notice of suspicion to the former Verkhovna Rada deputy and Counting Commission secretary in committing a crime under part 2 of the Article 364 (abuse of power or official position) and part 2 of the Article 366 (document forgery) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine within the pre-trial criminal proceedings initiated on the organization and conduction of legislation enacted in the Verkhovna Rada January 16, 2014 aimed at preventing peaceful protests.

"The mentioned lawmaker was the secretary of the Counting Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and together with other members signed the Counting Commission protocol, which actually granted these laws the status of the official document. Investigators have reasons to believe that these laws were not voted in practice."

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/327965/former_mp_the_counting_commission_secretary_who_signed_the_dictatorial_laws_arrested

Center for identifying bodies from Donbas conflict zone to be set up in Dnipropetrovsk, 11.03.2015

According to Korban, in 2015 the bodies of all soldiers killed in action have been transported only to Dnipropetrovsk region. Since the beginning of the year, about 350 bodies have been sent there, he said.

"Due to this fact, we decided to establish a single center for identifying the bodies of soldiers killed during the Anti-Terrorist Operation in the Donbas conflict zone," he said.

"At the moment, we are purchasing expensive equipment, particularly a genetic analyzer," Korban said.

"We've been forced to take on this function. Moreover, the DNA examinations of the bodies from all the country were carried out here, in the Dnipropetrovsk region," he said.

"We'll buy equipment that will allow this to be done automatically, so that the relatives won't have to wait but will immediately know the results of this analysis," Korban said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1054120-center-for-identifying-bodies-from-donbas-conflict-zone-to-be-set-up-in-dnipropetrovsk.html>

The First Perception of the Ukrainian Government: First 100 Days in the Office, 12.03.2015

The 2014 Maidan Revolution in Kyiv has led to a new president, a new parliament, and a new national government of Ukraine. The previous president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich abandoned his office and fled the country in late February last year. The new president Petro Poroshenko was elected three months later. The new parliament of Ukraine was elected in the fall of 2014. A month later, on December 2, 2014, the parliament approved the new cabinet.

The new cabinet of Ukraine is unprecedented in many ways. Out of twenty members of the cabinet, fourteen members have not served in previous governments. Seven members come from industry and are novices in politics. Three ministers are foreign nationals and were granted Ukrainian citizenship so that they could join the cabinet. The average age of ministers is just a little over 44 years.

Yet, the bureaucracy of the ministries and governmental agencies is staffed with political veterans. The new ministers have been facing the daunting task of identifying competent and honest people who can serve national interests. But the incumbents do not go out without a fight. Being skillful at sabotage, they try to weaken political support for the new ministers, use the judicial system to challenge the lawfulness of new appointments, and even employ thuggish methods such as threats and physical force.

<http://voxukraine.org/2015/03/12/the-first-perception-of-the-ukrainian-government-first-100-days-in-the-office/>

PGO puts five former members of parliamentary Counting Commission on wanted list, 13.03.2015

The Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine has notified five former members of Verkhovna Rada Counting Commission that they are suspected of violating the law and has put these persons on the wanted list.

During the pre-trial inquiry into the criminal case into parliamentary voting on January 16, 2014, on supporting bills to hamper peaceful rallies [the so-called 'dictatorship laws'], the PGO on February 26, 2015 and March 3, 2015 announced that the following individuals were suspected of the crime of abuse of power and office –former MPs Volodymyr Demydko, Andriy Pinchuk, Stanislav Skubashevsky, Yaroslav Sukhy [Party of Regions], and former Communist Party MP Oleksandr Zubchevsky, the PGO press service has reported.

"Since the aforementioned persons failed to come to the pre-trial investigation service, on March 12, 2015 the investigator declared them as wanted," reads the report issued by the PGO.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255053.html>

NSDC approves boundaries of Donbas districts with special status, 13.03.2015

NSDC has approved the decision to define the boundaries of certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where a special self-governance regime will be introduced, stated NSDC deputy secretary Mykhailo Koval on the meeting results, chaired by President Poroshenko.

"In order to fulfill the commitments, undertaken by Ukraine under the Minsk agreements of September 19, 2014 and February 12, 2015, confirmed by the UN Security Council on February 17, 2015, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine approves the decision to define the boundaries of certain districts, where a special local self-governance regime will be introduced in accordance with the law of Ukraine on special regime of local government in the territory of certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions," he said.

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/nsdc_approves_boundaries_of_donbas_districts_with_special_status_329746

Poroshenko rules out change of division line in Donbas, 14.03.2015

"Yesterday's meeting in the NSDC did not address the status, the status was determined a long time ago, and not the borders, because the engagement line was determined back on September 19 and it, according to the Minsk agreements, established a special local self-governance procedure in some areas," the president said.

He said the borders determining the engagement line was established on September 19, 2014.

"On February 12, we clearly defended the September 19 line and clearly insisted that the line cannot be changed," Poroshenko said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255107.html>

Ukraine plans joint military exercises with U.S., Poland for 2015 – bill, 14.03.2015

President Petro Poroshenko has introduced a bill to parliament to let foreign armed forces into Ukraine to take part in five joint exercises with Ukrainian forces.

According to the draft law, Ukraine plans three Ukrainian-American command post exercises, Fearless Guardian 2015, Sea Breeze 2015 and Saber Guardian/Rapid Trident 2015, and two Ukrainian-Polish exercises, Secure Skies 2015, and Law and Order 2015, for this year.

Fearless Guardian will take place in Yavoriv district, Lviv region, in the period from March to November and will bring together a maximum of 2,200 troops. Ukraine is providing up to 200 armed forces troops and up to 1,000 National Guard personnel, and the U.S. will be represented by a maximum of 1,000 servicemen.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255135.html>

Rada registers Poroshenko's bill on 'special status' to certain Donbas districts, 15.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has submitted a bill to parliament which designates districts in eastern Ukraine as those that could be subject to special self-government procedures. Under the Minsk deal agreed to on February 12 after talks between the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France, Ukraine's parliament was scheduled to adopt the 'special status' law on March 14. Under the agreements, permanent legislation on the 'special status' law was to be brought in by Ukraine no later than 30 days after signing the Minsk agreement.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055707-rada-registers-poroshenkos-bill-on-special-status-to-certain-donbas-districts.html>

Poroshenko submits to Verkhovna Rada draft appeal to UN and EU for deployment of peacekeepers, 16.03.2015

The corresponding draft resolution, No. 2379, was published on the Web site of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Monday.

"The adoption of the resolution will create conditions for an appeal on behalf of Ukraine to the United Nations and the European Union on the deployment of an international peacekeeping and security mission on the territory of Ukraine, which will contribute to a political resolution and an early normalization of the situation in separate areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It will also help to restore law and order in these areas, constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, the rights and legitimate interests of legal persons, and the creation of conditions for the return of internally displaced persons," the explanatory note for the bill says.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055908-poroshenko-submits-to-verkhovna-rada-draft-appeal-to-un-and-eu-for-deployment-of-peacekeepers.html>

Presidents of Ukraine and Germany discussed prospects of bilateral relations' development and ratification of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, 16.03.2015

In the course of his two-day official visit to Germany, President Petro Poroshenko has held a meeting with Federal President of Germany Joachim Gauck in Berlin.

On the porch of the official residence, the Presidents have walked by the line of warriors of the Honor Guard. The orchestra has performed the anthems of Ukraine and Germany. The Head of State has left a note in the Book of Honored Guests.

In the course of the meeting, the President has informed his German colleague on the situation in Donbas and emphasized the need for liberating all the hostages, including director Oleh Sentsov and Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko. The President has drawn the attention of his German colleague to the persecution of the Ukrainian church in the occupied territories. The parties have agreed with the necessity of prolonging and broadening sanctions against Russia.

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32486.html>

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32489.html>

PGO seizes property of illegitimate Crimean officials, 16.03.2015

The Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine (PGO) has seized the property of members of parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as well as of the self-proclaimed leaders of the autonomy, in particular Sergey Aksyonov and Vladimir Konstantinov.

This has been announced by the PGO press office.

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/pgo_seizes_property_of_illegitimate_crimean_officials_329827

Rada approves introduction of special procedures in some districts of Donbas after local elections, 16.03.2015

A total of 265 MPs voted on Tuesday for the bill amending Article 10 of the law on special local self-government procedures in some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which was submitted by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

The law says that these special procedures will be implemented by local self-governance bodies elected in extraordinary elections.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255580.html>

SBU detained five suspects of terrorist acts in Odesa, 16.03.2015

Ukraine's Security Service officers detained five Ukrainians who are suspected in committing a number of terrorists acts in Odesa, announced SBU head adviser Markiiian Lubkivskyi. According to him, one of the detainees scuttled from the Ukrainian army. Lubkivskyi stressed that the suspects were producing explosives for blowing up premises of one of Odesa volunteer organizations. SBU have seized supplies and arms in a garage of the terrorist group. Subsequent activities on detaining other suspects of Odesa terrorist acts are underway.

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/328697/sbu_detained_five_suspects_of_terrorist_acts_in_odesa

Council of Europe and Ukraine launch new Action Plan, 16.03.2015

In Kyiv 17-18 March, Mr Jagland is meeting President Petro Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Volodymyr Groysman, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, other government officials, and representatives of civil society.

In the meeting with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk on Tuesday, the Secretary General assured the Prime Minister of his and the Council of Europe's full support for Ukraine's reform process and territorial integrity. The Secretary General and the Prime Minister agreed on the need for a comprehensive constitutional reform and full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all parties. Mr Jagland proposed that the Council of Europe provide its legal and constitutional expertise towards drafting the legislation necessary for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/council-of-europe-and-ukraine-to-launch-new-action-plan>

Ukraine closed small border traffic with Russia effective today, 16.03.2015

emporary restrictions on the crossing of the state border of Ukraine were introduced today for the residents of border regions of the Russian Federation, in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine decree №86.

In particular, crossing of the Russian-Ukrainian state border by residents of border regions of the Russian Federation through the local checkpoints is suspended starting from March 16. The border control process for this category of persons and the border crossing itself will be conducted in international and interstate border crossing points. The mentioned persons must have travel passports to cross the border. The Russian Federation national IDs and the birth certificates (for children under 14 years of age) will be invalid for entry to Ukraine.

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/328604/ukraine_closed_small_border_traffic_with_russia_effective_today

Coalition parties split over question of special status for Donbas, 17.03.2015

"There is no coordination of positions in the coalition regarding the special status of the area of the ATO implementation," Kononenko said.

"At the moment, the factions of the Radical Party, Samopomich and Batkivshchyna are not ready to support the bill submitted by the president. The coalition council is to be adjourned later. We will try to find common ground."

Kononenko also said discussions are being held about the relevant resolution and a bill related to this issue.

Leader of Radical Party Oleh Liashko said NSDC Secretary Oleksandr Turchynov was also involved in the consultations with the leaders of the fractions.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056427-coalition-parties-split-over-question-of-special-status-for-donbas.html>

Kyiv asks Bucharest to back sending peacekeepers to Donbas, 17.03.2015

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis have discussed the initiative to deploy peacekeepers in Donbas.

"I have asked the Romanian side to back Ukraine's appeal to the UN Security Council and the EU Council about the deployment of peacekeepers to provide security on the contact line and on the uncontrolled sections of the state border. In our opinion, which is shared by our partners, it will ensure better stabilization and can help us avoid many casualties," Poroshenko said at a press conference after talks with Iohannis in Kyiv on Tuesday.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255556.html>

Prime Minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatsenyuk met with Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland, 17.03.2015

The Prime Minister of Ukraine highly appreciated the principled position of the Council of Europe condemning the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russian aggression in the eastern Ukraine. Arseniy Yatsenyuk appealed to Thorbjørn Jagland and urged to use the whole potential of the Council of Europe to make Russia meet its international commitments, in particular to release illegally detained Ukrainian prisoners and hostages.

Apart from that, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Secretary General of the Council of Europe discussed priority ways to support reforms in Ukraine. In particular, it concerned cooperation with the Venice Commission to complete a judicial reform as well as the support of legal mechanisms to protect human rights.

Prime Minister of Ukraine expressed concern over gross and systematic violations of human rights in Crimea by the Russian occupation administration, including persecution of Crimean Tatars, and urged the Council of Europe to make every effort to overcome the problems.

http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=248014795×tamp=1426598634000

Demobilization starts in Ukraine - Defense Ministry, 18.03.2015

Some 35,300 servicemen are eligible for the demobilization underway in Ukraine, according to the Defense Ministry.

These are the servicemen mobilized in the special period under the Ukrainian president's order "On Partial Mobilization" of March 17, 2014.

"Over 30,000 servicemen recruited in spring and summer of 2014 will be discharged from the combat zone from March 18," First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Vitaliy Kovalchuk said.

"The servicemen will be returning to all regions of the country, approximately 1,000-2,000 men to each," he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255736.html>

Ukrainian army to grow to 250,000 within month – minister, 18.03.2015

"This will happen within a month," Poltorak said in Kyiv on Wednesday. The reporters asked when the army size might grow to 250,000 men.

Ukraine has approximately 230,000 army servicemen at present but the 250,000 man target will be achieved through mobilization, the minister noted.

The Verkhovna Rada passed a presidential bill increasing the size of the army to 250,000 men, including 204,000 military servicemen, on March 5.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255771.html>

Readout of the President's Call with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, 18.03.2015

The President spoke today with Chancellor Merkel of Germany regarding developments in Ukraine. The two leaders agreed on the need for full and prompt implementation of the three Minsk agreements in order to reach a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict. They reiterated their agreement that there will be no easing of sanctions imposed on Russia until it has fulfilled all of its Minsk commitments. The President and the Chancellor also agreed on the continued importance of providing economic support for Ukraine as it implements necessary reforms.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/18/readout-president-s-call-chancellor-angela-merkel-germany>

National anti-corruption agency set up in Ukraine, 18.03.2015

"Today, the government has adopted the decision to set up the National anti-corruption agency. The draft decision was earlier submitted by the Justice Ministry," Justice minister of Ukraine Pavlo Petrenko said.

Petrenko noted that in the near future the Parliament would have to consider and pass the law on the regulations for the competition committee, which will form the public council at the National anti-corruption agency.

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/national_anti_corruption_agency_set_up_in_ukraine_329900

Ukraine, Romania agree to set up joint checkpoints on their border – Poroshenko, 18.03.2015

The presidents of Ukraine and Romania have agreed to set up joint checkpoints on the Ukrainian-Romanian border, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said.

"We've made several practical steps in agreements that will make our citizens' life easier. We've agreed that significant progress will be made in local border traffic. We hope and have already tasked our ministers to simplify border crossing regime through the mechanism of local border movement," Poroshenko said at a briefing in Kyiv on Tuesday after talks with his Romanian counterpart Klaus Iohannis.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255635.html>

Over 5,000 ex-Ukrainian soldiers who remained in Crimea charged with desertion and treason – chief military prosecutor, 18.03.2015

More than 5,000 people who served with the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and stayed on the peninsula after its annexation face being charged with treason and desertion, Deputy Prosecutor General and Chief Military Prosecutor of Ukraine Anatoliy Matios has said.

"Regarding the military, those military [personnel] who didn't move to the continental part of Ukraine and stayed in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea exceed 5,000 people from different armed forces, such as the air force, Navy and other units and formations," he said. Matios said that investigations have begun.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255620.html>

President invited the Council of Europe to take part in the work of the Constitutional Commission and ensuring free and fair elections in Donbas, 18.03.2015

At the meeting with Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjorn Jagland, the President has discussed the activity of the newly established Constitutional Commission. The President has emphasized that Ukraine was interested in participation of the Venice Commission experts in the work of the Constitutional Commission from the very beginning. The Head of State has noted that the participation of the Venice Commission experts would make the work of the Constitutional Commission more fast and ensure transparency of all procedures. "We must work in close coordination with the Parliament, NGOs, Venice Commission and President from the very beginning. It will accelerate the decision-making process," Petro Poroshenko emphasized.

<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/32504.html>

Hot water rates to increase by 55-57% from April 1, heating by 73%, 18.03.2015

Tariffs for the centralized supply of hot water for the Ukrainian public will increase by 55-57% from April 1, 2015, while heating bills will increase on average by 73%, Head of the Department of Economics of Utilities Systems of the Ministry of Regional Development of Construction and Housing Natalia Hotsianivska said at a briefing on Wednesday.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1057038-hot-water-rates-to-increase-by-55-57-from-april-1-heating-by-73.html>

President signs changes to law on special local government order in Donbas, 18.03.2015

Law No. 256-VIII, which was passed by the Verkhovna Rada on Tuesday, is aimed at normalizing the social and political situation and ensuring proper operation of local government agencies in these districts through holding early elections of local deputies and heads in regional districts, cities, towns and villages, municipal and rural districts.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057190-president-signs-changes-to-law-on-special-local-government-order-in-donbas.html>

First Ukrainian serviceman who betrayed Ukraine in Crimea detained, 19.03.2015

A sergeant from Mykolayiv region was detained at Dzhankoy while crossing the border. The investigators from the chief military prosecutor's office told the TV channel that the arrest is the only one of this kind in Ukraine.

Prior to the annexation of Crimea, the man had served under the contract at Perevalne, and a month ago he had called his mother and said that he was going home and he was offered a job in Kyiv.

While trying to cross the border in Dzhankoy, the serviceman who had signed a contract with the Russian army a year ago, was arrested for his desertion. He faces the charge that is punished from two to five years of imprisonment.

The serviceman's family only hopes that he will receive a suspended sentence. The first court hearing of this notorious case is expected to be held in a week.

http://www.ukrinform.ua/eng/news/first_ukrainian_serviceman_who_betrayed_ukraine_in_crimea_detained_329923

Rada allows intelligence agencies to conduct special operations in occupied areas of Donbas, 20.03.2015

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has confirmed the legal right of the Ukrainian intelligence agencies to infiltrate international terrorist organizations and organizations carrying out sabotage attacks against Ukraine.

Bill No. 2383 on making amendments to certain laws of Ukraine on the intelligence agencies of Ukraine was adopted at first reading with the support of 258 MPs on Thursday.

The author of the bill, MP Serhiy Pashynsky, said the bill gave the intelligence agencies the right to conduct special operations in the occupied territories.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/256226.html>

Ukraine's Oligarchs Are at War, 20.03.2015

Ending the destructive power that billionaires exercised over Ukrainian politics was an important goal of last year's "revolution of dignity" in Kiev, yet some of the more civic-minded of these businessmen wound up running the country anyhow. They now seem to have gone back to their old ways.

Even before the chocolate mogul Petro Poroshenko became president last year, Igor Kolomoisky (net worth \$1.3 billion) was appointed governor of his native Dnipropetrovsk region. Now, the two so-called oligarchs are locked in an open battle that augurs ill for Ukraine's immediate future.

Kolomoisky was for many Ukrainians a hero of the post-revolutionary period. He took on the governorship as Russia was stirring up trouble throughout eastern Ukraine in the hope of producing a broad-based uprising against the pro-Western provisional government in Kiev. To keep Dnipropetrovsk in Ukraine, Kolomoisky became the most generous sponsor of Ukrainian nationalist volunteer battalions. Even the fleet of armored vehicles used by his Privatbank, the biggest retail bank in Ukraine, was partially repurposed for use in the war.

Thanks to those efforts, separatism failed to catch on in Dnipropetrovsk. Another wealthy industrialist, Sergei Taruta, who was appointed governor of Donetsk, failed in part because he couldn't match Kolomoisky's passionate personal commitment. Much of the Donetsk region is now controlled by pro-Russian rebels.

<http://www.bloombergvie.com/articles/2015-03-20/ukraine-s-oligarchs-are-at-war-again->

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/oligarchs-at-war-claims-of-murder-among-ukrainian-billionaires-in-high-court-case-10107612.html>

National Guard forces sent to Dnipropetrovsk region 'due to possible riots', 20.03.2015

According to the report, the measures were taken in connection with possible riots in the region because of the information about the possible resignation of the head of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Ihor Kolomoiskiy.

In addition, there is information that during the talks of the leaders of "Normandy Four" countries in Minsk last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded the resignation of Kolomoiskiy. The information is being clarified now.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1057923-national-guard-forces-sending-to-dnipropetrovsk-region-due-to-possible-riots.html>

SBU carries out special operation in Donbas conflict zone: 16 officers detained, 23.03.2015

"A total of 16 people, including officers of the Ukrainian armed forces, the Interior Ministry, Ukraine's SBU state security service, and other armed groups were detained during the first stage of a special operation along the line of contact for corruption, abduction, robbery, smuggling, extortion, and issuing false passes," he said.

"Such socially dangerous crimes were carried out by certain corrupt officials in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian authorities. An SBU colonel and police officers were among those detained who issued false passes," Nalyvaichenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1058861-sbu-carries-out-special-operation-in-donbas-conflict-zone-16-officers-detained.html>

Nalyvaichenko says SBU stepping up counter-terrorism measures in Odesa, 25.03.2015

Nalyvaichenko was speaking with journalists in Kyiv after laying flowers at the memorial plaque to the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred in the Academy of the SBU.

"The Law enforcement agencies and Ukraine's SBU state security service are still ensuring public order in Odesa region. Moreover, we have strengthened counter-terrorism measures [taken] in Odesa with a steering group of the Security Service of Ukraine," he said.

According to Nalyvaichenko, SBU officers detained three more saboteurs in Odesa region, whom he said had explosives and planned to use them for attacks.

"Ukraine's SBU state security service and other law enforcement agencies are preparing for the next stage of the counterterrorist operation in Odesa region to completely sweep it of terrorist-minded groups or individuals," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059677-nalyvaichenko-says-sbu-stepping-up-counter-terrorism-measures-in-odesa.html>

Poroshenko signs law to increase size of Ukraine's army to 250,000 men, 25.03.2015

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2012 approved the size of the Ukrainian armed forces at 184,000 men. But the new parliament elected on October 26 last year on March 5 voted for a presidential bill to increase the size of the Ukrainian armed forces to 250,000.

The corresponding bill, No. 2269, was supported by 270 out of 314 MPs registered in the session hall.

According to Deputy Defense Minister Petro Mekhed, after the Anti-Terrorist Operation and the subsequent demobilization, the size of the Ukrainian armed forces will be reduced in line with the military-political situation.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059739-poroshenko-signs-law-to-increase-size-of-ukraines-army-to-250000-men.html>

Antimonopoly committee orders supermarkets to reduce food prices, 25.03.2015

According to the results of its inspection of retail chains in major cities of Ukraine, the committee concluded that in some cases retailers overpriced certain groups of products.

The AMC said that in view of the rapid growth in demand and simultaneous increase in prices of food products (flour, sugar, buckwheat, sunflower oil, pasta, oats and salt) in the period from February 21-28, 2015, the committee began investigations into the major retail chains in Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa and Kharkiv, as well as their suppliers and food producers.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1059749-antimonopoly-committee-orders-supermarkets-to-reduce-food-prices.html>

Ukrainian government officials arrested for corruption at cabinet meeting, 25.05.2015

Head of the State Service for Emergency Situations Sergiy Bochkovsky and his first deputy Vasyl Stoietsky were detained for corruption involving public procurement procedures, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said at the meeting.

"Using a simple scheme, state procurement was carried out through a private company," Avakov said.

"The private company was transferring money to a non-resident of Ukraine – an offshore company on the island of Jersey, and from there - to another private company owned by Bochkovsky and Stoietsky, after which the funds were transferred to card accounts they had opened in banks, including in Cyprus," Avakov said after the detention of the officials.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059794-ukrainian-government-officials-arrested-live-on-tv-at-cabinet-meeting-for-corruption.html>

Ukraine receives first batch of US Humvee armored vehicles, 25.03.2015

The United States also said it would deliver as non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine Raven drones, which can be launched manually.

A total of 30 armored off-road vehicles and 200 Humvees will also be delivered in Ukraine. In addition, it is expected that the United States will provide radios, anti-mortar radars and other equipment.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1059862-ukraine-receives-first-batch-of-us-humvee-armored-vehicles.html>

Avakov dismisses heads of State Emergency Services in all regions, 25.03.2015

"It was decided to dismiss all the heads of Regional State Emergency Services... In all of these regions we will organize an appropriate inspection and will decide on the further work of these persons in the State Emergency Service and on the level of their involvement in the corruption schemes that were discovered by the Interior Ministry," he said.

As reported earlier, on March 25, at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Chairman of the State Service of Ukraine for Emergency Situations Serhiy Bochkovskiy and his first deputy Vasil Stoietskiy were detained.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059821-avakov-dismisses-heads-of-state-emergency-services-in-all-regions.html>

Lustration procedure launched at Ukrainian Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food, 25.03.2015

The minister pledged the procedure will be objective and performed in compliance with the law. A statement that requests inspection has already been submitted to the State Judicial Administration, the State Fiscal Service and the Ministry of Justice.

The lustration inspection will also be carried out on the heads of central executive authorities, including the State Agency for Forest Resources and Fisheries of Ukraine, other accountable institutions and leaders at the regional level.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1059889-lustration-procedure-launched-at-ukrainian-ministry-of-agrarian-policy-and-food.html>

Ukrainian Parliament OKs Bill On Special Status For Rebel East, 26.03.2015

Ukrainian lawmakers have approved a draft law to grant special status to the rebel-held areas in the country's east. The Verkhovna Rada approved the bill on March 17.

It was part of a package of legislative proposals made by President Petro Poroshenko and that have been sharply criticized by both Russia and the pro-Russian separatists.

The Verkhovna Rada approved the bill on March 17, along with a series of other legislative proposals by President Petro Poroshenko. Russia and the rebels have sharply criticized the proposals put before Ukrainian deputies.

The text of the bill outlines the boundaries of particular districts in the areas under pro-Russian separatist control that could be granted special status with limited self-rule.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-parliament-special-status-donbas-east/26906026.html>

Poroshenko offers Right Sector leader Defense Ministry job – adviser, 26.03.2015

Leader of the Right Sector, MP Dmytro Yarosh has been offered a job at Ukraine's Defense Ministry, Anton Heraschenko, an adviser to Interior Minister Arsen Avakov announced.

"I can confirm that the president has offered Dmytro Yarosh a job at the Defense Ministry. I would approve of Dmytro Yarosh's becoming a civil servant," Heraschenko said.

"And I'll tell you more: he seems to get really bored at the Verkhovna Rada. What is more, he's got a serious wound in a battle. It would be a pleasure for me to create, jointly with Dmytro Yarosh, a self-defense volunteers' union after an Estonian, Finnish or Swiss model,"

Heraschenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1060472-poroshenko-offers-right-sector-leader-defense-ministry-job-adviser.html>

Emergencies service's ex-chief arrested, bail set at UAH 1.18 mln, 28.03.2015

Kyiv's Pechersk district court has ordered to arrest former head of the State Emergency Situations Service Serhiy Bochkovsky with bail set at UAH 1.184 million, and the arrested will be immediately released after the sum has been paid.

The court's decision was announced by Pechersk court judge Ivan Kozlov on Saturday.

"The investigating judge considers it necessary that the suspect Bochkovsky be arrested. At the same time, the suspect is allowed to pay bail set at the sum equivalent to 300 minimum official wages, i.e. UAH 1.184 million," the court's ruling reads.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061003-emergencies-services-ex-chief-arrested-bail-set-at-uah-118-mln.html>

Ex-deputy of emergencies service head arrested with right to bail worth over UAH 1 mln, 28.03.2015

The court has arrested former deputy chairman of the State Emergency Situations Service of Ukraine Vasyl Stoyetsky with the right to be released on bail worth UAH 1.182 million.

This court order was announced by judge of Kyiv's Pechersk district court Ihor Kozlov.

In keeping with the court ruling, the suspect or other person could put up bail until May 23, after which the suspect should be released immediately.

In case of release, Stoyetsky is obliged to visit investigators on demand and not to leave his permanent place of residence.

Justifying the decision, the court announced the suspect should be arrested as he may influence witnesses when out of prison.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061044-ex-deputy-of-emergencies-service-head-arrested-with-right-to-bail-worth-over-uah-1-mln.html>

Poroshenko signs law in support of volunteer movement in Ukraine, 30.03.2015

According to the report, the Law No. 246-8 of March 5, 2015 regulates social relations associated with the implementation of volunteer activities in Ukraine.

The main objective of the bill is to ensure the effective regulation of legal relations that can arise during the implementation of volunteer activities in Ukraine, promote the development of the volunteer movement in Ukraine and improve the quality of volunteer help.

The law defines the directions of volunteer activities and the terms "volunteering" and "volunteer," removes restrictions for volunteering organizations and institutions, clarifies the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the organizations and institutions that engage volunteers, explains the features of recovery of costs associated with the provision of volunteer assistance, and other changes that will contribute to the development of volunteer activities.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1061437-poroshenko-signs-law-in-support-of-volunteer-movement-in-ukraine.html>

SBU eliminates 'terrorism financing channel' in Kharkiv region, 30.03.2015

The SBU said that funding was provided through two Kharkiv commercial entities via a conversion center controlled by Zhilin. Money intended for terrorist financing was transferred to legal and natural persons on the territory of the Russian Federation, and the cash was illegally transported to Russia across the state border of Ukraine.

Then the funds were delivered to Rostov region, and from there to the leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics militant organizations through the area of Ukrainian-Russian border controlled by the militants.

Zhilin's accomplices were detained while trying to transport money across the state border of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. A few days earlier the funds had been illegally converted into cash with the help of these commercial structures.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1061587-sbu-eliminates-terrorism-financing-channel-in-kharkiv-region.html>

Terrorism / Separatism

Pro-Russian militants simulate withdrawal of weaponry from Donbas – Ukraine's ATO Staff, 01.03.2015

To mislead the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, pro-Russian militants pull out their military equipment from the line of contact during the day and bring it back overnight. This was announced by ATO speaker Andriy Lysenko at a briefing.

"Signs that the enemy is preparing further advances in the direction of Mariupol, Artemivsk and from Luhansk are being registered," he said.

Lysenko also said border guards at the Lysychansk checkpoint on February 28 identified a Ukrainian citizen who was travelling by bus en route from Severodonetsk to Hirske (both in Luhansk region), as a member of an illegal armed group, according to the database of the Interior Ministry of Ukraine.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050215-pro-russian-militants-simulate-withdrawal-of-weaponry-from-donbas-ukraines-ato-staff.html>

Four more soldiers from 128th brigade released from militants' captivity, 01.03.2015

They are Ruslan Shkamlotov, Ihor Pylypaka, Yuriy Ivaniuk, and Yevhen Shevchuk. The soldiers are on their way back home, Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Vasyl Budyk said.

The condition of their health is satisfactory, he added.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050218-four-more-soldiers-from-128th-brigade-released-from-militants-captivity.html>

Militants 'attempt to attack frontline positions' of Ukrainian troops, 02.03.2015

In some areas the militants and Russian mercenaries are trying to carry out attacks on the forward positions of Ukrainian troops. Their main activity is focused in the Donetsk area.

"In particular, over the past days, with artillery and heavy infantry weapons, there were attacks on the positions of Ukrainian troops in the area of Avdiyivka. Attacks were also launched on the positions of Ukrainian troops near Krasnogorovka, Opytne, and Tonenke," Tymchuk wrote. In the area from Krasnogorovka to the south-west of Horlivka Russian-backed militants are trying to oust Ukrainian troops from their positions by conducting offensive operations, Tymchuk said. At the moment, these attempts are being stopped by Ukrainian troops, but the enemy is continuing to strengthen its forces in this area.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050376-militants-attempt-to-attack-frontline-positions-of-ukrainian-troops.html>

UN: Number of displaced persons exceeds one million, 02.03.2015

The total number of people displaced from Crimea, Sevastopol and the Donbas conflict zone has now exceeded one million people, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said on Monday while presenting his new monitoring report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine. The report covers the period from December 1, 2014 to February 15, 2015. According to the report, all aspects of human life were negatively affected, and the situation of the local people was getting worse, especially in the territories controlled by the Russian-backed militants.

"The situation in eastern Ukraine strongly influences the human rights situation in other regions of the country. For today, more than one million people have been registered as internally displaced persons, while many places for their settlement are overcrowded and under-resourced," the report says.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1050588-un-number-of-displaced-persons-exceeds-one-million.html>

One Ukrainian soldier killed, four wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 02.03.2015

"Over the last day, we have lost one Ukrainian soldier, and another four were injured as a result of military clashes," Lysenko said

On March 1 the ATO headquarters reported no casualties among the Ukrainian armed forces in the last day.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050452-one-ukrainian-soldier-killed-four-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

Tymchuk: Militants send military hardware to Novoazovsk, 02.03.2015

Militant tactical group consists of 550-600 Russian mercenaries and soldiers of the RF, 20 tanks, 33 armored combat vehicles, 28 artillery pieces, and 16 multiple rocket launcher systems. "Before [seeing] this large group we saw small tactical groups of the DPR, mostly platoons, but several groups of up to a company. These groups have a small amount of heavy armored vehicles and act as light infantry as a part of the tactical groups of the Russian-backed militants," Tymchuk said.

"The militants also continue to improve their defenses south to Mariupol, outside the village of Sakhanka. They are equipping platoon and company strongholds, actively laying minefields, and carrying out a number of other activities. In addition, they're continuing to fire on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces near the villages of Shyrokyne, Oktiabr and Zaichenko," Tymchuk said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050381-tymchuk-militants-send-military-hardware-to-novoazovsk.html>

UN: Number of killed in Donbas conflict about 6000, 02.03.2015

About 6,000 people have been killed in the Donbas conflict zone in eastern Ukraine since fighting broke out there in April, the chairman of the UN mission on Human Rights in Ukraine.

"According to our latest data, from mid-April 2014 to mid-February 2015, at least 5,809 people have been killed and 14,740 wounded in the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine," Armen Harutyunyan said.

"In addition, 1,112 people were killed and 3,713 injured from December 1, 2014 to February 15, 2015," he said.

"However, taking into account that a full report of casualties, especially near Donetsk airport and near Debaltseve, has not yet been submitted, the UN mission on Human Rights estimates the total number of people killed in the east of Ukraine as of March 2 at about 6,000 people," Harutyunyan said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1050432-un-number-of-killed-in-donbas-conflict-about-6000.html>

Militants trying to rebuild Debaltseve rail hub, 03.03.2015

"The first shipment of ammunition consisting of six rail cars has already arrived in Debaltseve from the Russian Federation," Tymchuk said.

Russian-backed militants in the east of Ukraine attacked and captured Debaltseve on February 18, three days after a ceasefire in the region was supposed to have come into force.

According to two recent reports in the Russian press citing information provided by Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine, the operation to capture the Ukrainian-held town was largely conducted by regular Russian troops serving as "volunteers" with the militants.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050960-militants-trying-to-rebuild-debaltseve-rail-hub.html>

Night in conflict zone calm after evening of active shelling, 03.03.2015

"Starting from 2100, the militants fired small arms on [Ukrainian] positions, provocatively and chaotically. Not far from Donetsk, the militants fired twice on our fortified position near the mine of Dutovskaya. They also attacked the villages of Myronivskiy and Maiorsk near Artemivsk," the report says.

Russian-backed militants also fired mortars on Avdiivka at night, the press center said.

In total, during the night, starting from 2100 on March 2 and until 0500 on March 3, the militants violated the ceasefire six times.

At the same time, on the evening of March 2, there was an intensification of the enemy's military actions.

"In the area of Donetsk, at about 1900, the militants fired mortars on the village of Pisky. At 2010 they fired multiple rocket launcher systems and at 2030 they directed tank fire on Avdiivka. At 2020 they fired grenade launchers on the village of Opytne. And at about 2000 near the village of Sokolnyky in Luhansk region there was a fire fight between our troops and the militants," the report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1050973-night-in-conflict-zone-calm-after-evening-of-active-shelling.html>

Tymchuk: Militants trying to force Ukrainian soldiers out of Shyrokyne, 04.03.2015

"The militants are actively [simulating] the withdrawal of troops in this region: they withdraw weapons in the daytime and return them at night. As the militants say themselves, they're spinning a carousel," Tymchuk said.

The enemy continues to carry out active reconnaissance of the combat formations of the Ukrainian armed forces on several fronts.

There have been several attempts by Russian-backed militants to dramatically strengthen and increase the use of sabotage and reconnaissance groups up to the positions of the Ukrainian troops. The lack of complete control of the line of demarcation by the Ukrainian armed forces allows the militants to carry out such actions, Tymchuk said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051437-tymchuk-militants-trying-to-force-ukrainian-soldiers-out-of-shyrokyne.html>

Death toll in Zasyadko coalmine methane blast grows to 33, 04.03.2015

Twenty-three more bodies of miners who died in a methane blast at Zasyadko coalmine in the rebel-held city of Donetsk on Wednesday morning have been recovered.

Donetsk Regional Administration wrote this on Twitter.

"The bodies of twenty-three more miners have been found at Zasyadko mine in Donetsk.

Seven of them have been brought to the surface already. Nine bodies were found earlier, one died in the morning. The death toll is 33 people," the regional administration wrote.

Earlier reports said about 10 deaths.

A methane blast shook Zasyadko coalmine at 0520 Kyiv time on Wednesday. A total of 230 miners were working at the mine at that moment.

Representatives of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic where the coal mine is located refused to accept assistance from Ukrainian rescuers.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1051804-death-toll-in-zasyadko-coalmine-methane-blast-grows-to-33.html>

Militants violate ceasefire 12 times in last 12 hours, 04.03.2015

"From 1800 on March 3 to 0600 on March 4 the militants attacked the villages of Opytne, Pisky, and Berezoviy. At midnight, they fired artillery on Avdiivka, and they also fired mortars and multiple rocket launcher systems on the village of Vodiane," the report says.

Russian-backed militants also fired rocket-propelled grenades and small arms on the village of Shastyia. Near the village of Lebedynske not far from Mariupol Ukrainian positions were fired on by a sniper.

In addition, the Ukrainian armed forces observed a militant reconnaissance drone over the villages of Krasnivka and Znamenivka.

"In general, from 1800 yesterday and until now the militants have used weapons against the Ukrainian armed forces 12 times. Ukrainian soldiers continue to strengthen the defensive line and prepare for the second phase of redeployment of artillery systems certain distances away, according to the [Minsk] international agreements," the press center said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051457-militants-violate-ceasefire-12-times-in-last-12-hours.html>

General Staff: 19 soldiers killed, 135 injured during withdrawal from Debaltseve, 04.03.2015

During the planned withdrawal of about 3,000 soldiers from the Debaltseve bridgehead, Ukraine lost 19 soldiers. The fate of another 12 soldiers is being clarified. A total of 135 soldiers received injuries of varying severity... Nine defenders of the Debaltseve bridgehead are still in captivity," he said.

According to Selezniiov, all government and public institutions are involved in working for the release of the Ukrainian military.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051484-general-staff-19-soldiers-killed-135-injured-during-withdrawal-from-debaltseve.html>

More than 80 bodies of soldiers taken from conflict zone over last week, 04.03.2015

"Over the last week, from militant-controlled territory we have recovered the bodies of 81 people who died from January to February 2015," he said.

"We have already identified 19 of the bodies. Their names will be soon published on the Web site of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine," Selezniiov said.

He also said that forensic medical examination experts were involved in the identification of the other dead bodies.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051509-more-than-80-bodies-of-soldiers-taken-from-conflict-zone-over-last-week.html>

One Ukrainian soldier killed, one wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 04.03.2015

"Over the last day, we have lost one Ukrainian soldier, and another one was injured as a result of military clashes," Lysenko said.

Despite peace talks being held last month in Minsk, the fighting on the ground in eastern Ukraine continues. Ukrainian troops are frequently attacked by Russian-backed militants in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, although the intensity and number of the attacks decreased.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1051551-one-ukrainian-soldier-killed-one-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

Office of Right Sector in Odesa blown up, 05.03.2015

The blast occurred on the city's Koblevskaya Street, at building No. 40, at about 0030.

No-one was hurt in the explosion. A private apartment located near the office was damaged, as were cars near the building. The blast also shattered windows in neighboring buildings.

The incident reportedly came after Right Sector activists attacked an illegal casino located near the office on the corner of Ekateriniskaya and Deribasovskaya streets. According to media reports, the casino guards began to shoot at them, but the activists were able to disarm the guards.

After the initial shooting, the owner of the casino appeared with unidentified armed men, who started beating the activists, shooting began again, and gas was released into the Right Sector office, shortly after which the explosion occurred.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1052015-office-of-right-sector-in-odesa-blown-up.html>

Ukrainian army repels militant attacks near Mariupol, 06.03.2015

"On March 5, at 1945, 2015 and 2040 the Ukrainian armed forces recorded drones over the eastern outskirts of Mariupol," he said.

"Later, at 2138, the militants began storming the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces in the village of Shyrokyne. A grouping of DPR militants, consisting of 20 people, started to storm [Ukrainian positions] with small arms. The attack was repelled."

"At 2145 the militants fired grenade launchers and small arms on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces in the village of Shyrokyne. The shelling lasted until morning," Sushynskiy said.

"There were no casualties among the personnel of the Ukrainian army. The situation is under control," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1052511-ukrainian-army-repels-militant-attacks-near-mariupol.html>

Militants fire on Ukrainian army 14 times in last day, 06.03.2015

"The militants carried out isolated attacks on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces. From 2000 on March 5 to 0600 on March 6 the militants fired 14 times on the positions of our units," Stelmakh said.

"For a long time the largest number of attacks were recorded in the area of Donetsk. Around 2000 the militants fired with mortars and grenades on Avdiivka and the village of Pisky. At 0150 the militants again hit Avdiivka, at 0310 they attacked the village of Kamianka and at 0410 they fired on the village of Khimik," Stelmakh said.

"In the direction of Mariupol, at 2145 and at 0030 the militants fired for nearly an hour with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades on the village of Shyrokyne. At 2130 they tried to unsuccessfully storm our positions," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052499-militants-fire-on-ukrainian-army-14-times-in-last-day.html>

Tymchuk: Militants repairing military equipment and building up forces, 06.03.2015

In two days five convoys with supplies (one by railway, four by road, with a total of eight railcars and 46 vehicles) have arrived from Russia. In addition, the militants have been actively restoring Debaltseve railway junction. At the same time, the Russian-backed militants continue violating the Minsk agreement, Tymchuk said.

"The most active attacks were carried out in Donetsk and Primorsky (Mariupol) directions in the area northwest of Avdiyivka, near the settlement Shastya, and in the area from Svitlodarsk to Popasna," Tymchuk wrote.

"Along almost the whole demarcation line [we] have observed only a slight decrease in the number of artillery pieces, [which were to be] withdrawn to the rear as specified in the Minsk agreement. Heavy armor, in particular, tanks, which are also used to fire at the positions of Ukrainian troops, remain in place along the demarcation line."

<http://www.unian.info/war/1052462-tymchuk-militants-repairing-military-equipment-and-building-up-forces.html>

Tymchuk: Militants to introduce 'ration cards' due to food shortages, 06.03.2015

"A number of officials from the DPR believe that this is the only way out of this situation," Tymchuk said.

The Ukrainian government has restricted transport over the demarcation line between the warring sides in the Donbas by introducing a permit regime. This has disrupted not only regular supplies of foodstuffs from government-held territories, but supplies of vital medicines as well.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1052493-tymchuk-militants-to-introduce-ration-cards-due-to-food-shortages.html>

1,541 soldiers killed, 6,226 injured since start of anti-terrorist operation in Donbas, 06.03.2015

"Since the very moment when new Minsk agreements on the ceasefire were signed on February 15, militants have committed more than 750 attacks. Thus, the Ukrainian forces have lost 64 soldiers and 341 troops have been wounded. Only in the last few days, terrorists fired on the [Ukrainian] armed forces 58 times. Since the beginning of the antiterrorist operation last year, we've lost 1,541 soldiers and 6,226 have been injured," Ukraine's Ambassador to the United Nations Yuriy Sergeyev said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052839-1541-soldiers-killed-6226-injured-since-start-of-anti-terrorist-operation-in-donbas.html>

Ukrainian troops begin to pull out Uragan multiple rocket launchers from line of contact, 07.03.2015

This was announced by press secretary of the Anti-Terrorist Operation's Staff Andriy Lysenko, Novosti Donbasa reported.

"The third phase of the withdrawal of heavy military equipment by the Armed Forces of Ukraine is under way. At the moment, 100mm caliber MT-12 Rapira and MT-12R Ruta anti-tank guns, 152mm caliber Akatsiya (Acacia) self-propelled artillery systems and Grad multiple rocket launcher systems have been pulled out," Lysenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053003-ukrainian-troops-begin-to-pull-out-uragan-multiple-rocket-launchers-from-line-of-contact.html>

Five more Ukrainian soldiers released from militants' captivity, 07.03.2015

Five Ukrainian soldiers have been released from militants' captivity, Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Vasyl Budyk wrote on Facebook.

According to him, these were the servicemen from the 20th battalion and the 28th brigade. The release of the prisoners of war (POW) was handled by the coordinating department of Ukraine's Defense Ministry.

As of March 4, 2015, militants kept 195 POWs.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053010-five-more-ukrainian-soldiers-released-from-militants-captivity.html>

ATO Headquarters: fourth phase of heavy weaponry pull-out over, 08.03.2015

The Ukrainian side has completed the fourth phase of the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the line of contact in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) zone in eastern Ukraine.

This was announced by ATO speaker Andriy Lysenko.

"We've completed the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the line of contact. In particular, 100mm caliber Rapira and Ruta anti-tank guns and Grad and Uragan multiple rocket launcher systems have been pulled out," he said.

According to him, all the heavy weapons are being withdrawn to designated sites. The process is being monitored by OSCE observers and journalists.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053157-ato-headquarters-fourth-phase-of-heavy-weaponry-pull-out-over.html>

Ukrainian border guards intercept 58 trucks with goods for militants, 08.03.2015

In the past 24 hours, Ukrainian border guards intercepted 58 trucks, which were carrying goods without supporting documents to rebel-held territories in eastern Ukraine.

As the Ukrainian Border Guard Service reported, 33 of the intercepted trucks were blocked when they were trying to bypass the government-controlled road corridors, the weekly political magazine Novoe Vremya reported.

Border guards had to resort to arms to make one of the trucks stop near the village of Stepne in Donetsk region, the report said.

"A border guard detail had to fire 10 warning shots from a Kalashnikov rifle to make a vehicle driving in circumvention of a roadblock stop. The truck was examined and a double package of waybill documents was found," the border guards said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053190-ukrainian-border-guards-intercept-58-trucks-with-goods-for-militants.html>

Five Ukrainian soldiers liberated from terrorist captivity, 08.03.2015

Vasyl Budyk, counselor to the Deputy Defense Minister wrote on Facebook, Censor.NET informs.

"Five more soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were freed today! Many thanks to all who participated in the liberation of the guys!" he wrote.

List of the liberated soldiers:

Oleh Klymenko

Oleksandr Shchepets

Dmytro Zuyev

Yurii Yanytskyi (all of them from the 20th Battallion)

Leonid Podduba from the 28th Brigade.

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/327655/five_ukrainian_soldiers_liberated_from_terrorist_captivity_list

Rebel sniper kills Ukrainian serviceman despite ceasefire: military, 08.03.2015

Attacks have fallen significantly in the past two weeks, but accusations of continued violence on both sides show the fragility of the peace accord agreed in Minsk last month, which calls for the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline.

"There is increased activity of sniper groups. The serviceman who was killed died at the hands of a sniper," Lysenko said in a televised briefing.

He added that while the Minsk agreements were broadly observed along the front lines, and the intensity of provocative attacks had dropped significantly, rebels continued to fire on government positions.

Kiev accuses the separatists of using the ceasefire to regroup their forces and rearm for a further offensive, a charge the rebels deny, saying they have withdrawn heavy artillery in accordance with the Minsk peace deal.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/08/us-ukraine-crisis-casualties-idUSKBN0M40EW20150308>

Militants attack Ukrainian forces with artillery overnight, increased drone activity seen – ATO press center, 09.03.2015

Despite a ceasefire supposedly being in place in the Donbas, Russian-backed militants continued to attack Ukrainian positions overnight, the press center of the government's Anti-Terrorist Operation wrote on Facebook on Monday.

"During the night, from 2000 (Sunday) to 0600 (Monday), the militants attacked [Ukrainian forces'] positions 16 times, mostly using mortars and rocket-propelled grenades," the press center said.

However, from 0415 to 0435 militants fired twice at the town of Avdiivka with artillery, while at 0300 they fired cannon artillery on the village of Opytne, the press center said.

Both settlements are north of Donetsk airport, and well within the "buffer zone" between the sides in which it should now be impossible for attacks to be carried out with heavy artillery by either side - if they have carried out a complete withdrawal of these weapons, as both sides have claimed they have.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053257-militants-attack-ukrainian-forces-with-artillery-overnight-increased-drone-activity-seen-ato-press-center.html>

Heroes or Villains? Volunteer Battalions in Post-Maidan Ukraine, 09.03.2015

Surrounded by a halo of confusing information and deliberate propaganda, the appearance of volunteer battalions in post-Maidan Ukraine and their continued engagement in military operations in the Donbas remains contentious. At a time when the US is still considering whether to provide Ukraine with defensive lethal weapons to withstand the offensive in the east, the question as to whether the Ukrainian forces are cohesive, disciplined, law-abiding and loyal to the country's institutions is extremely important. Recognised for their crucial role in the early days of the hostilities, volunteer battalions are equally feared for their increasing politicisation. Yet they represent a massive resource of motivation and commitment that, if properly channelled, has the potential to revitalise and keep in check unreformed military institutions.

<http://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/heroes-or-villains>

Spot report by Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, 9 March 2015: Local cease-fire holding in Kominternove enables de-mining exercise, 09.03.2015

On 9 March 2015, the SMM facilitated the demining of the village of Kominternove (88km south-east of Donetsk) by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Kominternove is located in between territory controlled by the government and areas controlled by "Donetsk People's Republic" ("DPR") and as a result has been subject to constant shelling since the beginning of the conflict. Many unexploded tank and mortar shells, rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), 220mm rockets and burned tanks can be found throughout the village, including the yard of a local school and kindergarten. Previously, the SMM had seen children playing near the unexploded ordnance (UXO), and had informed Ukrainian authorities (see SMM Daily Report 29 December).

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=61ca0fd6f4>

Poroshenko: 19 Ukrainian soldiers killed during withdrawal from Debaltseve, 10.03.2015

"During the planned withdrawal of about 3,000 soldiers from the Debaltseve bridgehead, Ukraine lost 19 soldiers," Poroshenko said.

"A total of 135 soldiers received injuries of varying severity. Nine defenders of the Debaltseve salient are still in captivity, because, as you know, we released 150 of our soldiers from the captivity of the militants," he said.

"The fate of another 12 soldiers is being clarified," Poroshenko added.

At the time of the retreat of Ukrainian forces from Debaltseve, days after a ceasefire was supposed to have come into effect in the Donbas, Ukrainian soldiers moving out of the town told journalists the withdrawal had been organized by commanders on the ground in the town.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053521-poroshenko-19-ukrainian-soldiers-killed-during-withdrawal-from-debaltseve.html>

Over 60 Ukrainian soldiers killed in Donbas amid truce – Poroshenko, 10.03.2015

Sixty-four Ukrainian servicemen have been killed in eastern Ukraine since February 15, when the latest ceasefire, secured at talks in Minsk, Belarus, on February 12, came into force, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said.

"Sixty-four Ukrainian servicemen have been killed since the truce came into effect on February 15," Poroshenko said in an interview with Pershyi Natsionalnyi Channel on Monday night.

Of this number, 51 were servicemen of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, 11 were soldiers of Ukraine's National Guard, plus representatives of the Interior Ministry, the State Border Guard Service and the State Emergency Situations Service, he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254201.html>

Poroshenko: Operation in eastern Ukraine kills 1,549 servicemen, 10.03.2015

A total of 1,549 Ukrainian servicemen have died in the hostilities in eastern Ukraine, according to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/poroshenko-operation-in-eastern-ukraine-kills-1549-servicemen-383025.html>

Former Ukrainian parliamentarian Melnyk found dead in apparent suicide, 10.03.2015

A former member of the Ukrainian parliament (Party of Regions) and businessman Stanislav Melnyk has been found dead in his apartment in the town of Ukrainka in the Kyiv Oblast. Early reports suggest that he had committed a suicide after shooting himself with a rifle.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/former-ukrainian-parliamentarian-melnyk-found-dead-in-apparent-suicide-383071.html>

Nine Ukrainian soldiers wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 10.03.2015

"Over the last day, we haven't lost any Ukrainian soldiers, but nine were injured as a result of military clashes," Lysenko said.

On March 9 no Ukrainian soldiers were killed but 4 were wounded in the Donbas conflict zone. Despite a ceasefire having been declared on February 15, fighting has continued along the front line in eastern Ukraine, albeit at a reduced level.

According to the Minsk agreements, both sides are supposed to withdraw their heavy weapons from the front line by distances that depend on the ranges of the weapons.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053697-nine-ukrainian-soldiers-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

Tymchuk: About 2,500 militants massing near Mariupol, 10.03.2015

According to Tymchuk, part of the forces and resources of this group of fighters is involved in the fighting along the Pavlopol-Shyrokin section of the front line, with the rest operating in the area from Zaychenko to Zhovtneve.

"The group consists of 2,500 people, divided into several tactical groups of mixed composition (local rebels and Russian mercenaries), having at its disposal 25 tanks and 18-20 armored fighting vehicles, up to 60 units of army vehicles, more than 20 MT-LB and other tractors, and all sorts of converted all-terrain vehicles (primarily operated by mobile mortar teams)," he wrote.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053616-tymchuk-about-2500-militants-massing-near-mariupol.html>

Lysenko: Militants mine 250 ha of Donetsk region, 11.03.2015

"Sowing should take place soon, but 250 hectares of Donetsk region have [already been] planted with mines, grenades and other munitions," Lysenko said.

"That means that the leaders who came there, as directed by the Kremlin, are not going to restore the region.

"The Donetsk and Luhansk militants are completely destroying the regions. They haven't even built a single barn.

"That means that the militants came there temporarily - either to intimidate Ukraine or destroy it."

<http://www.unian.info/war/1053956-lysenko-militants-mine-250-ha-of-donetsk-region.html>

Ukrainian army 'not to withdraw all weapons until sure militants have done so', 11.03.2015

"We have already carried out the fourth stage of the withdrawal of our weapons. We are not going to fully withdraw these weapons, because we do not know that the militants have done the same," NSDC spokesman Andriy Lysenko said.

"Therefore, it would be wrong to expose the front line and to leave our soldiers without protection. That's why we're leaving our heavy infantry weapons there, which could temporarily stop the advancing forces so that the Ukrainian army could return our artillery to the front," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054216-ukrainian-army-not-to-withdraw-all-weapons-until-sure-militants-have-done-so.html>

Azov battalion: Mariupol preparing defenses against attack from sea, 11.03.2015

"Two areas have been identified along the coast near Mariupol, Donetsk region, which are suitable for amphibious assault. Now they are being examined, fortifications are being erected, and military experts with necessary competences are working at the sites," the statement reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054257-azov-battalion-mariupol-preparing-defenses-against-attack-from-sea.html>

9,261 soldiers gain status of ATO participants, 11.03.2015

"Moreover, this week the Defense Ministry has prepared and submitted to the Interdepartmental Commission of the State Service for veterans of the ATO the documents of another 755 Ukrainian soldiers," he said.

"In general, the Interdepartmental Commission is considering the materials of 3,268 soldiers and officers of the Ukrainian armed forces with regard to granting them the status of participants of the ATO," Selezniiov said.

As of February 26, the General Staff said about 8,500 Ukrainian soldiers had gained the status of participant of the ATO.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1054059-9261-soldiers-gain-status-of-ato-participants.html>

Latest from OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine based on information received as of 18:00, 11.03.2015

The SMM monitored the implementation of the "Package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements". The SMM, based on its monitoring – which was restricted by third parties and by security considerations* – observed that fighting continued in areas in and around the Donetsk airport and in areas to the east of Mariupol.

<http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/144671>

Militants resume aerial reconnaissance, firing on Ukrainian border guards, 12.03.2015

According to Slobodian, on March 11 the militants fired small arms on a checkpoint near the village of Maiorske.

"The militants also increased their aerial reconnaissance with the use of drones. From March 8 to March 12, we recorded 61 flights by militant drones over the security zone along the line of military clashes," he said.

The border guards also recorded flights of helicopters near the state border with Russia.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054598-militants-resume-aerial-reconnaissance-firing-on-ukrainian-border-guards.html>

Militants shell Ukrainian positions in Donbas 36 times on March 12 – ATO press center, 12.03.2015

Militants used grenade launchers and mortars 16 times and small arms 20 times from 0600 to 1800 Kyiv time on Thursday.

"The Donetsk sector remains the epicenter of hostilities. The enemy has used 120mm and 82mm caliber mortars and grenade launchers to shell Pisky, Opytne and Butivka coalmine. What is more, at 1150 Kyiv time the gun of an enemy infantry fighting vehicle was firing at our troops near the town of Avdiyivka," the ATO press center said.

Militants near the village of Shyrokyne in the Mariupol sector did not stop shelling either. They attacked the village with various types of weapons four times.

"Small arms were used by the enemy three times to fire at the village of Leninske near Artemivsk. They also used an automatic grenade launcher to shell the town of Mayorsk," the ATO press center said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054850-militants-shell-ukrainian-positions-in-donbas-36-times-on-march-12-ato-press-center.html>

Former governor of Zaporizhzhia region found dead, 12.03.2015

According to the statement by Zaporizhzhia police, the incident was reported to the police at around 1300 on Thursday.

"An investigative team has arrived at the scene - the private house of Oleksandr Peklushenko in the Leninsky district of Zaporizhzhia," police said.

"The ex-chairman of Zaporizhzhia State Administration was indeed found dead. The death was caused by a gunshot wound to the throat."

According to preliminary investigations into the incident Peklushenko's death was suicide. The final cause of death will be determined after carrying out all necessary investigations and examinations, police said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1054701-former-governor-of-zaporizhzhia-region-found-dead.html>

Russian mercenaries from Yekaterinburg heading for Donbas, 12.03.2015

About 50 mercenaries departed from the Russian city of Yekaterinburg for Ukraine late on March 12, Yekaterinburg news portal 66.ru reported.

They are to join the separatist gang led by Oleksiy Mozhgovy, a leader of illegal armed formations in the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic and commander of the Prizrak ('Ghost') brigade, the portal said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054885-russian-mercenaries-from-yekaterinburg-heading-for-donbas-photo.html>

Exclusive: From 'Red October' village, new evidence on downing of Malaysian plane over Ukraine, 12.03.2015

(Reuters) - Villagers in eastern Ukraine have told Reuters they saw a missile flying directly overhead just before a Malaysian airliner was shot out of the sky on July 17 last year, providing the most detailed accounts to date that suggest it was fired from territory held by pro-Russian rebels.

The accounts from 4 villagers of Chervonyi Zhovten, which was then, and is now, controlled by the rebels, are significant because they indicate the rocket was in the early stages of its flight path.

That would mean it must have been launched from rebel ground nearby, challenging the suggestion of Moscow and the separatists that the plane was brought down by the Ukrainian military. At the time, the nearest Ukrainian-held area was about 6 km (3.7 miles) away.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/12/us-ukraine-crisis-airliner-idUSKBN0M81XF20150312>

Militants faking withdrawal of heavy weapons – ATO Staff, 13.03.2015

The withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact in Donbas by illegal armed groups is of a false nature, anti-terrorist operation (ATO) spokesman Andriy Lysenko has said.

"Illegal armed groups' military hardware is running in a circle or being concealed indoors in industrial zones of large towns and cities and in remote farm facilities," he said.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/254961.html>

Tymchuk: Group of 5,000 militants deployed between Maiorske and Avdiivka, 13.03.2015

"During the last two days the number of soldiers of this task group has increased from 3,500 to 5,000 people," Tymchuk said.

"We have observed the militants sending small tactical groups to the front line, including a few tanks, 15-20 armored combat vehicles and several units with antitank weapons - 100mm caliber Rapira anti-tank guns or anti-tank systems on the armored vehicles," he said.

According to Tymchuk, a tactical militant group has been deployed in the Petrovskiy district of Donetsk, including about 45 armored vehicles, 11 of which were tanks. All the equipment was dispersed and camouflaged.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1055090-tymchuk-group-of-5000-militants-deployed-between-maiorske-and-avdiivka.html>

OSCE SMM: 10 Ukrainian border guards in captivity in 'LPR', 13.03.2015

In LPR-controlled Sverdlovsk (61km south-east of Luhansk) the OSCE SMM was told by a local resident that her son, a former Ukrainian Border Guard Service serviceman, was 'arrested' on March 7 and detained by members of the 'Komendatura' (military-type investigative body).

"The 'Komendatura' confirmed to the SMM that they are holding 10 former Ukrainian border guards," the latest report as of March 11 reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1054880-osce-smm-10-ukrainian-border-guards-in-captivity-in-lpr.html>

Spot by OSCE Observer Mission: eighteenth Russian convoy crossed into Ukraine and returned back through the Donetsk Border Crossing Point, 13.03.2015

On 13 March 2015 at 15:14hrs (Moscow time), a Russian convoy arrived at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point (BCP). A total of 24 vehicles were checked by the Russian border guard and customs services. The Observer Mission (OM) was not aware of this convoy coming as it was not announced in advance. All the vehicles had crossed back into the RF by 00:02hrs.

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=0e5344e397&e=6b2886dd4c>

Russian radicals recruit fighters for Donbas in Moscow's downtown, 13.03.2015

Radicals from Eduard Limonov's "Other Russia" party jointly with the representatives of an organization "Interbrigada" have put a tent in Moscow's downtown, calling on to go to war against Ukraine, reports "Ukrayinska Pravda."

The tent has a few posters on them calling on to go fighting for the "Novorissiya" army and stressing the lack of fighters, commanders and military experts.

"Stop sleeping! "Novorossiia's" defeat is death for Russia! It is better to be dead than defeated! Be personally involved. Join as a volunteer!" - calls on the text on the tent.

http://mw.ua/WORLD/russian-radicals-recruit-fighters-for-donbas-in-moscow-s-downtown-1439_.html

"DPR" threatens to breach ceasefire if Ukraine does not give "special status" until March 14, 13.03.2015

The representative of a self-proclaimed "DPR," Denis Pushylin announced that the Ukrainian government has less than two days to make the Ukrainian parliament to determine a list of areas which will have a "special status" in accordance to the Minsk agreements.

"Kyiv has 24 hours left to meet the obligations. If the Ukrainian parliament does not determine the list of settlements with the special status during this time, then the whole world will see that Kyiv disrupts the peace process in the Donbas" – quotes the TASS Pushylin's comment on "Russia-24" TV channel.

http://mw.ua/UKRAINE/dpr-threatens-to-breach-ceasefire-if-ukraine-does-not-give-special-status-until-march-14-1436_.html

More bodies of Ukrainian soldiers pulled from Donetsk airport rubble – OSCE, 14.03.2015

"At the Donetsk airport new terminal, the SMM observed the arrival of the 'Donetsk People's Republic' ('DPR') 'emergency services,' together with 20 captives, whom the 'DPR' referred to as Ukrainian soldiers, who shortly after started searching for deceased Ukrainian Armed Forces soldiers," the recent OSCE SMM report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1055566-more-bodies-of-ukrainian-soldiers-pulled-from-donetsk-airport-rubble-osce.html>

Militants in Donbas violate truce 23 times within 12 hours – ATO press center, 15.03.2015

Illegal armed groups used weapons to shell Ukrainian troops 23 times from 0700 to 1900 Kyiv time on Sunday, the ATO press center reported.

In particular, they used mortars and grenade launchers 11 times, small arms 7 times, while tanks attacked the Ukrainian positions twice.

The greatest number of such incidents was recorded in the Donetsk sector. In particular, at 0920 Kyiv time enemy's tanks were firing at the village of Pisky, at 1300 there was shelling in the direction of the town of Avdiyivka. From 1625 to 1650 Kyiv time militants were using 82mm and 120mm caliber mortars to shell Pisky, the press center said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1055702-militants-in-donbas-violate-truce-23-times-within-12-hours-ato-press-center.html>

Spot Report by the OSCE Observer Mission, 15.03.2015

On 15 March 2015 at 08:11hrs (Moscow time), a Russian convoy arrived at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point (BCP). A total of 43 vehicles were checked by the Russian border guard and customs services. All the vehicles had crossed back into the Russian Federation by 18:55hrs on 15 March.

<http://www.osce.org/om/145046>

Tymchuk: Six convoys of supplies arrive from Russia, 16.03.2015

"For the last two days we have recorded the arrival of six targeted convoys of supplies from the Russian Federation, including two trains each with eight wagons. The destinations of these trains were Debaltseve and Ilovaisk," he said.

Earlier, there were reports that the militants had reopened the train station in Debaltseve, which is a key rail hub in the region, connecting the militant-held cities of Donetsk and Luhansk and a major line to Russia.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1055891-tymchuk-six-convoys-of-supplies-arrive-from-russia.html>

Tymchuk: militants digging in, massing military equipment closer to Mariupol, 16.03.2015

"Six units of towed artillery weapons, as well as one Strela-10M SAM were transferred to the task force through the village of Maksymovo," Tymchuk wrote.

"The enemy keeps trying to push the Ukrainian troops back closer to Mariupol, firing on the positions of ATO forces. They are said to have used the tactic of 'wandering' tanks and mortar detachments," Tymchuk wrote.

He also said militant troops in the Donbas continue to grossly violate the ceasefire by launching attacks on positions of Ukrainian troops. Attacks are carried out mainly with small arms, but occasionally using mortars and other heavy infantry weapons. There have also been several cases of armored vehicles and artillery being used.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1055887-tymchuk-militants-digging-in-massing-military-equipment-closer-to-mariupol.html>

Media: more than 100 Germans fight on the side of terrorists in Donbas, 16.03.2015

Over one hundred German citizens are involved in the war in eastern Ukraine on the side of so-called "DPR" and "LPR." Reportedly, these are mostly immigrants from the former Soviet Union who have German roots. Some of these men earlier served in the German Bundeswehr. This has been reported by the German newspaper Die Welt. Journalists note that the German citizens fighting in Ukraine do not bear criminal responsibility in accordance to German laws, while those involved in the fighting on the side of the radical Islamist group "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq may be persecuted.

http://mw.ua/WORLD/media-more-than-100-germans-fight-on-the-side-of-terrorists-in-donbas-1447_.html

Terrorists' losses in ATO constitute 14,600 soldiers and 260 tanks - ATO command, 16.03.2015

"Since the beginning of the ATO, the militants irretrievably lost more than 14,600 personnel, nearly 260 tanks and 340 armored combat vehicles, almost 170 MLRS, up to 190 artillery systems, 16 airplanes and helicopters, 10 unmanned aerial vehicles, and 360 vehicles," Fedichev said.

He stressed that the vast majority of the military equipment was brought in from the territory of Russia, and "the Ukrainian military turned it into a pile of scrap metal."

http://en.censor.net.ua/news/328728/terrorists_losses_in_ato_constitute_14600_soldiers_and_260_tanks_ato_command

Over 360 Ukrainian troops killed near Ilovaisk in August 2014, up to 180 missing, 16.03.2015

Anatoliy Matios, the deputy prosecutor general and main military prosecutor of Ukraine, has said the investigators had determined that over 360 Ukrainian troops were killed in the fighting near Ilovaisk in August 2014.

"They [the exact figures] exceed 360 people. These are people and military men from all arms of service and units involved in the fighting near Ilovaisk. It's the total casualties," he told reporters in Kyiv on Monday.

Matios said up to 180 people are listed as missing.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255340.html>

Militants fire on Ukrainian army 30 times in last day, 17.03.2015

"Despite the Minsk peace agreements, Russian-backed militants continue to fire on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces in Donetsk and Luhansk regions," he said.

According to Stelmakh, the militants violated the ceasefire 30 times in the last day.

"The militants were most active in the area of Donetsk. At 0750, 1245, and 1730 they fired 122-mm D-30 howitzers on Avdiivka. In addition, the militants fired tanks three times and mortars twice on this town," he said.

The militants have claimed that they have pulled back their heavy artillery from the front line, but the OSCE, which is charged with monitoring the pullback, says neither side is allowing it to move completely freely to carry out its mandate.

"In addition, Russian-backed militants also fired small arms and automatic grenade launchers on the villages of Pisky and Opytne," Stelmakh said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056363-militants-fire-on-ukrainian-army-30-times-in-last-day.html>

Movement of military vehicles to be restricted in Donetsk region due to Kostiantynivka tragedy, 17.03.2015

"We will introduce restrictions on the movement of military hardware and we will set new travel routes. The movement of tracked vehicles under their own power will be strictly forbidden. Only on trailers," head of Donetsk Regional State Administration Oleksandr Kikhtenko said .

"Such activities will be extended to the entire area of Donetsk region that is controlled by the Ukrainian authorities," Kikhtenko said.

"We are planning to hold these measures together with the management of the Anti-Terrorist Operation," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1056407-movement-of-military-vehicles-to-be-restricted-in-donetsk-region-due-to-kostiantynivka-tragedy.html>

Three Ukrainian soldiers killed, five wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 17.03.2015

"Over the last day, we have lost three Ukrainian soldiers, and another five were injured as a result of military clashes," ATO spokesman Lysenko said.

Ukrainian soldiers were killed by shelling and as a result of a vehicle going over a land mine.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056457-three-ukrainian-soldiers-killed-five-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/03/17/world/europe/17reuters-ukraine-crisis-casualties.html?ref=world&_r=0

OSCE reports use of heavy artillery near Donetsk airport, 17.03.2015

"From 0917 to 0957 SMM representatives heard from their location in the center of Donetsk (controlled by DNR) at least 16 mortar attacks, presumably of the 82-mm and 122-mm caliber. SMM members concluded that the incident occurred about 10 kilometers north-west of their location, near Donetsk airport," the statement reads.

At the same time, in the vicinity of the airport in Donetsk OSCE observers heard the sounds of more than 100 rounds (incoming and outgoing).

According to the mission, the rounds were fired from different types of weapons, including heavy mortars, tanks, artillery and guns.

In addition, the OSCE mission said it was continuing to record violations of the ceasefire regime in the area near Shyrokin, next to Mariupol, and in Donetsk region.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056823-osce-reports-use-of-heavy-artillery-near-donetsk-airport.html>

Militant leaders reject amendments to law on Donbas, give ultimatum to Kyiv, 18.03.2015

"With the amendments of Poroshenko, the introduction of a special status of certain areas of the Donbas is postponed for an indefinite period... We declare that no compromise with Kyiv is possible until yesterday's shameful decisions of Poroshenko and the Verkhovna Rada are canceled," the leaders said.

According to Zakharchenko and Plotnytskyi, the militants previously agreed to a special status of the Donbas as part of a renewed Ukraine, but Ukraine has not renewed.

"Having denied the Donbas a special status, Kyiv has trampled on the fragile Minsk peace and brought the situation to a dead end," the militants said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1056895-militant-leaders-reject-amendments-to-law-on-donbas-give-ultimatum-to-kyiv.html>

Tymchuk: Militants preparing to attack, 18.03.2015

"Russia is actively increasing the process of the transfer and accumulation of material and technical resources of the LPR and DPR, which are necessary for further military actions from the occupied territories of Ukraine. In fact, they are creating the resource base for the further escalation of the conflict," he said.

At the same time, according to Tymchuk, over the last day the militants made repeated attempts to disrupt the ceasefire in the Donbas.

"Russian-backed militants carried out provocations by firing on the positions of Ukrainian troops and a series of active offensive actions," Tymchuk said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056856-tymchuk-militants-preparing-to-attack.html>

More than 788,000 people evacuated from Donbas conflict zone, 18.03.2015

The total number of people evacuated from the temporarily occupied territories of the Donbas conflict zone has now reached 788,532 people, including 140,936 children and 358,713 disabled and elderly people, spokesperson of the State Service for Emergency Situations Natalia Bystra said at a briefing on Wednesday.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1056898-more-than-788000-people-evacuated-from-donbas-conflict-zone.html>

One Ukrainian soldier killed, five wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 18.03.2015

"Over the last day, we have lost one Ukrainian soldier, and another five were injured as a result of military clashes," ATO spokesman Lysenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056921-one-ukrainian-soldier-killed-five-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

Former Kyrgyz mercenary: 'I saw Russian army, not Ukrainian fascists in Donbas', 18.03.2015

In an exclusive interview with Radio Liberty, the mercenary spoke of his disillusionment with Russian propaganda – disinformation that prompted him to come to the war in Ukraine's Donbas in August 2014 to fight on the side of the Russia-backed militants, according to a report on the interview in Ukrainian news magazine Novoye Vremya.

"It's all just propaganda, as it appeared to be," says the fighter, who goes by the nom de guerre of "Manas."

"It's quite sad, actually, as I graduated from a political school and still fell for such nonsense."

The former LNR (Luhansk People's Republic militant organization) fighter said that he had personally seen Russian troops being deployed and in combat, and was absolutely positive that Russian servicemen were involved in the fighting.

"What doubts can I have if we fought together? There can be no doubts," he said.

He said that his experiences had led him to doubt information about the Ukraine conflict coming from the Russian media - doubts which ultimately led him to leave Ukraine in November 2014.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1056986-former-kyrgyz-mercenary-i-saw-russian-army-not-ukrainian-fascists-in-donbas.html>

Lubkivskiy: Militants preparing sabotage in Donetsk and Luhansk ahead of fresh attacks, 19.03.2015

"On Friday, March 20, a special operation called 'Anthill' is to be carried out in Donetsk, which is aimed at disrupting the Minsk agreements. This information was confirmed by the sources of the SBU in the leadership of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic," Lubkivskiy said.

According to Lubkivskiy, a number of diversions are being prepared in Donetsk and Luhansk.

"The events are to be immediately covered by the Russian and separatist propaganda media in order to blame the Ukrainian authorities. As conceived by the Russian special services, the next step should be the destabilization of the situation in several major Ukrainian cities in the east," he said.

"This provoked situation is to be a starting point for a unilateral resumption of military actions by the militants. As the Ukrainian security service, we have full information about the situation in the temporarily occupied territories and we clearly see that the militants can't and don't want to live in peace," Lubkivskiy said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057498-lubkivskiy-militants-preparing-sabotage-in-donetsk-and-luhansk-ahead-of-fresh-attacks.html>

Militants fire artillery and mortars at Ukrainian army overnight, 19.03.2015

On the night of March 19, from 2000 to 0700, the militants fired on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces 17 times, the ATO press center wrote.

"The militants were most active around Donetsk. Here, at 2015, near the mine of Dutovka, the insurgents fired 122-mm D-30 howitzers and mortars on our fortifications. At 2035 they fired artillery and mortars on Avdiivka. In addition, the militants used firearms to commit armed provocations near the villages of Pisky and Opytne," the report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1057344-militants-fire-artillery-and-mortars-at-ukrainian-army-overnight.html>

12 wagons with ammunition for militants arrive in Krasnodon – Ukrainian colonel, 19.03.2015

"On March 18, twelve wagons of ammunition and anti-tank missile systems were delivered by rail to Krasnodon, Luhansk region," ATO Deputy Commander in Donetsk and Luhansk regions Colonel Valentyn Fedychyev said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1057666-12-wagons-with-ammunition-for-militants-arrive-in-krasnodon-ukrainian-colonel.html>

Latest from OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, 19.03.2015

The SMM monitored the implementation of the "Package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements". The SMM, based on its monitoring – which was restricted by third parties and by security considerations*– observed that fighting continued in areas around Donetsk airport, Horlivka and Shyrokyne, east of Mariupol.

In Mariupol (government-controlled, 110km south of Donetsk), the Chief Monitor met with the Mariupol mayor and his deputies. The mayor said the city had been suffering economically due to the crisis, with steel factories running at half their output and business in the port significantly down. He added that some 26,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) had passed through Mariupol and that 17,500 remained there. About 2,000 IDP children are enrolled in local schools and kindergartens. The mayor also referred to the ongoing shelling in Shyrokyne (97km south of Donetsk, 20km east of Mariupol) and called for the full implementation of the "Package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements". The Chief Monitor also visited an SMM observation point in Sopyne (government-controlled, 99km south of Donetsk, 15km east of Mariupol) from where the SMM monitors activity in and around Shyrokyne.*

<http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/145846>

Last bridge over Siverskiy Donets River blown up in Stanytsia Luhanska, 20.03.2015

According to the report, the sound and shockwave from the explosion was felt not only in the village, but also in the eastern districts of Luhansk. Russian-backed militants are suspected of being responsible for blowing up the bridge, the extent of damage to which is not yet known. As reported earlier, the bridge was the last one between the town and the regional center.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1057840-last-bridge-over-siverskiy-donets-river-blown-up-in-stanytsia-luhanska.html>

OSCE monitors still see militants' heavy weapons in Donbas, 20.03.2015

This was announced in a recent OSCE SMM report based on information received as of 1800 Kyiv time on March 19 and released on March 20.

"The SMM during the reporting period <...>in Horlivka, the SMM observed two T-72 main battle tanks exiting a chemical plant, where earlier in the day the SMM had been denied access by armed guards. In nearby "DPR"-controlled Yenakiyev (38km north-east of Donetsk), the SMM observed an additional two T-72 tanks. In "DPR"-controlled Michurine (64km south-south-east of Donetsk), the SMM observed three T-72 tanks. At a road junction controlled by the "DPR" nine kilometers south of Donetsk, the SMM observed two stationary T-72 tanks," the report reads.

"Close to government-controlled Kurakhove (41km south of Donetsk), the SMM observed an anti-tank guided missile on the turret of an armored personnel carrier (APC)," it said.

The presence of various types of heavy weaponry was also registered near the towns of Makiyivka in Donetsk region, and Muratove and Smolianynove, both in Luhansk region.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058190-osce-monitors-still-see-militants-heavy-weapons-in-donbas.html>

Pro-Russian militants shelling Pisky, Shyrokyne at night, 21.03.2015

Pro-Russian illegal armed groups continued provocative attempts to fire on the positions of Ukrainian military forces in the ATO zone in the night from March 20 to March 21.

Militants were using grenade launchers and 82mm caliber mortars to shell the village of Pisky near the destroyed Donetsk airport six times, the report said. At 2335 Kyiv time on Friday they started using 120mm caliber mortars to shell the village.

At 0230 Kyiv time on Saturday, ATO servicemen near the village of Opytne revealed a reconnaissance group who were trying to move deeper into Ukrainian territory. The sides entered a fight during which the enemy was forced to retreat.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058263-pro-russian-militants-shelling-pisky-shyrokyne-at-night.html>

Two Ukrainian soldiers killed, seven wounded in Donbas in past 24 hours, 21.03.2015

"Ignoring the Minsk agreements, militants have used artillery systems, mortars and grenade launchers, and small arms to shell units of the ATO forces in the Donetsk, Artemivsk, Luhansk and Mariupol sectors," ATO spokesman Andriy Lysenko said.

The situation outside Donetsk remains difficult, as was the case in previous days.

"Two military clashes between Russian mercenaries and Ukrainian servicemen have taken place near the village of Opytne in Yasynuvata district, Donetsk region. Our soldiers have bravely defended themselves and successfully repelled all attacks by the enemy," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058352-two-ukrainian-soldiers-killed-seven-wounded-in-donbas-in-past-24-hours.html>

Militants continue blowing up railway tracks, 21.03.2015

"Militants have blown up railway tracks in Volnovakha district and near the town of Popasna," ATO press secretary of Andriy Lysenko said.

"One of the reasons for committing acts of terrorism is an attempt by militants to break any communication between the occupied and free areas in Donetsk and Luhansk regions," he added.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058356-militants-continue-blowing-up-railway-tracks.html>

Defense Ministry reports confirmed ATO death toll, 22.03.2015

"As of today, the National Museum of Military History of Ukraine has collected the most complete database of Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers battalions' fighters who have died since the beginning of the hostilities [in eastern Ukraine]. General information including a photo, the date and place of birth, the date and place of death, division, military rank, position, circumstances of death, and a burial site are listed on the Book of Remembrance's website. At present, the list includes 1,750 soldiers killed as of February 1, 2015," the press service said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058527-defense-ministry-reports-confirmed-ato-death-toll.html>

Donbas militants violate truce 32 times on Sunday, 22.03.2015

In particular, militants used 122mm caliber artillery systems four times to fire at the positions of the Ukrainian troops near the town of Avdiyivka on Sunday, the ATO press center reported.

"The enemy was also firing from tank guns to shell that town at 1200 and 1210 Kyiv time," the press center said.

What is more, mortars were used to shell positions near Butivka coalmine and the town of Avdiyivka, which is the Donetsk sector.

Militants used 120mm caliber mortars six times and anti-tank guided missiles three times to shell the village of Shyrokyne in the Mariupol sector.

In total, on Sunday, the enemy violated the Donbas ceasefire 32 times.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058563-donbas-militants-violate-truce-32-times-on-sunday.html>

Militants fire Grad rockets on Orikhove overnight, 23.03.2015

"At 2205 the militants fired 120-mm mortars on the village of Pisky, and at 2330 they fired from tanks on the village of Opytne in the direction of Donetsk," the press center says.

According to the report, an hour later, Russian-backed militants fired rockets on the village of Orikhove in Luhansk region in a clear breach of the Minsk peace agreements, the report said.

"In Luhansk region, at 0115, flagrantly violating the peace agreements, and clearly demonstrating the presence of multiple launch rocket systems, the militants fired Grad rockets on the village of Orikhove. And at about 0300, near the village of Sokolnyky, the enemy infantry with small arms entered into a firefight with our military. The attack was successfully repelled," the press center reported.

"The militants also fired mortars twice on the village of Shyrokyne overnight."

"In addition, the villages of Leninske and Shumy near Artemivsk were fired on with small arms twice," the press center's report reads.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058678-militants-fire-grad-rockets-on-orikhove-overnight.html>

Tymchuk: Militants acquire highly mobile Grad-P systems, 23.03.2015

"The militants are armed with 9P132 Grad-P Partizan portable rocket launchers in several areas of Luhansk region," Tymchuk said.

"This system is designed by the Soviet Union for supply to Vietnam. It is a 122-mm caliber weapon for firing a single missile from the Grad multiple rocket launch system. This launcher can be quickly assembled and disassembled. It also can be mounted on a light vehicle and equipped with a telescopic sight," Tymchuk said.

"Mobile firing groups of Russian-backed militants, acting directly on the frontline, can be equipped with this launcher," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058704-tymchuk-militants-acquire-highly-mobile-grad-p-systems.html>

Militants destroy more than 1,500 kilometers of roads and 33 bridges in Donbas, 23.03.2015

"Railway infrastructure and the road sector received considerable damage. In general, a total of 1,582 objects of [state railways administration] Ukrzaliznytsia were damaged, [which will cost] more than UAH 800 million [to repair]," she said.

However, according to Bystra, as of today, 736 railway objects have been already repaired.

"In addition, we are working on repairing [other] damaged railroads, bridges and overpasses."

"More than 1,500 kilometers of public roads have been destroyed in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. A total of 33 bridges and overpasses [with a total] length of about 3,000 meters have also been partially destroyed," Bystra said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1058716-militants-destroy-more-than-1500-kilometers-of-roads-and-33-bridges-in-donbas.html>

Ukrainian airman dies in chopper crash near Kyiv, two others injured, 24.03.2015

The helicopter crashed in the Vassilkovskaya district of Kyiv region, TSN reported, quoting information from the prosecutor of Kyiv region. The two injured airmen have been hospitalized. The crashed helicopter was one of two aircraft making a flight from Poltava to Zhytomir. The cause of the crash is being investigated. The crash site has been cordoned off by the military.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1059383-ukrainian-airman-dies-in-chopper-crash-near-kyiv-two-others-injured.html>

Moskal: Russian sabotage group fires on military unit in Luhansk region, far from front, 24.03.2015

"No [previous] military actions have taken place there, but the district center is actually on the border with the Russian Federation," Moskal said.

"It is obvious that a reconnaissance and sabotage group came from Russia into the village of Milove in order to destroy [Ukrainian] military equipment."

According to reports, on Tuesday morning at 0330 in the government-held village of Milove, unidentified persons fired an anti-tank gun at an army truck that was transporting air defense equipment for repair. The truck was damaged by anti-tank grenades, but there were no casualties as a result of the attack.

Moskal noted that the area where the incident occurred is far from the front line between the two warring sides in the Donbas.

"The village of Milove is in the north of Luhansk region, about 200 kilometers from the demarcation line," Moskal said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1059181-moskal-russian-sabotage-group-fires-on-military-unit-in-luhansk-region-far-from-front.html>

General Staff: Militants fire mortars 10 times overnight, 25.03.2015

Near Donetsk at 2135 the militants fired 120-mm mortars on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces near the mine of Butivka and the village of Pisky.

The militants also fired small arms and rocket-propelled grenades on the village of Opytne.

In the area of Artemivsk, from 0320 the militants fired 120-mm mortars twice on the village of Troitske from the town of Stakhanov.

Russian-backed militants have been launching regular attacks on the village of Shyrokyne near Mariupol for several weeks in a row, the headquarters said.

"In the last 24 hours, almost from midnight to 0420 the militants fired 120-mm mortars," the report says.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1059695-general-staff-militants-fire-mortars-10-times-overnight.html>

Four Ukrainian soldiers wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 25.03.2015

"Over the last day, we haven't lost any Ukrainian soldiers, but four were injured as a result of military clashes," the ATO spokesman Andriy Lysenko said.

On March 24 Russian-backed militants fired on the village of Stanytsia Luhanska, the neighborhood of the village of Krymske, the village of Troitske and the Bakhmutka highway in Luhansk region.

No civilians were injured in any of the attacks, and there was no damage to infrastructure, according to the Ukrainian authorities.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1059759-four-ukrainian-soldiers-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

Right Sector volunteers ordered to leave Mariupol zone, 25.03.2015

Commander of the 8th separate company of the Right Sector Ukrainian military volunteer corps Andriy Cherven said that his troops had been ordered to leave the town of Shyrokyne outside Mariupol before March 27, and the anti-terrorist operation zone itself before April 1. According to him, the order says that all the troops that are not part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard should be withdrawn from the zone. Cherven added he couldn't disobey the order.

He said that the withdrawal of military volunteer units would be detrimental to the defense of the city of Mariupol. He said he had appealed to the community of Mariupol, asking to influence the decision so that the volunteer units could remain in Shyrokyne.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1059965-right-sector-volunteers-ordered-to-leave-mariupol-zone.html>

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059989-right-sector-spokesman-order-for-volunteers-to-leave-mariupol-not-feasible.html>

Passenger bus gets into landmine trap outside Horlivka: 3 dead, 9 injured, 25.03.2015

A passenger bus with 26 people on board has got into a landmine trap outside the separatist-held town of Horlivka.

This information was confirmed by chief of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry's main department in Donetsk region Viacheslav Abroskin on his Facebook page.

"At 2030 Kyiv time on Wednesday Artemivsk police have received a call informing that a passenger bus heading from Artemivsk to Horlivka had tripped a landmine in the field near the town of Mayorsk," he wrote.

According to him, a preliminary report says that the bus driver decided to bypass a roadblock and was driving along an earthy track towards Horlivka.

"Driving across the field, the bus struck a landmine with its backward wheel. As of now, the death toll is three people. The total number of the bus passengers is 26 people. <...> Police officers from the Artemivsk police department are now working on the scene," he wrote.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1059973-passenger-bus-gets-into-landmine-trap-outside-horlivka-3-dead-9-injured.html>

<http://www.unian.info/society/1060158-four-killed-21-injured-in-bus-that-ran-over-landmine.html>

OSCE: Trucks full of Donbas coal heading for Russia, 25.03.2015

"During the reporting week the observer mission (OM) continued to observe an increased number of trucks crossing the border in both directions," the weekly update reads.

The observer teams (OTs) continued to observe dumper trucks transporting coal from the Luhansk region to the Russian Federation through border checkpoint (BCP) Gukovo. The OTs observed intense trailer truck traffic at BCP Donetsk crossing the border in both directions.

"The OTs also observed tanker trucks crossing the border both ways. These crossings occurred at both BCPs. These trucks for the most part had the word 'Propane' and 'Flammable' written across the tanks in Russian," the OSCE said in the report.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1059982-osce-trucks-full-of-donbas-coal-heading-for-russia.html>

Russia sends another 'aid convoy' to Donbas, 26.03.2015

The trucks have already arrived at the uncontrolled part of the border.

According to the Russian side, the content of the convoy is mainly the seeds for field work. Russia's claims cannot be independently verified.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1060143-russia-sends-another-aid-convoy-to-donbas.html>

Unrest In Ukrainian Town After Girl Killed By Armored Vehicle, 26.03.2015

Authorities in a government-held town in eastern Ukraine have made arrests after violence that followed a road accident in which an armored vehicle struck and killed a young girl.

Angry residents of the Donetsk region town of Kostyantynivka threw stones at a barracks, torched two cars, and overturned a third after servicemen apparently lost control of an armored vehicle on March 16, killing a girl who was about 7 years old and injuring her aunt and a toddler. Police stepped up patrols to avert any more unrest, Donetsk region police chief Vyacheslav Abroskin said on Facebook on March 17.

Abroskin said two servicemen responsible for the accident had been detained, and that organizers of the "disorder" had been identified.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-unrest-kostyantynivka-girl-killed/26905176.html>

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/riots-in-kostyantynivka-after-armored-vehicle-hits-and-kills-a-child-383664.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/03/17/world/europe/ap-eu-ukraine.html?ref=world>

Militants fire on Ukrainian army 10 times in last day, 26.03.2015

In particular, in the direction of Donetsk the militants fired 120mm mortars on the village of Pisky from 2040 to 2120, and at 2245 they hit Avdiivka.

In addition, the militants fired small arms on the villages of Novoselivka and Kamianka, and on the village of Shyrokyne near Mariupol.

In the area of Artemivsk, at about 0300 the militants fired 120mm mortars on the village of Troitske from the town of Stakhanov.

"In general, from 2000 on March 25 to midnight the militants fired on our positions eight times, while two more cases of violation of the ceasefire were recorded from midnight to 0600," the report says.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1060191-militants-fire-on-ukrainian-army-10-times-in-last-day.html>

Four killed, 21 injured in bus that ran over landmine, 26.03.2015

"At 2030 on Wednesday Artemivsk police received a report that a passenger bus heading from Artemivsk to Horlivka had run over a landmine in a field near the town of Maiorsk," the report says. "As a result, four people were killed, and another 21 were injured," the report reads.

Police officers from the Artemivsk police department are now working at the scene.

The bus set off the mine when its driver took a diversion across a field in order to avoid having to pass through a checkpoint.

According to the ATO press center, the bus hit a mine laid by Russian-backed militants.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1060158-four-killed-21-injured-in-bus-that-ran-over-landmine.html>

Militants in Luhansk region fire Grad first time after Minsk truce – Moskal, 28.03.2015

A reconnaissance and sabotage group of militants made an attempt to infiltrate into the town of Novotoshivka in Popasna district, Luhansk region, in the early hours of Saturday.

This was announced by the press service of Hennadiy Moskal, the head of Lugansk regional military and civil administration.

At night, militants again used Grad multiple rocket launchers in Luhansk region after a long break, the press service said.

At 2300 Kyiv time on Friday, they were shelling the 29th roadblock at the Bakhmutka motor road and the dislocation of the Ukrainian forces in the town of Novotoshivka. "Rockets exploded near a coalmine facility and Kuibyshev Street. As a result of a direct hit, a garage facility was burnt, some districts of the village were cut off the power grids. More detailed information about damage and casualties among civilians is verified," the press service said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061007-militants-in-luhansk-region-fire-grad-first-time-after-minsk-truce-moskal.html>

New explosion in Odesa, 29.03.2015

Unidentified people exploded a bomb at the entrance of a single-storey building with a civil volunteers' center in Odesa very late on Saturday.

The building, which previously housed the Oriental Yard restaurant, is located at the intersection of Olhivivska and Mechnykov Streets.

The State Emergency Situations Service reported there were no casualties

<http://www.unian.info/society/1061083-new-explosion-in-odesa-photo.html>

22 Russian tanks enter Ukraine on March 28 – Donetsk regional administration, 30.03.2015

Up to 15 Grad multiple rocket launchers operated by Russian-backed militants were shelling civilians in the town of Horlivka in Donetsk region in the early hours of March 29.

Twenty two tanks from Russia entered Ukraine on March 28, the press service of Donetsk Regional State Administration wrote on Twitter.

"They [tanks] were heading from the side of [the Russian town of] Gukovo [in Rostov region] to a repair and engineering works in Sverdlovsk, Luhansk region," the tweet reads.

Moreover, the press service reported that up to 15 Grad multiple rocket launchers operated by Russian-backed militants were shelling civilians in the town of Horlivka in Donetsk region in the early hours of March 29.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061248-22-russian-tanks-enter-ukraine-on-march-28-donetsk-regional-administration.html>

Militants fire three times on Ukrainian army near Mariupol, 30.03.2015

On March 29 one Ukrainian soldier was killed, and another one wounded as a result of military clashes in the village of Hranitne in Donetsk region.

"Starting from 1700 the militants fired on the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces in the village of Hranitne for about one and a half hours. They used 122mm and 152mm [caliber] weapons," Sushynskiy said.

The Ukrainian military says its forces did not return fire.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061373-militants-fire-three-times-on-ukrainian-army-near-mariupol.html>

One Ukrainian soldier killed, three wounded in Donbas conflict zone in last day, 30.03.2015

"Over the last day, we have lost one Ukrainian soldier, and another three were injured as a result of military clashes," Lysenko said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061462-one-ukrainian-soldier-killed-three-wounded-in-donbas-conflict-zone-in-last-day.html>

NATO: Militants trying to grab more territory in eastern Ukraine, 30.03.2015

The situation in eastern Ukraine has improved since the signing of the Minsk agreements last month, but NATO observes violations of the ceasefire and that the militants are trying to seize more territory, NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow said in an interview with Defence News on Monday, according to Ukrainian newspaper Ukrainska Pravda.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061584-nato-militants-trying-to-grab-more-territory-in-eastern-ukraine.html>

Tymchuk: Militants suddenly start rotation near Mariupol, 31.03.2015

A formation of 70-80 people with mortars and 30mm automatic grenade launchers arrived there by truck.

"The Russian-backed militants continue to increase the combat potential of their units via the supply of material resources from Russia," Tymchuk said.

"During the last day we have recorded the movement of about 28 transport units, mainly through the 'northern' route," Tymchuk said.

"The militants continue to transfer the material and technical resources from Luhansk and Lutuhyne, as well as through Krasnyi Luch to Debaltseve, Stakhanov and Pervomaisk," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1061820-tymchuk-militants-suddenly-start-rotation-near-mariupol.html>

More than 5,000 Ukrainian soldiers hurt in Donbas conflict zone, 31.03.2015

"Over 5,000 soldiers were injured or wounded in the Donbas conflict zone," he said.

Verba also said that a total of 108 Ukrainian servicemen had received treatment abroad, 88 of whom had fully recovered.

"As of March 31, a total of 38 Ukrainian servicemen are being treated abroad. In particular, the Ukrainian soldiers were treated or rehabilitated in Germany, Israel, the United States, the Baltic States and Bulgaria," he said.

About 1,500 wounded soldiers were treated in medical institutions.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1062052-more-than-5000-ukrainian-soldiers-hurt-in-donbas-conflict-zone.html>

Pilot Savchenko

Poroshenko, Merkel, Hollande call on Putin to immediately release Savchenko, 03.03.2015

According to the press service of the Ukrainian president, the parties had a telephone conversation in the "Normandy format" late Monday.

President Poroshenko also stressed the need for the release of all prisoners illegally detained in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and in the Russian Federation.

The parties supported a Ukrainian proposal to place OSCE observers at all points where there have been ceasefire violations, in particular to start with the following 10 villages: Shastya, Popasna, Stanytsia Luhanska, Krymske, Avdiivka, Volnovakha, Hranitne, Luhanske, Shyrokyne, and the area around Donetsk airport.

The parties stressed the need to ensure safety and a proper operation mode for the OSCE observers, including unimpeded inspections in places where weapons that have been withdrawn from the front line have been redeployed.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050916-poroshenko-merkel-hollande-call-on-putin-to-immediately-release-savchenko.html>

Patriarch Filaret gives award to Savchenko, 02.03.2015

Patriarch Filaret, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate, has awarded Ukrainian pilot, MP and member of the Ukrainian delegation to PACE Nadia Savchenko the Order of the Holy Great Martyr George the Victor, the press service of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate reported on Sunday.

"The motto of the award is the struggle against evil," Filaret said at St. Volodymyr's Cathedral on March 1 before the start of prayers for the health and release of Savchenko.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050366-patriarch-filaret-gives-award-to-savchenko.html>

Russia says Savchenko could be transferred to hospital 'if health worsens', 03.03.2015

Savchenko has been on hunger strike for almost three months, demanding her return to Ukraine. Doctors say her current condition is stable.

Anatoliy Rudyi, first deputy head of the Federal Penitentiary Service, said that there were no pathological changes in Savchenko's state of health.

"Her weight is stable, and various indicators of her state are stable and acceptable... We're doing our best to control the situation. Almost every day we submit information about her state to the management service," he said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051074-russia-says-savchenko-could-be-transferred-to-hospital-if-health-worsens.html>

PACE: Russian authorities should save Savchenko's life, 04.03.2015

The Russian government must make a gesture of humanity and save the life of Nadia Savchenko, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Anne Brasseur said on Tuesday, according to BBC Ukraine.

"Time to save the life of Nadia Savchenko is running out," she said, referring to the Ukrainian pilot, who is now on the 82nd day of a hunger strike in a jail in Moscow.

"This week, in Strasbourg, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. I think that the most worthy contribution to this event from the Russian government could be the release from punishment of Nadia Savchenko due to her state of health," Brasseur said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051409-pace-russian-authorities-should-save-savchenkos-life.html>

Mogherini calls on Kremlin to release jailed Ukrainian pilot Savchenko, 04.03.2015

According to Mogherini, the hunger strike poses a threat to Savchenko's life, the BBC Russian Service reported.

"Ms Savchenko has now been on hunger strike for 82 days. After such an extended period of time, she faces permanent damage to her health, or death. < > Once again, I add my voice to all of those calling on the Russian authorities to urgently release Ms Savchenko on humanitarian grounds," Mogherini said in an official statement.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1051784-mogherini-calls-on-kremlin-to-release-jailed-ukrainian-pilot-savchenko.html>

Jailed pilot Savchenko getting worse, Ukraine's foreign ministry demands Russia let Ukrainian doctors examine her, 05.03.2015

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs demands that Russia immediately let Ukrainian doctors examine jailed Ukrainian pilot Nadia Savchenko, as her health has considerably deteriorated. "Some mass media reports that Nadia Savchenko has allegedly stopped her hunger strike unfortunately do not correspond to reality. Nadia Savchenko continues hunger strike in protest against her illegal removal from Ukraine and groundless detention in Russia, however, she has agreed to resume consumption of a nutritious matter (chicken broth) for a certain period of time," ministry's spokesman Yevhen Perebyinis said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052260-jailed-pilot-savchenko-getting-worse-ukraines-foreign-ministry-demands-russia-let-ukrainian-doctors-examine-her.html>

Savchenko demands examination by Ukrainian doctors before hospitalization, 06.03.2015

The Ministry of Health has already agreed with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on the formation of a group of leading specialists and is now waiting for the consent of the Russian Foreign Ministry to receive the medical delegation.

Vera Savchenko, Nadia's sister, said the jailed Ukrainian woman was feeling the ill effects of her hunger strike, now in its 83rd day.

"The decision to stop the hunger strike was taken by my sister because of her critical condition. She is constantly cold, and complains of severe pain in the heart and stomach," Vera Savchenko said.

"Kremlin spokesperson Dmitriy Peskov has assured me by phone that Russian President Vladimir Putin is following the state of health of my sister and has already been informed about the request of the Ukrainian doctors to examine the prisoner," she said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052441-savchenko-demands-examination-by-ukrainian-doctors-before-hospitalization.html>

Jailed pilot Savchenko's mother asks Merkel to assist in release of her daughter, 07.03.2015

Maria Savchenko, the mother of Ukrainian pilot, MP and member of the Ukrainian delegation to PACE Nadia Savchenko, who is now imprisoned in Russia, has written a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel with a request to assist in the release of her daughter.

"Dear Mrs. Merkel, please help me save my daughter. I appeal directly to you and strongly hope that you will in any possible way help us get out of this situation," Maria Savchenko wrote in a letter published by Bild on Saturday, ZN.UA reported.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1052986-jailed-pilot-savchenkos-mother-asks-merkel-to-assist-in-release-of-her-daughter.html>

Is A Savchenko Deal In The Offing?, 11.03.2015

Mark Feigin, a lawyer for the jailed Ukrainian pilot Nadia Savchenko, claims to have new evidence proving that his client was not involved in the deaths of two Russian journalists. Speaking to Ukraine's 24 TV, Feigin said a video shot in June 2014 in Luhansk Oblast shows Savchenko, then a member of the Aidar volunteer battalion, being taken prisoner hours before the journalists, Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin, were killed.

The shaky video, shot during a roadside battle, shows a female figure dressed in a striped paratrooper's shirt and a camouflage jacket, her face covered with a blue-and-yellow scarf printed with the words "Maidan Self-Defense."

"I'm not a sniper," the figure says in response to a volley of questions from her apparent captors. Asked who she is, she replies simply, "I'm a gunner."

<http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-nadia-savchenko-deal-new-video-emerges/26894177.html>

Bloomberg: Savchenko may die of acute pancreatitis, 12.03.2015

Her lawyers are afraid that she may die if the disease worsens and Ukrainian doctors are not allowed to visit her.

In particular, one of her lawyers, Ilya Novikov, told Bloomberg that Savchenko knew about her diagnosis from the doctors in a Moscow prison.

"There is a very serious threat to her life. Savchenko says that she will resume her hunger strike in protest, if by March 16 Russia doesn't allow an international medical commission to visit her, which will include the doctors from Ukraine," he said.

"If Nadia again refuses to eat, this could accelerate the inflammatory processes and worsen her disease," Novikov said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1054734-bloomberg-savchenko-may-die-of-acute-pancreatitis.html>

Savchenko gaining weight, in combative mood – Ukrainian doctors, 14.03.2015

This was announced by Ukrainian doctors who were let in examine Savchenko imprisoned in Matrosskaya Tishina pre-trial detention facility No. 1.

"Getting out of starvation mode is always much more dangerous than even a certain period of starvation itself. This suggested serious challenges, which were our major concern when we were going here. At the moment she is in a relatively satisfactory condition. If it goes the way it does and we've jointly decided, then we hope that everything will be fine," deputy chief medical officer of Ukrainian Feofania hospital Andriy Strokan said.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1055563-savchenko-gaining-weight-in-combative-mood-ukrainian-doctors.html>

Savchenko resumes hunger strike, 16.03.2015

A letter from Savchenko announcing the resumption of her protest was posted by Russian translator and journalist Natalia Mavlevich on her Facebook page on Monday.

"From March 16, after a ten-day break, I'm on hunger strike again. And, this time, to a victorious end!!!" the letter says.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1056057-savchenko-resumes-hunger-strike.html>

Nadia Savchenko: Freedom or Death, 20.03.2015

"The Kremlin will send me back to my homeland. Even if it is as a "load 200" [Russian military term which stands for human remains], in a coffin, decorated with a ribbon topped with a bow for my birthday on May 11," wrote the Ukrainian detainee Nadia Savchenko in a letter recently published by her lawyers via Twitter.

According to Savchenko, she had suspended her hunger strike for 10 days due to numerous requests from "kind people." However, in the future she finds it impossible to compromise with her conscience, "I can't [do it] any longer, because otherwise I will lose my self-respect."

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1057952-nadia-savchenko-freedom-or-death.html>

Savchenko in satisfactory condition – prisoner human rights watchdog, 22.03.2015

Alexander Kulikovsky, member of the Moscow Public Oversight Commission (ONK), a prisoners' human rights watchdog, shared this information with Russian News Agency TASS.

"ONK members have visited Nadia Savchenko today, nothing threatens her life, [her] conditions is satisfactory," he said.

According to Kulikovsky, Savchenko has said she is ready to end her hunger strike if her imprisonment is changed for house arrest.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1058548-savchenko-in-satisfactory-condition-prisoner-human-rights-watchdog.html>

Mass Media

Journalists In Annexed Crimea Under Pressure, 13.03.2015

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine -- Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers on the annexed Crimean Peninsula have detained an investigative journalist in the regional capital, Simferopol. Colleagues of Natalya Kokorina, who works for the Center of Journalist Investigations in Simferopol, told RFE/RL that FSB officers searched her parents' apartment and detained her. Her lawyer, Dzhemil Temishev, was not allowed to enter the apartment during the search. Also on March 13, FSB officers searched an apartment in Simferopol that belongs to the parents of another local journalist, Anna Andriyevska, and confiscated a computer belonging to Andriyevska's father.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/crimea-journalist-under-pressure/26899212.html>

Freedom of media should remain priority for authorities in Ukraine, Mijatović says during visit to Kyiv, 19.03.2015

Ending her four-day visit to Kyiv, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović today said that the current crisis in and around Ukraine continues to negatively influence free media and journalists' safety in the country.

"The troubling developments with freedom of the media and safety of journalists as a whole continue in different parts of Ukraine, particularly in eastern Ukraine and Crimea," Mijatović said.

During her visit, the Representative met with senior governmental officials, including Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, Minister of Information Policy Yuriy Stets and the Head of Verkhovna Rada's Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy Viktoriya Siumar. Mijatović also met with the Head of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine Yuriy Artemenko and the Director General of the National Television Company Zurab Alasania. In her discussions with the authorities, Mijatović again raised the need to put an end to impunity for attacks on journalists and to be cautious when introducing changes to media legislation. She also stressed the importance of a well-functioning public service broadcaster and full transparency of authorities' decisions that restrict foreign media, including accreditation requirements.

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=3629592487&e=6b2886dd4c>

National Minorities

Ukrainian beaten to death by Moscow nationalists, 20.03.2015

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is demanding that Russia immediately investigate the killing of a Ukrainian man in Moscow that has signs of a hate crime.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ukrainian-beaten-to-death-by-moscow-nationalists-384028.html>

Vicious attack on well known neurosurgeon in Ukraine, 23.03.2015

The leading child neurosurgeon in Ukraine, Alexander Dukhovsky, was attacked by Kiev regime loyalists near his house in Kharkov. They were aiming at damaging his arms and hands and were shouting:

"K*ke mug, get out of the city and the country."

Dukhovsky says that the antisemitism was ignored by the Ukrainian media.

<http://9tv.co.il/news/2015/03/23/199960.html>

<http://peakoil.com/forums/vicious-attack-on-well-known-neurosurgeon-in-ukraine-t71169.html?sid=f41e27c211a2f48e11ed950a212b30de#p1242303>

Ukraine Worldwide

MP Honcharenko being interrogated by Russian investigators on charges of murder attempt in Odesa on May 2, 01.03.2015

Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Honcharenko, who was detained in Moscow during a memorial march on Sunday, honoring recently killed Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, is now being interrogated by Russian investigators on charges of an attempted murder of a Russian citizen during riots in Odesa, Ukraine, on May 2, 2014.

This was announced by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation.

Lawyers Mark Feygin and Nikolay Polozov, who have come to the Moscow-based Kitay-Gorod police station where Honcharenko was held, have not been allowed to meet their client.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050185-ukrainian-mp-honcharenko-being-interrogated-by-russian-investigator-on-charges-of-murder-attempt-in-odesa-on-may-2.html>

Moscow police detain 10 participants in march in memory of murdered Russian opposition leader Nemtsov, 02.03.2015

BBC's Russian Service reported, with reference to OVD Info, that Nikolai Aleksiychuk had been arrested under Article 19.3 of the Code of Administrative Infringements. He is also charged under Article 20.3.

"The detainee was found guilty of the public demonstration of Nazi symbols and the failure to obey a police officer," RIA Novosti said, quoting the press service of Moscow's Tver Court.

Another person who attended the march, Fyodor Lakshin, who is a cancer patient, was also sentenced to eight days of administrative arrest under a court ruling. He was also charged with failure to obey a police officer.

The court has already received materials gathered against 10 people who were detained during the march in memory of Nemtsov, who was shot dead within sight of the Kremlin in Moscow late on February 27.

<http://www.unian.info/politics/1050730-moscow-police-detain-10-participants-in-march-in-memory-of-killed-russian-opposition-leader-nemtsov.html>

Anna Durytska, witness to Nemtsov's killing, returns to Kyiv, 03.03.2015

The 23-year-old Ukrainian model Anna Durytska, who was by the side of outspoken Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov when he was shot and killed last Friday, returned to Kyiv from Moscow late Monday.

Durytska was interrogated by Russian investigators for three days and kept under house arrest. Nemtsov's friends helped her to remain connected with the outside world after her cell phone was seized by the Russian authorities, according to Ukraine's TSN news agency, Ukraine Today reports.

In an interview with Russian independent TV channel Dozhdh on Monday, Durytska said that she did not know the reason she was being held in Russia and that she was desperate to get back home as soon as possible due to her mother's anxiety.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1050992-anna-durytska-witness-to-nemtsovs-killing-returns-to-kyiv-video.html>

EU donates 24 armoured and 40 unarmoured vehicles to OSCE in Ukraine, 06.03.2015

The EU is ready to work further on guaranteeing the full implementation of Minsk agreements at several different levels, most notably through support for the OSCE.

As part of this effort the EU has already donated 40 unarmoured vehicles and 24 armoured [Toyota/LandCruiser-type] vehicles to the OSCE SMM.

Fifteen of the armoured vehicles have now arrived in Kyiv. Five more SUVs are on their way.

This completes the number of the armoured vehicles, as four cars have already been delivered prior to these new arrivals.

The fleet will be officially handed over to the SMM beginning of next week.

<http://www.unian.info/war/1052842-eu-donates-24-armoured-and-40-unarmoured-vehicles-to-osce-in-ukraine.html>

IMF Executive Board Approves 4-Year US\$17.5 Billion Extended Fund Facility for Ukraine, US\$5 Billion for Immediate Disbursement, 11.03.2015

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) today approved a four-year extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility for Ukraine. The arrangement amounts to the equivalent of SDR 12.348 billion (about US\$17.5 billion, 900 percent of quota) and was approved under the Fund's exceptional access policy. The Board also took note of Ukraine's decision to cancel the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Ukraine that was approved on April 30, 2014 (see Press Release No. 14/189).

The authorities' economic program supported by the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) will build on and deepen reforms launched under the SBA. The program aims to put the economy on the path to recovery, restore external sustainability, strengthen public finances, and support economic growth by advancing structural and governance reforms, while protecting the most vulnerable.

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2015/pr15107.htm>

Nine countries provide Ukraine with humanitarian aid worth \$120 mln – government, 13.03.2015

The Ukrainian Armed Forces as of March 12 received humanitarian aid worth \$120 million from nine countries, according to a government report.

The government report states, inter alia, that on March 11 Petro Poroshenko in a phone call with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden "thanked him for the U.S. additional non-lethal assistance to Ukraine in the field of security, in particular drones, communications systems, radars that detect mortar fire, night vision devices and other means worth a total \$75 million, as well as 230 military vehicles."

The United States provided Ukraine with procurement technical assistance worth \$13 million.

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/255030.html>

Japan to grant \$810,000 to nine Ukrainian charitable foundations, 13.03.2015

The representatives of nine Ukrainian charitable foundations and the Japanese Ambassador to Ukraine Shigeki Sumi on March 13 signed an agreement on the Japanese government's provision of aid worth \$810,000 to nine Ukrainian charitable foundations.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/japan-to-grant-810000-to-nine-ukrainian-charitable-foundations-383385.html>

Crimean Court Finds Ukrainian Flag a "Prohibited Symbol", 13.03.2015

The organizer and two participants in a peaceful action marking the 201st anniversary of the birth of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko have received corrective labour sentences and the organizer, Leonid Kuzmin, is also threatened with dismissal.

<http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1426162852>

EU extends sanctions against 150 people for actions against Ukraine, 13.03.2015

The EU Council has extended for six months the sanctions against 150 people and 37 organizations for actions aimed at undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The assets will be frozen and access to the EU denied until September 15 for these individuals. A complete list of individuals and organizations is placed on the website of the EU Council.

Sanctions are chiefly directed against Russian citizens, including the management of law enforcement agencies, and the immediate surroundings of Vladimir Putin.

http://mw.ua/ECONOMICS/eu-extends-sanctions-against-150-people-for-actions-against-ukraine-1441_.html

Putin reappears after mysterious 11-day absence, 16.03.2015

The meeting between the two presidents comes amid recent speculation in the media that the Russian leader was seriously ill or even dead, or that he was overthrown in a military coup.

The Kremlin denied all the rumors, but at the same time added fuel to the fires of speculation by releasing photographs and video of Putin that appeared to have been taken before his disappearance, or that were impossible to date.

But the excitement appeared to be over on Monday, with the Kremlin press service reporting dryly that "the agenda of the summit talks will include a discussion of key issues of further

strengthening of Russian-Kyrgyz cooperation, first of all - in the trade, investment, cultural and humanitarian spheres, as well as in the energy sector" – standard wording for a meeting between Putin and the leader of a former Soviet republic.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1055925-putin-reappears-after-mysterious-11-day-absence.html>

Crimea: One year on from annexation; critics harassed, attacked and silenced, 18.03.2015

The de facto authorities in Crimea have failed to investigate a series of abductions and torture of their critics, and resorted to an unrelenting campaign of intimidation to silence dissent, said Amnesty International in a briefing published today on the first anniversary of annexation. Violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea highlights how the de facto authorities in Crimea are carrying out a catalogue of human rights abuses against pro-Ukrainian media, campaigning organizations, Crimean Tatars and individuals critical of the regime.

<https://www.amnesty.org/articles/news/2015/03/crimea-annexation-critics-attacked-and-silenced/>

European Parliament approves allocation of EUR 1.8 bln to Ukraine, 19.03.2015

The European Parliament's trade committee has decided to approve a European Commission proposal to extend EU macro-financial assistance to Ukraine worth a total of EUR 1.8 billion, according to a report from the Parliament on a meeting of the Committee on International Trade held on Thursday, March 19.

<http://www.unian.info/economics/1057394-european-parliament-approves-allocation-of-eur-18-bln-to-ukraine.html>

Tusk, Merkel, Hollande agree to prolong sanctions against Russia, 19.03.2015

However, a formal decision on the prolongation of the sanctions, which are expiring in July, won't be taken before an EU summit slated for June, Russian.

Earlier Merkel suggested linking EU sanctions on Russia to full implementation of a Ukraine ceasefire under the Minsk agreements. According to her, it would be wrong to decide on rollover of the sanctions after the implementation of only first clauses of the peace accords. The Ukraine crisis and relations with Russia will be also the focus of a two-day summit of the EU leaders, which is to begin in Brussels on Friday.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1057655-tusk-merkel-hollande-agree-to-prolong-sanctions-against-russia.html>

Dutch investigators return to Ukraine to collect more MH17 crash evidence, 20.03.2015

The investigators plan to reach the areas previously with limited access because of fighting in Donbas, Radio Svoboda reported.

The Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice on Friday reported that the team consisted of 12 members – police officers and military experts, who will remain at the crash site until March 28. On March 19, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov called on an "unbiased and transparent investigation" into the causes behind the MH17 plane crash. He made this statement after Dutch media had reported that fragments of a Russian-produced BUK missile had been found at the crash site.

<http://www.unian.info/society/1058185-dutch-investigators-return-to-ukraine-to-collect-more-mh17-crash-evidence.html>

Australia imposes broader sanctions on Russia, 31.03.2015

According to the report, these sanctions are the same as those that have been imposed by the European Union, the United States and Canada, and supplement financial restrictions and travel bans that were imposed earlier.

The extended sanctions also include restrictions on the export or import of Russian weapons and related materials, as well as exports to Russia of certain equipment for oil exploration and production.

In addition, exports to Crimea of certain equipment for the energy and mining sector have been limited.

<http://www.unian.info/world/1061795-australia-imposes-broader-sanctions-on-russia.html>

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