

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTING OF THE BUILDUP TO WAR IN UKRAINE

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From February 13, 2022 onward

The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Sunday, February 13, 2022

In early 2022 Ukraine had finished the preparations for an overwhelming attack on the renegade People Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk (DPR and LNR).

Half of the Ukrainian army, some 120,000 men recruited and trained during the last 7 years, were stationed near the ceasefire line and ready to go. On the opposing side only some 40,000 men were under arms. They would have little chance to withstand an onslaught.

Russia could not let a Ukrainian attack happen. If Ukraine could regain the renegade provinces it would have been able to join NATO. Russian public opinion was decisively on the side of the Russian speaking DNR and LPR. It would surely demand an intervention. Since the 2014 coup in Kiev some four million Ukrainians had already moved to Russia. There are lots of family ties between the two countries. In sight of this Russia had put some of its own forces on alert and had moved weapons and munition to assembling points near the Ukrainian border.

The U.S. had for months warned of an upcoming Russian attack on Ukraine. It could do that because it knew the Ukraine would attempt to regain the republics by force. It knew that Russia would have to respond. On January 12 2022 CIA director Bill Burns had secretly met Zelensky in Kiev. Burns often carries messages from President Joe Biden.

On Sunday February 13 2022, after a phone call with U.S. president Joe Biden, the Ukrainian president Zelensky gave the final order for the planned Ukrainian attack.

That the decision had been made was immediately leaked in London as well as in Kiev.

In its summary of the day the *Guardian* listed a lot of activities that were consistent with the imminent start of a conflict. Diplomats and foreign military were moving out of Ukraine. Weapons flew in.

Tipped off by its government the British insurance conglomerate Lloyd stopped reinsurance services for anything Ukraine:

Anatoliy Ivantsiv, head of Ukrainian insurance firm Expo, told Interfax that British reinsurance giant Lloyds announced it would temporarily cease all conflict risk insurance over Ukrainian airspace from Feb. 14.

When the news of the attack order leaked in Kiev, its 'elite' oligarchs and some parliament members were ready to leave. On February 13 and the following days they fled the country:

Ukraine's richest men are fleeing the country with their families as the number of private jet charters jump after the possibility of war spiked in recent days, according to flight traffic information posted on social media

on

February

13.

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Switzerland, Austria and the south of France were the most popular destinations for the charter flights.

Ukrainska Pravda stated that such an exodus on charter flights hasn't been witnessed in six years of observations. The publication reported that planes belonging to the country's top oligarchs, including Rinat Akhmetov, Viktor Pinchuk, and Boris Kolesnikov, as having left the country. A private plane for 50 people was also ordered by Igor Abramovich, another top business figure.

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bne IntelliNews sources confirm that two residential English tutors, both British citizens, working for an MP and a businessman respectively, will leave for the south of France this week. Neither confirmed that the flights had anything to do with increased fears over an invasion, as both families travel regularly with their staff for work holidays. Even last month, when the war drums began to beat more loudly for the first time, tutors and teachers working at private schools in Kyiv reported a large number of children absent, away on holidays.

Some members of the Ukrainian parliament were also bailing out. on February 14 *Kiev Independent* reported:

More than two dozen lawmakers out of a total 424 MPs, who are due to attend parliamentary sessions starting this week, are not currently in Ukraine. Almost half, or 12 deputies, are from the pro-Russian party Opposition Platform-for Life, five deputies are from the presidential Servant of the People party. Most of the lawmakers, or 20 people, left the country in February.

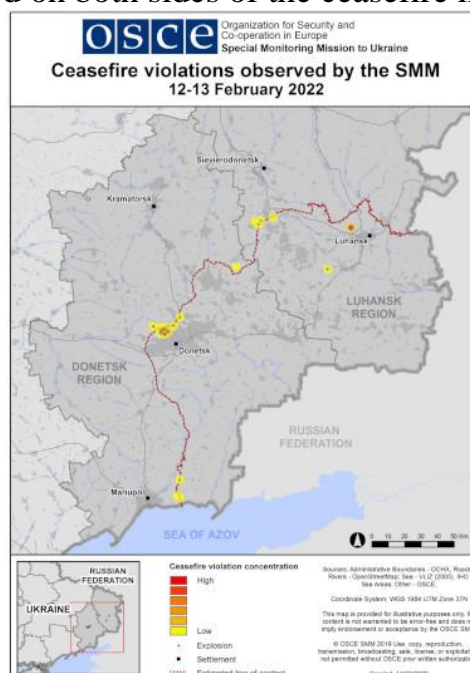
As part of the Minsk agreement the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) had a Special Observer Mission at the ceasefire line in east-Ukraine.

Over the weekend of February 12 and 13 the front had been relatively quiet:

In Donetsk region, between the evenings of 11 and 13 February, the Mission recorded 261 ceasefire violations, including 50 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 114 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, between the evenings of 11 and 13 February, the SMM recorded 114 ceasefire violations, including 24 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 258 ceasefire violations in the region.

The observed numbers of explosion were less than the average of the last 7 and 30 day periods. Explosions occurred on both sides of the ceasefire line.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Monday, February 14, 2022

February 14 2022 was a relative quiet day. The U.S. knew that the Ukraine would soon launch a large attack on the renegade Donetsk and Luhansk republics. To protect the Russian people living there the Russian Federation would have to invade Ukraine. The White House continued to warn of an upcoming 'Russian invasion' that the upcoming Ukrainian actions would provoke.

The *Washington Post* [reported](#) on a war planning group in the White House. The preparations had been going on for quite a while:

As fears grow of potential Russian aggression against Ukraine, a “Tiger Team” led by the White House is quietly gaming out how the United States would respond to a range of jarring scenarios, from a limited show of force to a full-scale, mass-casualty invasion.

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The Tiger Team was officially born in November, when national security adviser Jake Sullivan asked Alex Bick, the NSC director for strategic planning, to lead a planning effort across multiple agencies. Bick has brought in the Departments of Defense, State, Energy, Treasury and Homeland Security, along with the U.S. Agency for International Development to look at a possible humanitarian crisis.

The intelligence community is also involved, gaming out various courses of action the Russians might pursue and the risks and advantages of each, officials said.

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This planning has been underway even as other agencies push ahead with their own preparations. The Treasury Department has crafted potential sanctions packages and the Pentagon has planned for additional troop deployments at the same time the White House was finalizing its playbook.

Among the Tiger Team’s top concerns is a Russian effort to promote the false narrative that it is Ukraine, aided by the West, that is preparing to launch an offensive in eastern Ukraine, and that Russia is the victim.

We will see over the next days who really launched the attack.

The Kremlin was still [not convinced](#) that a war would come:

In a meeting in the Kremlin, the foreign minister Sergei Lavrov told Putin he believed there was still room for dialogue on Russian requests for a new security deal with the west, which have been made as Russia amassed 140,000 troops around Ukraine’s borders in recent weeks.

“It seems to me that our possibilities are far from being exhausted. They certainly should not continue indefinitely. But at this stage I would suggest that they continue and be intensified,” Lavrov told Putin.

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“We warn against endless conversations on issues that need to be resolved today. Still, as the foreign minister, I should say that there is always a chance,” said Lavrov.

At the same time, [a senior Russian diplomat told the Guardian](#) that Russia would be within its rights to “counterattack” against Ukraine if it felt Kyiv was threatening the population of eastern Ukraine.

“We will not invade Ukraine **unless we are provoked to do that**,” said Vladimir Chizhov, Russia’s ambassador to the EU, in an interview in Brussels.

“If the Ukrainians launch an attack against Russia, you shouldn’t be surprised if we counterattack. Or, if they start blatantly killing Russian citizens anywhere – Donbas or wherever,” he said.

There was diplomacy going on with a phone call between president Joe Biden and the British premier Boris Johnson. The German chancellor Olaf Scholz was in Kiev to try to stop the upcoming war. It was way too late.

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in east-Ukraine reported [of February 14](#) that the front was again [unusually quiet](#):

In Donetsk region, the Mission recorded 17 ceasefire violations, including one explosion. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 157 ceasefire violations in the region.

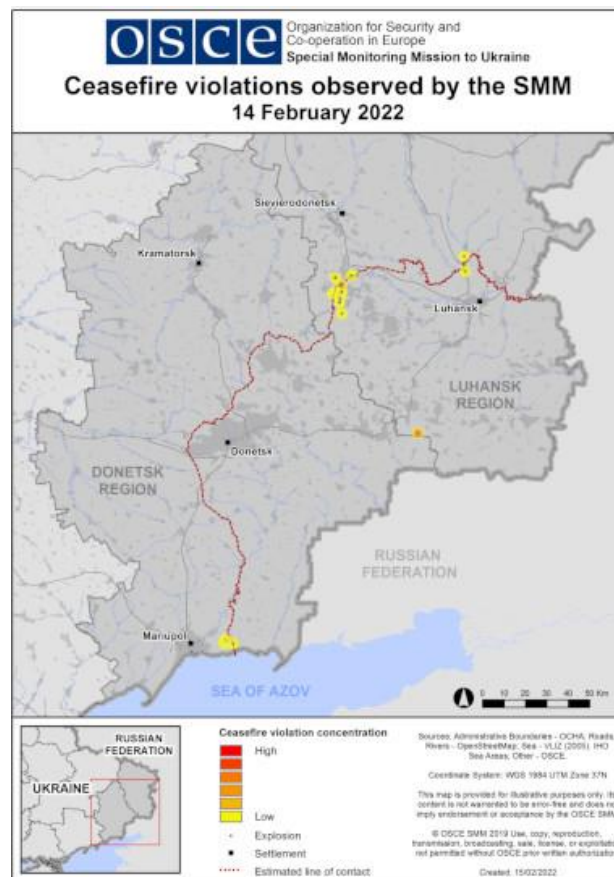
In Luhansk region, the SMM recorded 157 ceasefire violations, including 40 explosions. 80 of the ceasefire violations were assessed as a live-fire exercise outside the security zone. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 80 ceasefire violations in the region.

There was a notable observation of a Ukrainian tank concentration:

In violation of withdrawal lines, the Mission observed 22 tanks in a government-controlled area and one mortar in a non-government-controlled area of Luhansk region.

That was an unusually large number of Ukrainian T-72s near Pidlisne, 70km north-west of Luhansk.

The observed numbers of ceasefire violations and explosion were less than the average of the last 7 and 30 day periods as well as less than the daily average in all of 2021. The concentration of explosions south of Sadovyi (non-government-controlled, 57km south-west of Luhansk) was assessed to be from a live exercise. It is marked by the orange point on the Luhansk Donetsk boarder line.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Tuesday, February 15, 2022

After the 2014 coup in Kiev the duly elected President Yanukovich had fled the country. His supporters in parliament were afraid and would not show up for further assemblies. The incoming U.S. selected government immediately set out to suppress the Russian speaking parts of Ukraine. The first move of the rump parliament, now dominated by right-wing people from west Ukraine, was to prohibit the Russian language for official business.

The ethnic Russian population in the east and southeast was opposed to the coup and rebelled against it. The new government tried to oppress it by military means. But a lot of soldiers defected to the rebels and soon those won the upper hand. The Ukrainian government troops were decisively defeated, twice. Each time the French, German, Russian and Ukrainian governments set down to come [to agreements](#) on how to proceed:

The first, known as the **Minsk Protocol**, was drafted in 2014 by the [Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine](#), consisting of Ukraine, [Russia](#), and the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) (OSCE), with mediation by the leaders of [France](#) and [Germany](#) in the so-called [Normandy Format](#). After extensive talks in [Minsk](#), [Belarus](#), the agreement was signed on 5 September 2014 by representatives of the Trilateral Contact Group and, without recognition of their status, by the then-leaders of the self-proclaimed [Donetsk People's Republic](#) (DPR) and [Luhansk People's Republic](#) (LPR). This agreement followed multiple previous attempts to stop the fighting in the region and aimed to implement an immediate [ceasefire](#).

The agreement failed to stop fighting, and was thus followed with a revised and updated agreement, **Minsk II**, which was signed on 12 February 2015. This agreement consisted of a package of measures, including a ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, release of [prisoners of war](#), **constitutional reform in Ukraine granting self-government to certain areas of Donbas and restoring control of the state border to the Ukrainian government**. While fighting subsided following the agreement's signing, it never ended completely, and the agreement's provisions were never fully implemented.

The Minsk II agreement, a "Package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements", was endorsed by the UN Security Council [Resolution 2205](#). It is available [here](#). The package includes clearly numbered tasks. An immediate ceasefire is task 1. The 'Launch of a dialogue' about legislation measures the Ukrainian parliament would have to take to recognize a special status for Donbas is step 4. Step 9 is the reinstatement of full control of the state border by the government.

These clearly defined steps later proved to be the reason why the agreement was never fully implemented. The government of Ukraine insisted that step 9 should be taken before step 4. The governments of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics insisted on the original sequencing as giving up any control over the border with Russia, and the supplies coming through it, would have taken away their ability to defend themselves before the other steps, specifically the recognition of the special status of the Donbas republics, had been taken.

Over the years several summits were held to push for a fulfillment of the Minsk agreements. But the government of Ukraine, with 'western' support, continued to block the process.

On Tuesday, February 15 2022, following talks with the German chancellor Olaf Scholz, President Vladimir Putin ordered some troops who had been stationed near the border with Ukraine to move back to their barracks.

France 24 [listed other headlines of the day:](#)

- Blinken speaks to FRANCE 24: The Ukrainian crisis has 'reinforced transatlantic solidarity'
- NATO chief says 'cautious optimism' over Ukraine crisis
- Ukraine crisis: Blinken says risk of Russian invasion high
- Should I stay or should I go? Ukrainians remain resolute despite a war of nerves
- Scholz welcomes Russian withdrawal of some troops from near Ukraine
- Putin, Scholz begin talks in Moscow over Ukraine security
- Russia says some troops return to base, Ukraine reacts cautiously
- Markets calmer after Zelensky's invasion joke spooks investors

France 24, and many other 'western' media, missed something important that was [happening in Russia](#):

Russia's parliament will vote on Tuesday to decide whether to ask President Vladimir Putin to recognise two Russian-backed breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as independent, the speaker of the Duma lower house said.

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The idea of asking Putin to recognise the breakaway territories was first floated by lawmakers on Jan. 19 but has taken weeks to get onto parliament's agenda, with the Kremlin declining to comment on whether it likes the idea.

In late January 2022 the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) had [analyzed the idea](#):

On January 19, 11 members of the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, registered a draft law to recognize the independence of two separatist statelets in eastern Ukraine that have been warring with Kyiv since 2014 with substantial but undeclared support from Moscow. The document, which was **put forward by members of the Communist Party**, comes amid rising tensions along Ukraine's border and in occupied Crimea, as Russia continues its buildup of military forces while demanding that the collective West agree to proposals to reshape the European security order to its liking.

This is not the first time that Russian parliamentarians have sought to provide official recognition to the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (abbreviated as the DPR and LPR, respectively). In 2014, deputies from the party launched an abortive campaign to collect signatures in support of recognizing the territories' independence, which would have been delivered to President Putin for consideration. Meanwhile, the Just Russia party called for recognizing the statelets' independence that same year and has included it in subsequent party platforms.

This was not the idea of the major government supporting United Russia party, but of the parliamentary opposition. Putin had rejected the 2014 attempt towards independence as he did want to keep the Donbas republics within Ukraine.

CSIS writes that an eventual recognition of the independence of Donbas was seen by its supporters as a step that might help to avoid a war:

The approach suggested by the Communists offers certain advantages to Russia. First, with negotiations on Russia's security demands stalled, extending official recognition to the LPR and DPR could give Putin a

relatively simple way to shift the status quo in Russia's favor without (necessarily) involving the 127,000-strong Russian forces currently encircling Ukraine.

The chairman of the State Duma's committee dealing with relations in neighboring states has already indicated that recognizing the statelets' independence could be part of Russia's "plan B" in case talks fail. **If Russia would want to allow more time for negotiations to play out, while also escalating pressure to compel the West to accept at least some of its core positions, then recognition of the statelets could be considered in the Kremlin as an appropriate next step.** Should Ukraine and the West make substantial concessions at that stage, then Putin would be able to proclaim a victory in the current standoff and draw down his forces rather than risk a spiraling escalation with unpredictable outcomes.

During its February 15 session the Duma adopted the resolution:

Russia's lower house of parliament voted on Tuesday to ask President Vladimir Putin to recognise two Russian-backed breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as independent and the European Union told Moscow not to follow through.

The move by the State Duma, if approved, could further inflame a wider standoff over a Russian military build-up near Ukraine that has fuelled Western fears that Moscow could attack. Russia denies any invasion plans and has accused the West of hysteria.

Recognition of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics could kill the Minsk peace process in eastern Ukraine, where a conflict in the region known as Donbass between government forces and Moscow-backed separatists has cost 15,000 lives.

"Kyiv is not observing the Minsk agreements. Our citizens and compatriots who live in Donbass need our help and support," Vyacheslav Volodin, the State Duma speaker, wrote on social media.

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At a news conference in Moscow, Putin declined to be drawn out on how he plans to respond. He said Russians were sympathetic to the residents of the Donbass region, but he wanted the regions' problems to be resolved through the Minsk accords.

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Four-way peace talks between Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany were held last week but ended without a breakthrough.

After the talks, Ukraine said it would not yield to pressure from Moscow to negotiate directly with the separatists, while Russia accused Kyiv of putting forward absurd proposals.

The OSCE Special Observer Mission at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported of February 15 that the number of ceasefire violations continued to be below average. The number of explosions, i.e. artillery impacts, was higher than average but mostly limited to one area where they hit on both sides of the ceasefire line:

In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 24 ceasefire violations, including five explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 17 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 129 ceasefire violations, including 71 explosions.

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The majority of ceasefire violations occurred in areas close to the disengagement area near Zolote (government-controlled, 60km west of Luhansk) (see below). In the previous reporting period, the Mission recorded 157 ceasefire violations in the region, some of which also occurred near the disengagement area near Zolote.

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During the reporting period, the SMM camera in Zolote recorded four projectiles in flight, while Mission patrols heard 61 undetermined explosions and 37 bursts of heavy-machine-gun fire, assessed as outside the disengagement area near Zolote but within 5km of its periphery.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Wednesday, February 16, 2022

On the even of February 15 the Russian Foreign Ministry released information about a phone call between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. *CGTN reported* on February 16:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday called on the U.S. to drop aggressive rhetoric in dialogue on security guarantees and demonstrate pragmatic approach to this topic, state-owned Tass news agency reports.

Lavrov held a telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in which the Russian diplomat stressed the need to continue working together.

"On our part, it was stressed that it is necessary to continue joint work, as was agreed by Presidents [of Russia Vladimir] Putin and [of the United States Joe] Biden during their telephone call on February 12, in the context of the US and NATO proposals on security guarantees," TASS quotes the Russian foreign ministry.

"Lavrov specially stressed the inadmissibility of aggressive rhetoric fanned by Washington and its closest allies and called for a pragmatic dialogue on the entire spectrum of issues raised by Russia, with a focus on the principle of indivisible security."

Russia had previously sent demands for talks on several issues to the U.S. and NATO. The most important point for Russia had been the term 'indivisible security' in the sense that security for one side should not interfere with the security of the other side.

This term is included in several treaties with Russia. It claimed that the expansion of NATO was threatening its security and thereby breaching those treaties. While the U.S. denied this, it is obvious that all NATO expansion were increasing the potential danger for Russia. Russia and NATO were thus put into a classic [security dilemma](#):

In international relations, the security dilemma (also referred to as the spiral model) is when the increase in one state's security (such as increasing its military strength) leads other states to fear for their own security (because they do not know if the security-increasing state intends to use its growing military for offensive purposes). Consequently, security-increasing measures can lead to tensions, escalation or conflict with one or more other parties, producing an outcome which no party truly desires; a political instance of the prisoner's dilemma.

The U.S. had responded to the Russian paper by conceding on some minor points that Russia had long demanded but not on any of the big questions of which the most important one was 'indivisible security'.

On February 2 2022 I had [described the process](#) in detail:

[I]n mid December Russia started to counter the U.S. move. It published two draft treaties, one [with the U.S.](#) and one [with NATO](#), that included stringent security demands:

- No more NATO expansion towards Russia's borders.
- Retraction of the 2008 NATO invitation to Ukraine and Georgia.
- Removal of foreign NATO forces from east Europe.
- Legally binding guarantee that no strike systems which could target Moscow will be deployed in countries near to Russia.
- No NATO or equivalent (UK, U.S., Pl.) 'exercises' near Russian borders.
- NATO ships, planes to keep certain distances from Russian borders.
- Regular military-to-military talks.
- No U.S. nukes in Europe.

Russia requested written responses and threatened to take 'military technical' measures should the responses be negative. Russia also planned for and launched new military exercises.

The responses were received but, following a U.S. request, Russia refrained from publishing them. They were leaked to *El Pais*, [published today](#) and can be [downloaded here](#) (pdf).

The U.S. response to Russia's draft treaties is professional. While it rejects Russia's main demands, especially a neutral status for the Ukraine, it concedes on minor issues and offers additional talks on them. The NATO response is in contrast highly ideological and rejects all of Russia's points while making new demands towards Russia which are designed to be rejected. (Future negotiations are now likely to exclude NATO.)

Russia has yet to officially respond to the received letters. During a news conference after talks with the Prime Minister of Hungary the Russian President [remarked](#) on the letters:

[W]hile ignoring our concerns, the United States and NATO are referring to the right of states to freely choose specific methods to ensure their security. But this is not only about providing someone with the right to freely choose methods to ensure their security. **This is only one part of the well-known indivisible security formula. The second inalienable part implies that it is impossible to strengthen anyone's security at the expense of other states' security.**

Russia's Foreign Ministry has [send a letter](#) to several NATO countries in which it requests their official opinions on several agreements they have signed which include clauses on the indivisibility of security: The very essence of the agreements on indivisible security is that either there is security for all or there is no security for anyone.

How is the signing of those treaties and indivisible security for all compatible with the aggressive NATO expansion aimed at Russia? 'Western' foreign ministries will find it difficult to answer that question.

France 24 listed some of its relevant headlines [of the day](#):

- Ukraine crisis: Moscow announces end of Crimea drills, NATO unconvinced
- Russia's parliament asks Putin to recognise breakaway east Ukrainian regions
- Ukraine crisis: Russian pullout meets Western allies scepticism
- 'Day of Unity': Ukrainians raise flags to defy Russia invasion fear
- NATO says Russia appears to be continuing military escalation in Ukraine
- NATO chief says Russia appears to be continuing military build-up around Ukraine

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported [of February 16](#) that the number of ceasefire violations had suddenly jumped to above average. Artillery exchanges took place [on many parts of the front](#).

In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 189 ceasefire violations, including 128 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 24 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 402 ceasefire violations, including 188 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 129 ceasefire violations in the region.

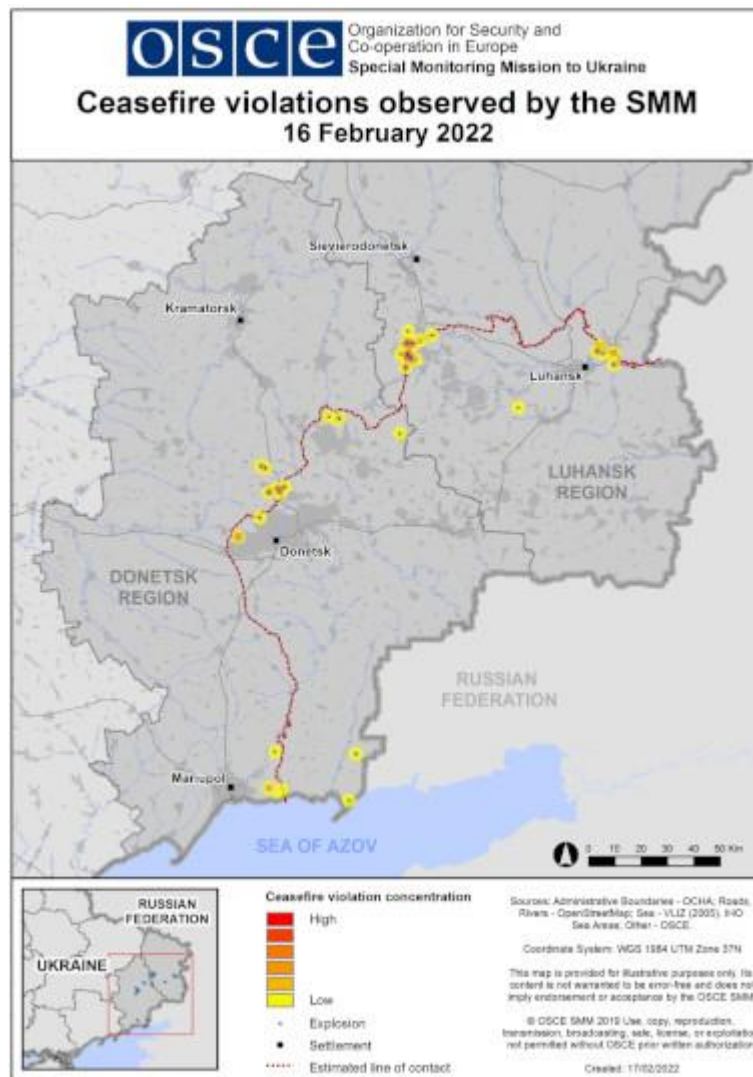
On February 16 the observers noticed several self propelled howitzer (2S1 *Govzdika*, 122 mm) in violation of withdrawal lines. Four were seen on the Ukrainian government side and two on the non-government side.

After three days that had been more or less quite the sudden jump in fighting was particularly noticeable.



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The map shows explosions, the small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Thursday, February 17, 2022

On February 17 2022, a Thursday, the UN security Council held a [meeting about the situation in Ukraine](#):

Speaking at the U.N. Security Council, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken revealed some conclusions of U.S. intelligence in a strategy that the U.S. and Britain have hoped will expose and pre-empt any invasion planning. The U.S. has declined to reveal much of the evidence underlying its claims.

He told the diplomats that a sudden, seemingly violent event staged by Russia to justify invasion would kick it off.

“We don’t know exactly” the pretext — a “so-called terrorist bombing” inside Russia, a staged drone strike, “a fake, even a real attack ... using chemical weapons,” he said.

It would open with cyberattacks, along with missiles and bombs across Ukraine, he said. Painting the U.S. picture further, Blinken described the entry of Russian troops, advancing on Kyiv, a city of nearly 3 million, and other key targets.

U.S. intelligence indicated Russia also would target “specific groups” of Ukrainians, Blinken said, again without giving details.

In an implicit nod to Secretary of State Colin Powell's appearance before the Security Council in 2003, when he cited unsubstantiated and false U.S. intelligence to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Blinken added: "Let me be clear. I am here today not to start a war, but to prevent one."

We know today that there was no 'staged violent event'. There were also no cyberattacks and no attacks on specific groups. U.S. intelligence before the war seems to have been as bad as ever.

The increase in shelling that had happened the day before was finally noticed:

Separatist authorities in the Luhansk region reported an increase in Ukrainian government shelling along the tense line of contact. Separatist official Rodion Miroshnik said rebel forces returned fire.

Ukraine disputed the claim, saying separatists had shelled its forces but they didn't fire back. The Ukrainian military command said shells hit a kindergarten in Stanytsia Luhanska, wounding two teachers, and cut power to half the town.

The head of the monitoring mission for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Yasar Halit Cevik, said it reported 500 explosions along the contact line from Wednesday evening to Thursday. Cevik told the Security Council the tensions then appeared to ease, with about 30 blasts reported.

Unfortunately the OSCE's Cevik was wrong.

Also on February 17 2022 the *Associated Press* published a good [explainer piece](#) about the 'Russia-backed rebels'. I made a few points that 'western' media do not dare to repeat today (emphasis added):

When Ukraine's Moscow-friendly president was driven from office by mass protests in February 2014, Russia responded by annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. It then threw its weight behind an insurgency in the mostly Russian-speaking east, known as Donbas.

In April 2014, Russia-backed rebels seized government buildings in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, proclaimed the creation of "people's republics" there and battled Ukrainian troops and volunteer battalions.

The following month, **the separatist regions held a popular vote to declare independence and make a bid to become part of Russia. Moscow hasn't accepted the motion, in the hope of using the regions as a tool to keep Ukraine in its orbit and prevent it from joining NATO.**

The 2014 votes for independence were cited by Russia when it later recognized the prior Ukrainian oblast as independent countries.

Ukraine and the West accused Russia of backing the rebels with troops and weapons. Moscow denied that, saying any Russians who fought in the east were volunteers.

The former Swiss Intelligence officer Jacques Baud has said that most of the weapons and men on the rebel side had come from units of the Ukrainian army which had change sides. They [did not come](#) from Russia:

In 2014, I am at NATO, responsible for the fight against the proliferation of small arms, and we are trying to detect Russian arms deliveries to the rebels in order to see if Moscow is involved. The information that we receive then comes practically all from the Polish intelligence services and does not "match" with the information from the OSCE: in spite of rather crude allegations, we do not observe any delivery of arms and materials Russian military.

The rebels are armed thanks to the defections of Russian-speaking Ukrainian units which cross over to the rebel side. As the Ukrainian failures progressed, the entire tank, artillery or anti-aircraft battalions swelled the ranks of the autonomists. This is what drives the Ukrainians to commit to the Minsk Accords.

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However, let us remember, there were never any Russian troops in the Donbass before February 23-24, 2022. Moreover, OSCE observers have never observed the slightest trace of Russian units operating in the Donbass.

The AP piece also repeated a point I have previously made about the sequencing in the Minsk agreements. It was the Ukrainian side which blocked their implementation by demanding border control before guaranteeing self-rule for Donbas (emph. add.):

After a massive defeat of Ukrainian troops in the battle of Ilovaisk in August 2014, envoys from Kyiv, the rebels and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe signed a truce in the Belarusian capital of Minsk in September 2014.

The document envisaged an OSCE-observed cease-fire, a pullback of all foreign fighters, an exchange of prisoners and hostages, an amnesty for the rebels and a promise that separatist regions could have a degree of self-rule.

The deal quickly collapsed and large-scale fighting resumed, leading to another major defeat for Ukrainian forces at Debaltseve in January-February of 2015.

France and Germany brokered another peace agreement, which was signed in Minsk in February 2015 by representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the rebels. It envisaged a new cease-fire, a pullback of heavy weapons and a series of moves toward a political settlement. A declaration in support of the deal was signed by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany.

The 2015 peace deal was a major diplomatic coup for the Kremlin, obliging Ukraine to grant special status to the separatist regions, allowing them to create their own police force and have a say in appointing local prosecutors and judges. It also envisaged that **Ukraine could only regain control over the roughly 200-kilometer (125-mile) border with Russia in rebel regions after they get self-rule and hold OSCE-monitored local elections** — balloting that would almost certainly keep pro-Moscow rebels in power there.

Many Ukrainians see it as a betrayal of national interests and its implementation has stalled.

The U.S. and UK stalled the process and used the time to arm and train the Ukrainian army so that it could, in early 2022, try to take back the Donbas region by force.

The OSCE Special Observer Mission at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported of February 17 2022 that the number of ceasefire violations had again increased significantly. Artillery exchanges took place along several parts of the front.

In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 222 ceasefire violations, including 135 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 189 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 648 ceasefire violations, including 519 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 402 ceasefire violations in the region.

In violation of the withdrawal lines both sides increased the deployment of heavy equipment to 'training areas' as well as towards the border line:

In violation of withdrawal lines, the Mission observed a surface-to-air-missile system in a government-controlled area of Donetsk region. It also spotted 21 howitzers, five anti-tank guns (four of which probable) and one probable multiple launch-rocket system, in two training areas in non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region.

Beyond withdrawal lines but outside designated storage sites, the SMM saw ten towed howitzers and two surface-to-air-missile systems in government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, in two compounds (of

which one near a residential area). It also spotted two surface-to-air missile systems, 12 mortars and 41 tanks, in two training areas in non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region.

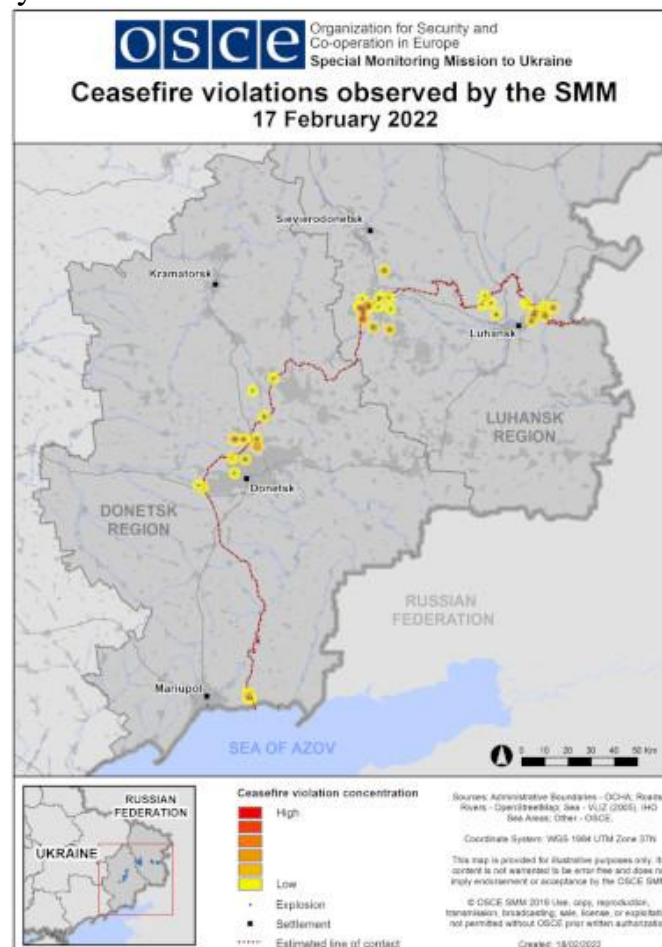
After the quiet start of the week the further sudden jump in ceasefire violations and explosions was quite noticeable.



¹ Based on information from the Monitoring Teams as of 19:30, 17 February 2022. All times are in Eastern European Time.

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The map shows explosions, the small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line. While only few of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows 23 impacts on the Donbas side and 13 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line. The artillery duels thereby seemed to become more uneven than on the day before.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Friday, February 18, 2022

On February 18 2022, a Friday, Russia voiced alarm over the sharp increase in shelling in Donbas:

MOSCOW (Reuters) -Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov voiced alarm on Friday over a sharp increase in shelling in eastern Ukraine and accused the OSCE special monitoring mission of glossing over what he said were Ukrainian violations of the peace process.

Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists have been fighting in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine since 2014 in a conflict that Kyiv says has claimed some 15,000 lives.

Washington and its allies have raised fears that the upsurge in violence in the Donbass could form part of a Russian pretext to invade Ukraine. Tensions are already high over a Russian military buildup to the north, east and south of Ukraine.

Moscow denies planning an invasion.

"We are very concerned by the reports of recent days - yesterday and the day before there was a sharp increase in shelling using weapons that are prohibited under the Minsk agreements," Lavrov said, referring to peace accords aimed at ending the conflict.

Militia of the Donbas republics started to evacuate civilians:

Russian-backed separatists packed civilians onto buses out of breakaway regions in east Ukraine on Friday, a shock turn in a conflict the West believes Moscow plans to use as justification for all-out invasion of its neighbour.

Warning sirens blared in Donetsk after it and the other self-proclaimed "People's Republic" of Luhansk announced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people to Russia, with women, children and the elderly going first.

Hours later, a jeep exploded outside the rebel government building in the city of Donetsk, capital of the region of the same name. Reuters journalists saw the vehicle surrounded by shrapnel, a wheel tossed away by the blast. Russian media said it belonged to a militia leader.

The Ukrainian government said it was not planning any offensive or targeting civilians in any way.

There were lots of meetings and calls among 'western' leaders and Lavrov and Blinken agreed to meet:

Antony Blinken is to meet the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, next week, as the US secretary of state warned the crisis in Ukraine was a "moment of peril for the lives and safety of millions of people".

The US state department said on Thursday night that Blinken had accepted an invitation to meet Lavrov provided there was no invasion of Ukraine. The move provides hope that diplomatic channels remained open even as US warnings of an imminent invasion grow louder.

"If they do invade in the coming days, it will make clear they were never serious about diplomacy," said state department spokesperson Ned Price. Blinken said earlier on Thursday he had sent a letter to Lavrov proposing a meeting in Europe.

A fresh flurry of meetings between western leaders begins on Friday, with the US president, Joe Biden, hosting a call with the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Britain, the European Union and Nato.

The US vice-president, Kamala Harris, is also due to arrive in Munich for several days of talks with global leaders including the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, the UK foreign secretary, Liz Truss, and Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

The Russian president Vladimir Putin held a [meeting with Russia's Security Council](#)

The discussion focused on the situation around Ukraine and on growing tensions that are being provoked by external forces. The President briefed the meeting participants, in great detail, about his international contacts this week, including face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations. They also exchanged opinions on security guarantees for Russia.

Putin also had a meeting with the president of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko. In a following [news conference](#) both bemoaned the seemingly unreasonable behavior of their international counterparts.

Putin:

Responding to a request from President Lukashenko, I talked about my recent meetings with foreign leaders on the provision by the US and NATO of long-term and legally binding security guarantees for Russia. We believe it is both logical and understandable that this issue also concerns our Belarussian allies.

We discussed the situation with Russia's requests for the West, the most important of which concern NATO's non-expansion, the non-deployment of strike weapons systems in close proximity to the Russian border, and the return of the bloc's military potential and infrastructure in Europe to the state of 1997 when the Russia-NATO Founding Act was signed.

As I said earlier, unfortunately, the United States and other members of the alliance do not appear ready to sincerely consider these three pivotal elements of our initiative. At the same time, they have advanced a number of ideas of their own concerning European security, specifically, intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, and military transparency, which Russia is open to discussing. **We are ready to continue the negotiation track provided that all items are considered in their entirety, in conjunction with Russia's main proposals, which are an unconditional priority for us.**

President Lukashenko and I touched on the intra-Ukrainian conflict as well. The settlement process remains stalled; despite all our efforts, neither the contacts at the level of advisers to the leaders of the Normandy Format countries nor the consultations with our partners are helping.

Kiev is not complying with the Minsk Agreements and, in particular, is strongly opposed to a direct dialogue with Donetsk and Lugansk. Kiev is essentially sabotaging the agreements on amending the Constitution, on the special status of Donbass, on local elections and on amnesty – on all the key items in the Minsk Agreements. Besides, basically, human rights are massively and systematically violated in Ukraine, and discrimination against the Russian-speaking population is being fixed at the legislative level.

The President of Belarus and I agreed that the Minsk Agreements are the key to restoring civil peace in Ukraine and relieving tension around that country. All Kiev needs to do is sit down at the negotiating table with representatives of Donbass and agree on political, military, economic and humanitarian measures to end the conflict. The sooner this happens, the better. Unfortunately, right now, we are witnessing the opposite – the situation in Donbass is worsening.

Lukashenko:

Considering the urgency of the situation, the President and I have devoted much attention today to this issue and discussed potential joint actions as a response to the aggressive behaviour of our Western partners. I would like to emphasise once again: nobody wants a war, or even an aggravation of the situation or any conflict. We, Russians and Belarusians, do not need this.

As people well versed in this issue, you probably understand that this no longer depends even on our neighbours, including Ukraine. You also see clearly who the escalation of tensions near our borders depends on. For the first time in decades, we have found ourselves on the threshold of a conflict that could, unfortunately, pull much of the entire continent into a maelstrom.

We are seeing the irresponsibility and, excuse me for being blunt, stupidity of some Western politicians at its best. There is no logic or reasonable explanation for the conduct of the leaders of neighbouring countries, their truly morbid desire to walk the edge.

The President of Russia has very mildly described the aggravation of the situation in Donbass. Unfortunately, it is true. People there are ready to flee the area and are probably already fleeing, as we know. This is not normal. I have the impression that some politicians who hold high and responsible positions in the so-called free world are simply pathologically dangerous to both their associates and, most importantly, to their own people.

History was about to repeat itself.



Via [@PaulEckstein](#) - Notice the laughing ~~Turk~~ China sitting it out.
bigger

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported [of February 18 2022](#) that the number of ceasefire violations had again increased significantly. Artillery exchanges took place [along many parts of the front](#). In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 591 ceasefire violations, including 553 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 222 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 975 ceasefire violations, including 860 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 648 ceasefire violations in the region.

Since Wednesday, February 16 2022, the number of ceasefire violations and explosions has increased every day.



² Based on information from the Monitoring Teams as of 19:30, 18 February 2022. All times are in Eastern European Time. During the reporting period, weather conditions limited the observational capabilities of the SMM cameras in Shirokoye and Zolote.

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The map shows explosions, the small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line. While only few of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows 56 impacts on the Donbas side and 22 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line. The artillery exchanges seem to have become more uneven than before.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Saturday, February 19, 2022

From the *Reuters* [summary](#) of Saturday, February 19, 2022:

Russia's President Vladimir Putin was set to oversee exercises by strategic nuclear missile forces on Saturday as Western leaders gathered in Munich, fearful that he could order troops massed on Ukraine's border to invade at any time.

Russian-backed separatist leaders in eastern Ukraine declared a full military mobilisation, a day after ordering women and children to evacuate to Russia, citing the threat of an imminent attack by Ukrainian forces. Kyiv flatly denied the accusation and Washington said it was part of Russia's plan to create a pretext for an invasion of Ukraine. [read more](#)

Multiple explosions could be heard on Saturday morning in the north of the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, a Reuters witness said.

...

Separatist authorities on Friday announced plans to evacuate around 700,000 people, citing fears of an imminent attack by Ukrainian forces - an accusation Kyiv flatly denied.

Less than 7,000 people had been evacuated from Donetsk as of Saturday morning, the local emergencies ministry said. Russian news agencies said later 10,000 evacuees had arrived in Russia.

...

Hours after the evacuation announcement, a jeep exploded outside a rebel government building in the city of Donetsk and Russian news agencies said two explosions hit Luhansk, one of the main cities in Ukraine's breakaway People's Republic of Luhansk, and part of a gas pipeline in the area caught fire.

The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was at the annual Munich Security Conference where he met U.S. VP Kamala Harris, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and others. He also held [a speech](#) which included this obvious lie:

Ukraine consistently implements the Normandy agreements and the Minsk agreements. Their foundation is the unquestionable recognition of the territorial integrity and independence of our state. We seek a diplomatic settlement of the armed conflict. Note: solely on the basis of international law.

The [Minsk agreements](#), which the UN Security Council endorsed, require Kiev to negotiate with the Donbas government and to implement new legislation:

The [first] agreement failed to stop fighting, and was thus followed with a revised and updated agreement, Minsk II, which was signed on 12 February 2015. This agreement consisted of a package of measures, including a ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, release of prisoners of war, **constitutional reform in Ukraine granting self-government to certain areas of Donbas** and restoring control of the state border to the Ukrainian government.

The former German chancellor Angela Merkel and the former French president François Hollande Kiev have since confirmed that Kiev did not attempt to fulfill the agreement but used it to win time to train and arm its military.

Zelensky also said this:

I want to believe that the North Atlantic Treaty and Article 5 will be more effective than the Budapest Memorandum.

Ukraine has received security guarantees for abandoning the world's third nuclear capability. We don't have that weapon. We also have no security. We also do not have part of the territory of our state that is larger in area than Switzerland, the Netherlands or Belgium. And most importantly - we don't have millions of our citizens. We don't have all this.

Therefore, we have something. The right to demand a shift from a policy of appeasement to ensuring security and peace guarantees.

Since 2014, Ukraine has tried three times to convene consultations with the guarantor states of the Budapest Memorandum. Three times without success. Today Ukraine will do it for the fourth time. I, as President, will do this for the first time. But both Ukraine and I are doing this for the last time. I am initiating consultations in the framework of the Budapest Memorandum. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was commissioned to convene them. If they do not happen again or their results do not guarantee security for our country, **Ukraine will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum is not working and all the package decisions of 1994 are in doubt.**

The Budapest Memorandum gives very vague security guarantees in exchange for Ukraine giving up the nuclear weapons that the Soviet Union had stationed in that state. (Ukraine had tried to break the codes that protected the weapons but did not succeed.) Ukraine's membership in the Non-Proliferation Treaty followed from the Budapest

Memorandum. When Zelenski says the "package decisions of 1994 are in doubt" he threatens to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to pursue nuclear weapons.

Ukraine has several nuclear energy reactors, access to nuclear fuel, well trained nuclear experts and missile technology expertise. It might take a year or two but Ukraine could indeed build deployable nuclear weapons.

The mentioning of an eventual denunciation of the Budapest Memorandum during the Munich Security Conference was taken by Russia as a threat.

The Donetsk News Agency reported that western Donetsk was, since February 17, under heavy fire:

The shelling incidents were reported from 11.47 a.m. until 12.22 p.m., the total of 46 mortar and grenade launcher rounds hit the city. The fire originated from the direction of Krasnogorovka.

The DPR has been under attack since 5.30 a.m. today, a wide range of weapons is used.

The OSCE Special Observer Mission at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported of Saturday, February 19 2022 and Sunday, February 20 2022 without separating both days in its verbal description. However the graphic showing the number of observed incidents attached to the report separates both days. The number of total ceasefire violations and explosions on Saturday was again increased from the previous day. Artillery exchanges took place along many parts of the front.

In Donetsk region, between the evenings of 18 and 20 February, the SMM recorded 2,158 ceasefire violations, including 1,100 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 591 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, between the evenings of 18 and 20 February, the Mission recorded 1,073 ceasefire violations, including 926 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 975 ceasefire violations in the region.

Both sides continued to position heavy weapons:

Withdrawal of weapons

In government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, the Mission saw four howitzers in violation of withdrawal lines. It also spotted 12 howitzers, one surface-to-air missile system and one multiple launch rocket system in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Beyond withdrawal lines but outside designated storage sites, the SMM saw 41 tanks and 14 howitzers in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including in two training areas.

Indications of military and military-type presence in the security zone

The Mission saw nine armoured combat vehicles in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as five armoured combat vehicles in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region.

On 19 February, while in Prokhorivka (government-controlled, 53km south of Donetsk), the Mission saw one light utility truck (GAZ-66) equipped with antennas, assessed as used for flying mid-range UAVs, stationary about 100m north of the road. It also observed two Ukrainian Armed forces soldiers near the truck.

The evacuation of civilians from the Donbas region continued:

Gatherings of people and convoys in Donetsk and Luhansk regions

Over the reporting period, in various locations in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Mission saw people gathering and several convoys of cars and buses (some of which bearing signs with “evacuation” written on them) driving eastwards with passengers (mostly women, children, and the elderly).

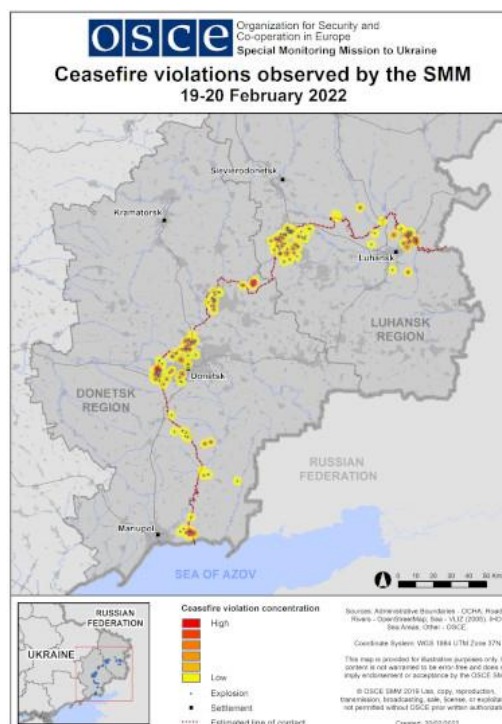
On Saturday the numbers of ceasefire violations did increase over those on Friday by some 30%. The number of recorded explosions held steady.



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The map shows ceasefire violations in yellow, orange to red colors. Most of these appear on the side of the Donbas republics. The source of most of the ceasefire violations, like noise of shooting or explosions recorded by cameras, drones or heard by the observers, is listed as 'undetermined'.

The map shows explosions, as small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line for Saturday and Sunday. While only few of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows some evenness with 25 impacts marked on the Donbas side and 28 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Sunday, February 20, 2022

It is somewhat disquieting how the events these days track those of a year ago.

In 2022 we saw a preparation of Russian and Ukrainian troops for a war, a meeting between the presidents of Russia and Belarus, an exercise of Russia's strategic nuclear forces on February 19, a strong Putin speech on the 21st, followed the next day by legislative action. Then the solemn and very symbolic Defender of the Fatherland Day on February 23 with military action starting the next day.

The anniversary is following the same pattern. The mobilized troops have been prepared. Putin has again met Lukashenko. Yesterday there was another strategic nuclear exercise. Tomorrow at noon (Moscow time) Putin will hold a public address. On the 22nd the Duma will hold an extraordinary session. Then another wreath laying during the Defender of the Fatherland Day followed by what? We don't know. But something is definitely coming.

From AP's [summary of Sunday](#), February 20, 2022:

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, facing a sharp spike in violence in and around territory held by Russia-backed rebels and increasingly dire warnings that Russia plans to invade, on Saturday called for Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet him and seek resolution to the crisis.

...

In new signs of fears that a war could start within days, Germany and Austria told their citizens to leave Ukraine. German air carrier Lufthansa canceled flights to the capital, Kyiv, and to Odessa, a Black Sea port that could be a key target in an invasion.

NATO's liaison office in Kyiv said it was relocating staff to Brussels and to the western Ukraine city of Lviv.

CNN [added](#):

The Ukrainian defense ministry has reported further ceasefire violations in the east, after a day of heavy weapons fire Saturday.

...

Ukraine said it recorded a total of 136 ceasefire violations on Saturday.

The Ukrainian Border Guards said that because of the shelling one crossing point for international humanitarian organizations, Shchastia, at the Line of Contact had been closed since 8:00 a.m. local time Sunday. A UNHCR convoy that used the crossing point Friday said it had been caught in crossfire.

Some residents of Donetsk -- which is controlled by pro-Russian separatists -- reported heavy shelling early Sunday. One woman contacted by CNN said she and her children wanted to move closer to the city center because of shelling in her district, Abakumova.

It's unclear where the shelling originated. The authorities in the breakaway republics persistently claim shelling by Ukrainian forces, who in turn regularly deny firing artillery across the front lines.

The woman also told CNN that on Saturday her neighbors had left for Russia and had been accommodated somewhere near Rostov-on-Don in a tent encampment.

The Russian authorities say that more than 40,000 people have arrived in Russia after being evacuated from the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, according to the acting head of the Ministry of Emergency Situations Alexander Chupriyan.

...

Russia's Investigative Committee says it is beginning an investigation into media reports of fatalities due to shelling in Luhansk region. In a statement, the committee said: "The media reported that this morning the Armed Forces of Ukraine made an attempt to attack the positions of the People's Militia of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, while, according to preliminary data, there are casualties among the civilian population."

The *Donetsk News Agency* reported of [infiltration attempts](#):

Donetsk, Feb 21 – DAN. Ukrainian saboteur squad has infiltrated the DPR with the purpose of arriving to the Russian border, the Ministry of State Security said.

...

"A DPR artillery depot has been blown up," the report added.

Another saboteur attack was thwarted in Donetsk in the night of February 20.

A Ukrainian saboteur blew himself up at the Donetsk railway station this morning while installing an explosive device.

The President of Russia Vladimir Putin had [a call](#) with the French President Emmanuel Macron:

In a follow-up to the talks during President Macron's recent visit to Moscow and regular telephone conversations, the two leaders had an in-depth discussion of the developments around Ukraine as well as developments regarding long-term legal security guarantees for the Russian Federation.

Serious concerns were expressed due to the quickly deteriorating situation along the contact line in Donbass. The President of Russia noted that provocations from Ukrainian militants were the reason for the escalation. Attention was drawn to the modern weapons and ammunition being sent to Ukraine by NATO member countries, which is encouraging Kiev to pursue a military solution to the Donbass problem. As a result, civilians in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics are suffering and being forced to leave for Russia to save themselves from intensifying attacks.

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported [of Saturday, February 19 2022 and Sunday, February 20 2022](#) without separating both days in its verbal description.

In Donetsk region, between the evenings of 18 and 20 February, the SMM recorded 2,158 ceasefire violations, including 1,100 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 591 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, between the evenings of 18 and 20 February, the Mission recorded 1,073 ceasefire violations, including 926 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 975 ceasefire violations in the region.

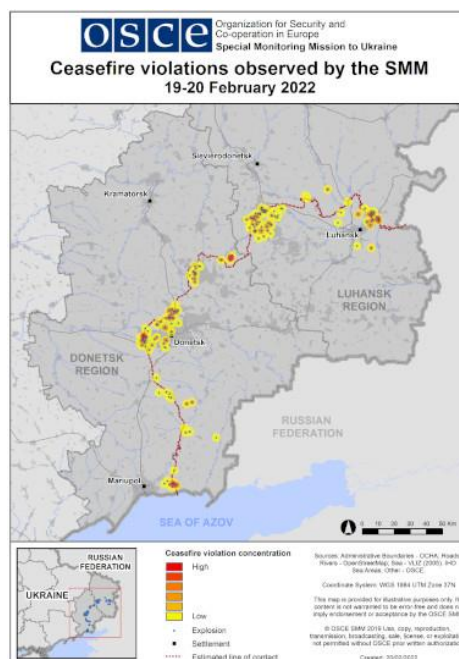
However the graphic showing the number of observed incidents attached to the report separates both days. For unknown reasons the number of total ceasefire violations and explosions on Sunday decreased significantly from the previous day. (This was however not a trend. The next day will see another large increase.)



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The map shows ceasefire violations in yellow, orange to red colors. Most of these appear on the side of the Donbas republics. The source of most of the ceasefire violations, like noise of shooting or explosions recorded by cameras, drones or heard by the observers, is listed as 'undetermined'.

The map shows explosions, as small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line for Saturday and Sunday. While only few of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows some evenness with 25 impacts marked on the Donbas side and 28 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Monday, February 21, 2022

Around noon of Monday, February 21 2022, the *Donetsk News Agency* reported of unprecedented artillery attacks on the Donbas republics:

The tensions along the line of contact in Donbass heightened over the last 24 hours, both DPR and LPR Missions to the JCCC report.

In the DPR, 730 explosions of Ukrainian projectiles were recorded, the enemy is using large caliber mortars and artillery cannons. A similar situation is observed in the LPR, where 674 explosions of Ukrainian shells were reported over 24 hours.

The Republics have suffered military and civilian casualties.

Key infrastructure objects have sustained damage. More than 1,000 customers are without power, a major ventilator was off in the Skochinskogo coal mine, prompting staff evacuation.

At around 18:50 local time the DNA reported that the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic had asked the president of Russia Vladimir Putin to recognize the republics as independent states:

"On behalf of our people we ask you to recognize the DPR as an independent, democratic, social state under the rule of law," the DPR Head Denis Pushilin said.

"I ask you to recognise the sovereignty and independence of the Lugansk People's Republic", the LPR Head Leonid Pasechnik said.

They both asked to consider the possibility of signing an agreement of friendship and cooperation between Russia and the LPR, including the cooperation in the sphere of defence.

Putin has a degree in law and is generally unwilling to bend or break it. The request by the Donbas republics are part of a process that will make a Russian intervention on their side legally consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The Russian president held a Security Council meeting. It opened with his summary of previous events that had led to the situation:

A peace plan was drafted during the negotiating process called the Minsk Package of Measures because, as you recall, we met in the city of Minsk. But subsequent developments show that the Kiev authorities are not planning to implement it, and they have publicly said so many times at the top state level and at the level of Foreign Minister and Security Council Secretary. Overall, everyone understands that they are not planning to do anything with regard to this Minsk Package of Measures.

Nevertheless, Russia has exerted efforts and still continues to make efforts to resolve all the complicated aspects and tragic developments by peaceful means, but we have what we have.

Our goal, the goal of today's meeting is to listen to our colleagues and to outline future steps in this direction, considering the appeals by the leaders of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic on recognising their sovereignty, as well as a resolution by the State Duma of the Russian Federation on the same subject. The latter document urges the President to recognise the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic.

After the Security Council meeting Putin had a phone call with the German chancellor Scholz and the French president Macron to inform them of the results:

Vladimir Putin informed the leaders of the outcomes of the expanded meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, which reviewed the current situation around Donbass in the context of the State Duma's

resolution on recognising the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. Today the leaders of the DPR and the LPR also requested the recognition of their sovereignty in connection with the military aggression of the Ukrainian authorities and massive shelling of the territory of Donbass, and the resulting civilian suffering.

In view of this, the President of Russia said he intended to sign a corresponding executive order soon.

The President of France and the Federal Chancellor of Germany expressed disappointment over the developments, while also indicating readiness to continue contacts.

At around 22:30 local time Putin held an [address to the nation](#) which was televised on public TV. It notices that large parts of today's east and south Ukraine as well as Crimea were previously parts of Russia that had been attached to Ukraine by Lenin (1922) and Khrushchev (1954). Additionally Stalin had attached Polish areas that to Ukraine after the Second World War.

He then review the plundering of Ukraine's richness after its independence, the rise of its 'nationalists' and the terror campaign they unleashed after the U.S. financed Maidan coup.

He noticed the build up of the Ukraine army, trained and armed by a continuous stream of NATO forces. Meanwhile NATO created new infrastructure that threatened Russia while the U.S. withdrew from several Arms Control treaties:

Today, one glance at the map is enough to see to what extent Western countries have kept their promise to refrain from NATO's eastward expansion. They just cheated. We have seen five waves of NATO expansion, one after another – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were admitted in 1999; Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004; Albania and Croatia in 2009; Montenegro in 2017; and North Macedonia in 2020.

As a result, the Alliance, its military infrastructure has reached Russia's borders. This is one of the key causes of the European security crisis; it has had the most negative impact on the entire system of international relations and led to the loss of mutual trust.

He describes the situation in Donbas under steady shelling and concludes:

Russia has done everything to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity. All these years, it has persistently and patiently pushed for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2202 of February 17, 2015, which consolidated the Minsk Package of Measures of February 12, 2015, to settle the situation in Donbass.

Everything was in vain. Presidents and Rada deputies come and go, but deep down the aggressive and nationalistic regime that seized power in Kiev remains unchanged. It is entirely a product of the 2014 coup, and those who then embarked on the path of violence, bloodshed and lawlessness did not recognise then and do not recognise now any solution to the Donbass issue other than a military one.

In this regard, I consider it necessary to take a long overdue decision and to immediately recognise the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic.

I would like to ask the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to support this decision and then ratify the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with both republics. These two documents will be prepared and signed shortly.

After the speech Putin signed documents recognizing [the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics](#):

The President of Russia signed the Executive Order On the Recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Executive Order On the Recognition of the Lugansk People's Republic.

Vladimir Putin and Head of the DPR Denis Pushilin signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Donetsk People's Republic.

The President of Russia and Head of the LPR Leonid Pasechnik signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Lugansk People's Republic.

The treaties of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance included mutual defense agreements.

While the 'West' calls Russia's action in Ukraine 'unprovoked' the long list of NATO actions that Putin included in his speech prove that Russia's action was certainly provoked.

The 'West' also likes to call the Russian intervention in Ukraine 'illegal'. However, Russia recognized the two republics just like the 'West' recognized Bosnia and a part of sovereign Serbia as an independent Kosovo. Unlike in the Donbas republics there had never been a referendum in Kosovo that supported such a step. But the 'West' had even found an international court that (barely) [legalized the Kosovo case](#). There can thus be no argument that the steps Russia took in recognizing the republics were in any way illegal.

The common self-defense treaties Russia and the republics signed are not fully consistent with [Article 51 of the UN Charter](#) as those republics were not (yet) UN members. But they closely followed that articles spirit:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.

The case of Russian support for the Donbas republics was thereby made as legal as they possibly could be made.

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported [of Monday, February 21 2022](#).

It was the worst day ever.

In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 703 ceasefire violations, including 332 explosions. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 579 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 1,224 ceasefire violations, including 1,149 explosions. In the previous 24 hours, it recorded 333 ceasefire violations in the region.

After a high number of ceasefire violations and explosions on Saturday, February 19 2022, the following Sunday had seen a reduction of incidents. Monday however proved that this was not a trend. While the numbers of ceasefire violations were 10% less than on the previous Saturday the number of observed explosion [increased by](#) 20% over Saturday.

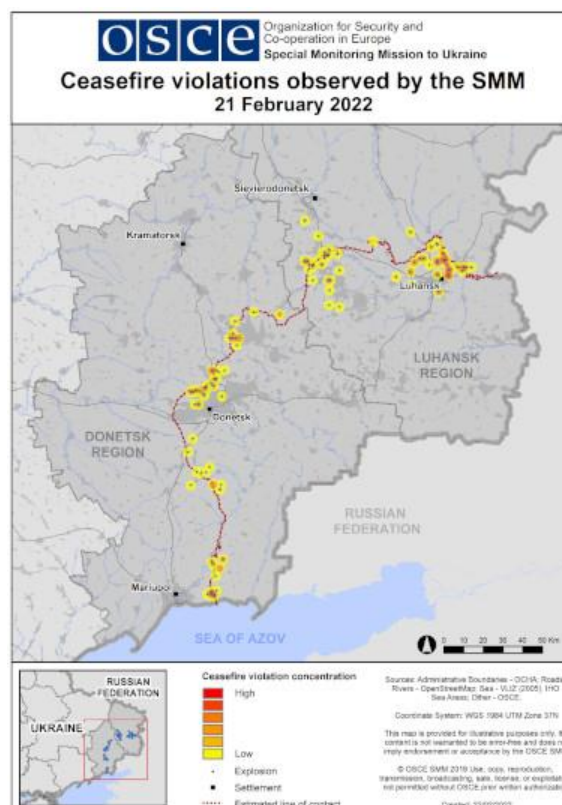


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The map shows ceasefire violations in yellow, orange to red colors. By far the most now appear on the side of the Donbas republics. The source of most of the ceasefire violations, like noise of shooting or explosions recorded by cameras, drones or heard by the observers, is listed as 'undetermined'.

The map shows explosions, as small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line. While only a part of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows that a great majority of those happened on the side of the Donbas republics. I count 92 impacts marked on the Donbas side and only 16 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line.

This was no longer an artillery duel or exchange of harassment. From a military standpoint this now clearly looked like artillery preparations for an attack along roads that could then be used as future lines of attack for a mechanized force.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Tuesday, February 22, 2022

To provide a legal framework for Russian military support to Donetsk and Luhansk the Russian President Vladimir Putin had signed executive orders to recognize the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic as independent countries:

In this regard, I consider it necessary to take a long overdue decision and to immediately recognise the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic.

I would like to ask the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to support this decision and then ratify the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with both republics. These two documents will be prepared and signed shortly.

On Tuesday, February 22, 2022 the Federal Assembly held an extraordinary session and did as Putin had ask:

In a session held on Tuesday, the Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, unanimously backed the deals, with 400 MPs voting in favor. Earlier that same day, the parliaments of the two regions simultaneously ratified the 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Russian Federation.'

This was sufficient reason for the U.S. and EU to implement their long planned fireworks of sanctions against Russia:

The European Union agreed to new sanctions on Russia that will blacklist more politicians, lawmakers and officials, ban EU investors from trading in Russian state bonds, and target imports and exports with separatist entities.

...

Russia's formal recognition of two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine was an unacceptable breach of Ukraine's sovereignty, Borrell said.

"This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot," Borrell told a news conference alongside France's foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian at a meeting in Paris.

Separately, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas told Reuters that further Russian aggression in Ukraine would result in more sanctions, in coordination with the United States.

The package of sanctions includes all members of the lower house of the Russian parliament who voted in favor of the recognition of the breakaway regions, freezing any assets they have in the EU and banning them from traveling to the bloc.

U.S. sanctions on Russia were imposed in a coordinated manner.

Germany halted the approval for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Later that day Putin signed the Federal Law On Ratifying the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Between the Russian Federation and the Lugansk People's Republic and a similar treaty with the Donetsk People's Republic:

The Federal Law was adopted by the State Duma and approved by the Federation Council on February 22, 2022.

...

The Treaty provides for broad cooperation in the political, economic, social, military and humanitarian areas.

After recognizing the independence of the LPR/DNR Russia all three could claim a right of collective self-defense in analog to [Article 51](#) of the UN Charter.

Sticking to the necessary legal formalities Putin then [asked](#) the Federal Council to authorize the use of Russian Armed Forces abroad:

On the basis of Paragraph “d”, Part 1, Article 102 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, and under the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Donetsk People’s Republic, and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Lugansk People’s Republic, I am submitting a proposal that the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation approve a resolution authorising the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation abroad on the basis of the generally accepted principles and norms of international law.

Putin then [took media questions](#). He made some interesting points.

- Russia recognizes the republics in their constitutional borders, i.e. their original borders in Ukraine before the conflict there started.
- He compares Crimea, where a referendum was held and people voted to become part of Russia, with Kosovo, where only a parliament vote was held to declare itself independent.
- He lays out what the conditions for peace had been before: Recognition of Crimea as part of Russia, no NATO membership for Ukraine, fulfillment of the Minsk agreements and a certain extend of demilitarization of Ukraine.
- Being asked about Ukraine's intend to build and deploy nuclear weapons (as announced by Zelenski on Feb 19 in Munich) Putin responded that the Ukraine has the means to do that. This would be a strategic threat to Russia.

Last but not least he is asked about the length and extend of the potential military deployment:

Andrei Kolesnikov, Kommersant newspaper:

Mr President, do you think it is possible in today’s world to resolve problems with force and remain on the side of good? This is my first question.

The second one is more technical, if you will. In your view, how far might troops advance: up to the contact line, to the administrative borders of the DPR and LPR, or somewhere else?

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: First, I did not say our troops would enter right away, after our meeting here. That is first. Second, it is absolutely impossible to predict the detailed path of possible actions. It depends on the concrete situation that is unfolding on the ground, as they say.

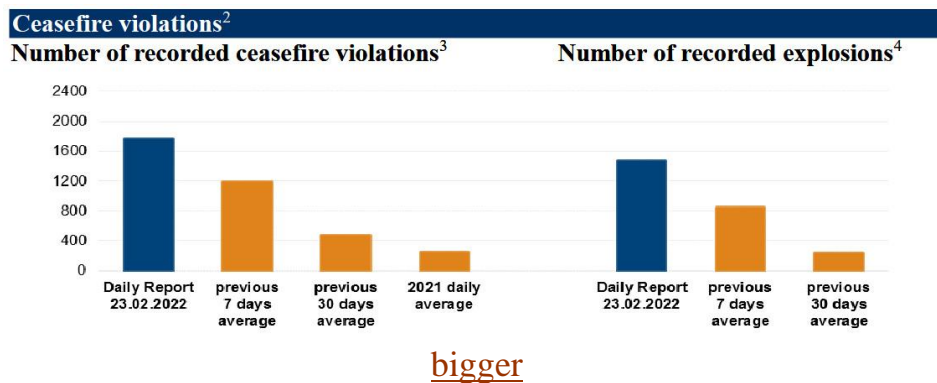
Regarding the question if all issues can and must be resolved by force or if it is possible to remain on the side of good. Well, why do you think that good must always be frail and helpless? I do not think that is true. I think good means being able to defend oneself. We will proceed from that.

The OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine reported [of Tuesday, February 22 2022](#).

In Donetsk region, the SMM recorded 528 ceasefire violations, including 345 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 703 ceasefire violations in the region.

In Luhansk region, the Mission recorded 1,182 ceasefire violations, including 1,075 explosions. In the previous reporting period, it recorded 1,224 ceasefire violations in the region.

The OSCE reported slightly less incidents than the day before.



Both sides moved further equipment towards the ceasefire line:

In violation of withdrawal lines, in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the SMM saw 13 tanks near a residential area of Karlivka (25km north-west of Donetsk), eight towed howitzers, including four in a residential area of Novotroitske (36km south-west of Donetsk), as well as four surface-to-air missile systems and two towed anti-tank guns. In non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, the SMM saw two surface-to-air missile systems and eight towed howitzers, of which four were moving south on road T-0508 near Bessarabka (85km south of Donetsk), in a zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is further proscribed according to Point 5 of the Memorandum of 19 September 2014.

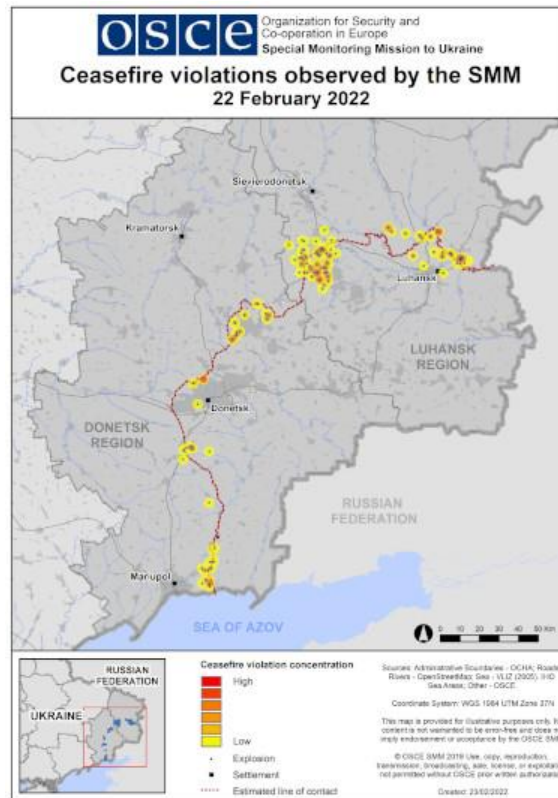
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The SMM saw five armoured combat vehicles in government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, including one in a residential area, and a self-propelled anti-aircraft system near a residential area, as well as eight armoured combat vehicles in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including two near Novomykhailivka (52km south of Donetsk), in a zone within which deployment of heavy armaments and military equipment is proscribed according to Point 5 of the Memorandum of 19 September 2014.

The map shows ceasefire violations in yellow, orange to red colors. The most appear on the side of the Donbas republics. The source of most of the ceasefire violations, like noise of shooting or explosions recorded by cameras, drones or heard by the observers, is listed as 'undetermined'.

The map shows explosions, as small black dots, on both sides of the ceasefire line. While only a part of the hundreds of explosions were located and marked on the map a count of the black dots shows that a great majority of those happened on the side of the Donbas republics. I count 68 impacts marked on the Donbas side and 34 on the government controlled side of the ceasefire line.

This was no longer an artillery duel or exchange of harassment. From a military standpoint this looked like artillery preparations for an attack along roads that could then be used as future lines of attack for a mechanized force.



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The Buildup To War In Ukraine - Wednesday, February 23, 2022

February 23 2022 was a holiday in Russia, the Defender of the Fatherland Day. It is a annual memorial day for all the people who, over the centuries, have fought for Russia in its wars.

As usual Russia's president Vladimir Putin addressed veterans, Armed Forces personnel and the people of Russia:

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Comrade officers, veterans,

Please accept my warmest greetings on this holiday, Defender of the Fatherland Day, which is celebrated all over the country not only by tradition but also by right.

It embodies the feelings of respect our citizens feel for their noble defenders, our pride in all those who served and serve in the Army and the Navy, recognition of their heroic merits to the Fatherland to assert our national interests, sovereignty and independence.

Patriotism and the unity of our nation, the exploits of its devoted sons and daughters have always been the foundation of the martial history of our thousand-year-old country, its glory and victories. We are proud of the many generations of its defenders: the guards of Alexander Nevsky and Dmitry Donskoy, the warriors of Minin and Pozharsky and the heroes of Poltava and Borodino, Stalingrad and the unstoppable assault on Berlin, all those who brought glory to our Fatherland according to the great traditions of our ancestors.

...

We can see the difficult international situation and the threats posed by current challenges, such as the erosion of the arms control system and NATO's military activities. And yet, Russia's appeals to build a system of **equal and indivisible security** that would reliably defend all countries, remain unanswered.

Our country is always open to a direct and honest dialogue and ready to search for diplomatic solutions to the most complicated issues. But I want to repeat that Russia's interests and the security of our people are an indisputable priority. ...

Putin also laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier.

The only diplomacy involving Moscow that happened during the day was a call with the president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan:

The leaders exchanged views on the situation with Russia's recognition of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics. Vladimir Putin stressed the objective necessity to take that decision based on the Ukrainian authorities' aggression in Donbass and their categorical refusal to implement the Minsk Agreements. Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave his well-known views on the matter.

The issues of working out long-term legally binding security guarantees for the Russian Federation were also discussed. In this context, Vladimir Putin expressed his disappointment with the US and NATO response which came down to an attempt to ignore Russia's legitimate concerns and demands.

The presidents agreed to continue Russian-Turkish contacts in various formats.

CNN's coverage on February 23 2022 was mostly related to new sanctions imposed on Russia as well as about various political voices warning of the imminent war.

Ukraine introduced a state of emergency.

In the evening some Ukrainian government web sites went down after a number of run-of-the-mill cyberattacks.

CNN also reported that the separatist regions in Donbas had asked the Kremlin for help repelling Ukraine forces:

The heads of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), two separatist regions in Ukraine, recently recognized by Russia as independent, have formally asked Russian President Vladimir Putin for help repelling the aggression of Ukrainian Armed Forces, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told Russian state news agency RIA-Novosti on Wednesday.

"The president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin received letters of appeal from the head of the Luhansk People's Republic Leonid Pasechnik and the head of the Donetsk People's Republic Denis Pushilin," Peskov said, according to RIA.

According to Peskov, the appeal said: "Kyiv continues to build up its military presence on the line of contact, while receiving comprehensive support, including military support, from the United States and other Western states. The Kyiv regime is focused on resolving the conflict by force."

"Given the foregoing, the heads of the two republics, in connection with the current situation, as well as in order to prevent civilian casualties and a humanitarian catastrophe, on the basis of Articles 3 and 4 of the treaties on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between the Russian Federation and the republics, ask the president of Russia to assist in repelling aggression of the armed forces and formations of Ukraine," Peskov added, according to RIA.

This was the last formal step for Russia to enter the war in Ukraine.

Soon Russia troops moved into the separate Donbas region:

Russian troops have moved into the eastern region of Ukraine that Russia has now recognized as “independent,” according the prime minister of NATO member Latvia and sources familiar with US intelligence.

“According to the information at my disposal, Putin is moving additional forces and tanks into the occupied Donbas territories,” Latvian Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš told CNN’s Jim Sciutto on Wednesday. “By any definition that’s a crossing of a sovereign territory into a neighboring country.”

Pressed specifically on whether he was referring to the entry of additional Russian troops since Moscow recognized the two separatist regions earlier this week, Kariņš replied: “Yes, according to the information at my disposal, this is exactly what we’re seeing.”

At midnight Moscow time Russian troops moved towards Ukraine from several directions. On February 24, at 6:00 am Moscow time, [Putin addressed Russia](#). The Russian airforce started operating in Ukraine, Russian troops moved in. The war was on.

Curiously the OSCE [Special Observer Mission](#) at the ceasefire line in southeast-Ukraine issued no report that covers whatever happened on the ground [on Wednesday, February 23 2022](#).

Its [Daily Report 42/2022 issued on 23 February 2022](#) covers what happened on Tuesday, February 22 2022. Its [Daily Report 43/2022 issued on Tuesday, February 24 2022](#) covers only things that happened all over Ukraine on Thursday, February 24 2022.

The later report seems confused:

Based on information from the Monitoring Teams as of 19:30 23 February 2022. All times are in Eastern European Time.

- Since the early hours of 24 February, at various locations across Ukraine, the SMM observed a severely deteriorated security situation.
- The Mission heard multiple explosions, including multiple launch rocket system fire.
- The SMM saw military aircraft overflying Kherson and Kyiv cities.
- The Mission recorded a spike in shelling in government-controlled areas of Luhansk region.
- In various locations across Ukraine, the SMM saw fewer people in the streets and long queues at shops, pharmacies, ATMs and petrol stations.

[Download the full report](#)

While the first line states that the observations for the report ended "as of 19:30 23 February 2022" all reporting in the intro as well as in the full report seems to be of observations and incidents that happened on February 24. There is no count of ceasefire violations and no map of incidents and impacts for the 23rd.

We thus do not have any record from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission on ceasefire violations, explosions and military movements along the ceasefire line in Donbas for Wednesday, February 23 2022.

I have found no explanation for this.

Disarming Ukraine - Thursday, February 24, 2022

The military of Russia has launched an operation to disarm, and possibly regime change, the Ukraine.

I do understand why Russia is doing this - it is either attack now or defend itself later with way more casualties and the danger of total defeat.

I had hoped though that it would find other methods to protect Russia from further NATO aggression.

In 2014 the U.S. instigated regime change in Kiev and has since controlled the Ukrainian government. It has build up the Ukraine as a base to strangle Russia economically and militarily.

During the last two centuries Russia had to defend itself, with horrific casualties, against two huge invasions from the west. It is understandable that it does not want to repeat that experience.

It is difficult to discern what the planed end state of this operation is. Where is this going to stop?

Looking at this map I believe that the most advantageous end state for Russia would be the creation of a new independent country, call it Novorussiya, on the land east of the Dnieper and south along the coast that holds a majority ethnic Russian population and that, in 1922, had been attached to the Ukraine by Lenin. That state would be politically, culturally and militarily aligned with Russia.



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This would eliminate Ukrainian access to the Black Sea and create a land bridge towards the Moldavian breakaway Transnistria which is under Russian protection.

Excursion:

The yellow part of that map marked 'Ukraine in 1654' was actually the land of the Eastern Orthodox [Zaporozhian Cossacks](#). Under threat from the Catholic Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth, which at the time held the green parts under serfdom, the Cossacks negotiated the [Pereiaslav Agreement](#) (1654) with Russia and pledged allegiance to the Tsar. They area thus became an autonomous part of Russia.

End Excursion

The rest of the Ukraine would be a land confined, mostly agricultural state, disarmed and too poor to be build up to a new threat to Russia anytime soon. Politically it would be dominated by fascists from Galicia which would then become a major problem for the European Union.

Thanks to Stalin's additions to the Ukraine three countries, Poland, Hungary and Romania, have claims to certain areas in the Ukraine's western regions. If they want to snatch those up again it is now probably the best time to do so. Despite being part of NATO, which likely would not support such moves, those three will have domestic policy difficulties to withstand the urge.

I hope for a sharp but short fight which destroys the Ukraine's military capabilities but causes as little casualties and other damages as possible.

It is sad that NATO countries, including mine, did not have the courage to make the necessary concessions to prevent this from happening.

Update:

[Putin's speech last night](#) (English version) explains why this is happening.