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Liberty Crossing Analysis

# Strategic Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Initiative Weekly Newsletter

Liberty University

Helms School of Government Students



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## Russia-Ukraine Conflict

### BLUF

- To separate Kyiv from Western support, Russian forces are assessed to be pushing around the city rather than into, so that they may initiate an attack on Kyiv from multiple fronts.
- In preparation for a renewed ground offensive, Russian forces are reported to be heavily bombing Kharkiv. Russian ground forces are positioned in locations near the area of operations and are assessed to reconvene the physical assault within the next 72 hours.
- Russian Forces are assessed to capture Mariupol and Kherson in the coming days, both of which will provide staging grounds for further movement to the North and to the West. Mariupol will provide Russia with a united front in the south and Kherson will be the key resupply center in further westward movement.

### Analysis

#### Kyiv

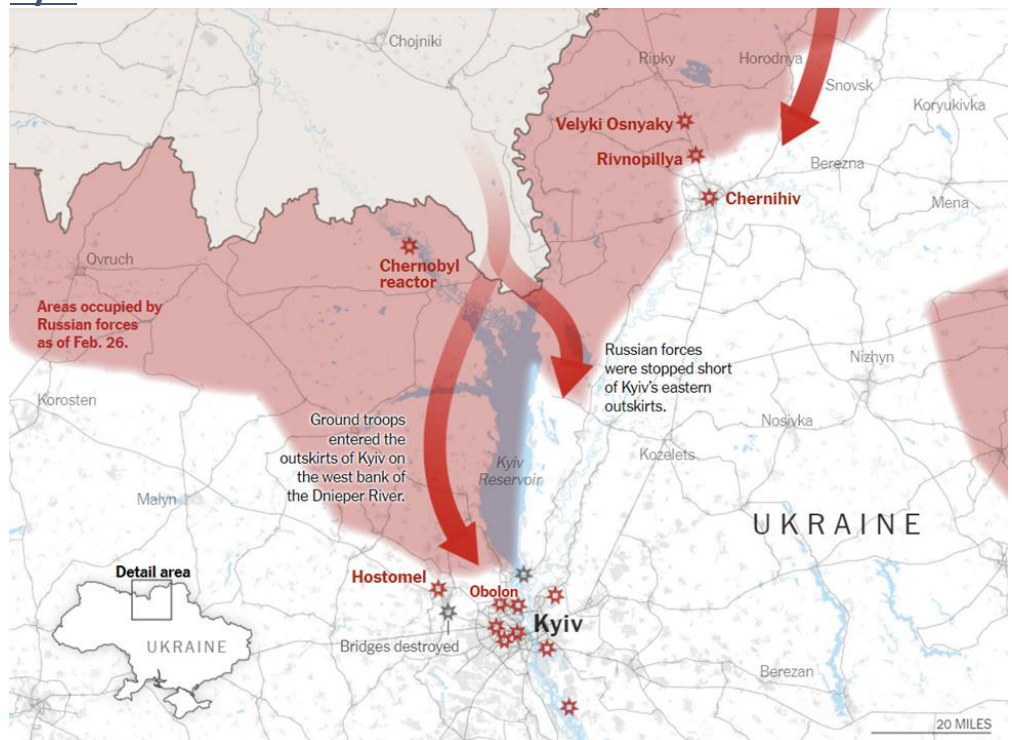


Figure 1: NY Times reporting; Ukrainian officials; Institute for the Study of War

- The "40 Mile-long" Convoy that's supporting Russian forces in the Northwest of Kyiv. Convoy is positioned along the West bank of the Dnipro and consists of numerous trucks and combat vehicles.



Figure 2: A section of the Russian convoy just outside Rudnya-Shpylivska, north of Kyiv. Maxar Technologies

- Supporting Effort 1: Chernihiv
  - Russia appears to be concentrating forces in Belarus for a renewed attack on Chernihiv. If Russia takes the city, they can utilize the arterial highway (which is on the East bank of the Desna River) to move large amounts of troops directly to the East of Kyiv.
- Supporting Effort 2: Sumy
  - The Sumy advance has been stalled around Nizhyn due to large pockets of Ukrainian Resistance. Currently the force is roughly 115 kilometers East of Kyiv.
- If Russia's movement on Kyiv is to be successful, they need to:
  - Establish multiple supply channels to Kyiv
    - Currently, Russian convoys are limited to a handful of routes which in turn make them easier to disrupt.
  - Take Chernihiv or at least encircle the city so that they can have forces circumvent the city and move toward the Eastern from of Kyiv.
  - Reduce pockets of resistance on the Sumy Axis
    - If forces from Sumy are to support the operation within Kyiv, they need to move past the minor opposition forces that are currently stalemating them
- Summary:
  - Russian forces are likely attempting to completely encircle Kyiv through further incursion from the North-West of the city, while supporting forces from Chernihiv and Sumy encircle from the East. In order to cut off the center of Kyiv from troop reinforcements and western supplies. Russian forces need to entirely surround Kyiv.



## Kharkiv

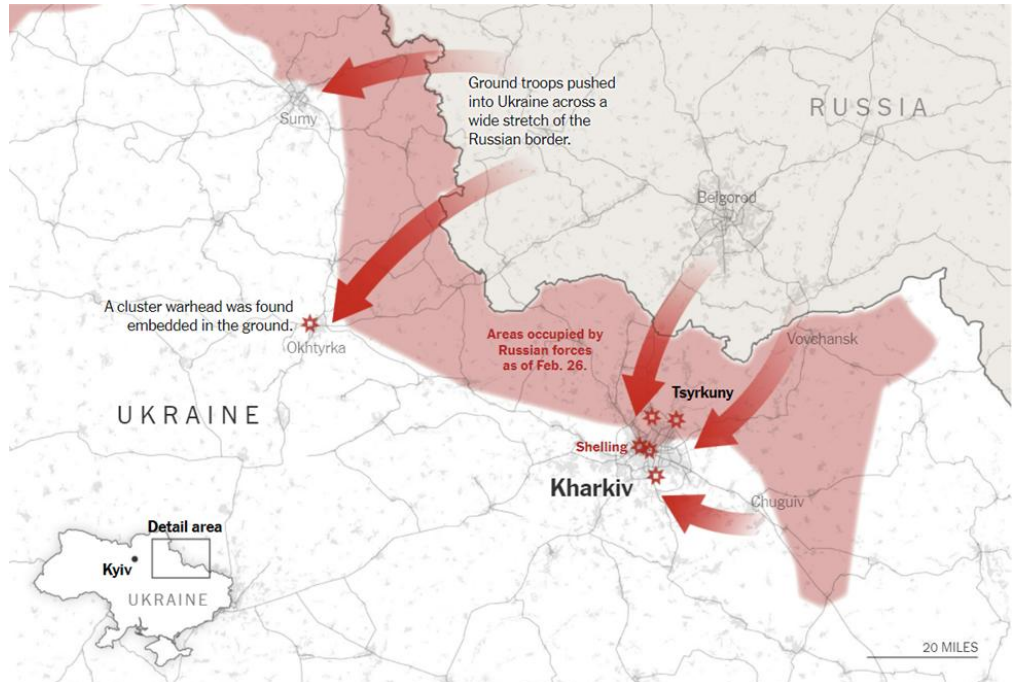


Figure 3: NY Times reporting; Ukrainian officials; Institute for the Study of War

- Summary:
  - Ukraine's Kharkiv front line has held despite a heavy bombardment from Russian forces. Since the launch of the invasion, fighting has been reported at multiple points to the North and Southeast of the city. Looking at the struggles of Russia's previous advance, it is hard to assess the likelihood of a completely successful second push into Kharkiv. It is expected that (as in Kyiv) Russian forces are attempting to encircle Kharkiv so that they can cut off reinforcements and supplies.

## Mariupol and Kherson

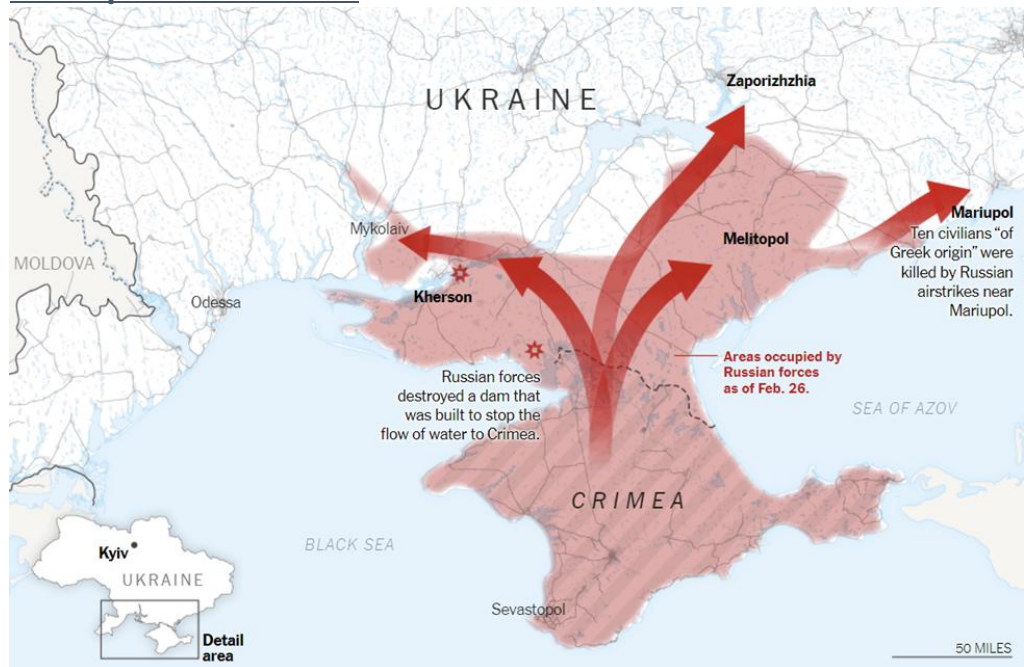


Figure 4: NY Times reporting; Ukrainian officials; Institute for the Study of War

- Summary:
  - Capturing Mariupol would allow Russian forces from the south to join with the DNR and LNR separatists in the east. It is possible that Mariupol is already surrounded and is likely to be taken/captured soon. Majority of Kherson City is controlled by Russian forces. Once Kherson is completely captured, Russian forces will likely use Kherson as a staging ground for consolidation before further moves Westward. It is believed that Kherson has fallen under complete Russian control.

### **High Impact/Low Probability**

- Low Probability/High Impact: Nuclear Scenario
  - A NATO country enters the war with Ukraine and draws in the rest of NATO (ex: Germany deploys into Ukraine; Russia bombs Berlin... NATO is not obligated to support Germany).
  - If NATO joins the war, it is assessed that Russia will feel overwhelmed and divert to the nuclear option.
- Medium-High Probability/High Impact: Ukrainian forces hold
  - Russia's economy is effectively destroyed through its over exertion.
  - This would likely lead to a complete power change within Moscow and a realigning of Russia's alliances.
- High Probability/Medium-High Impact: Russian forces take Ukraine
  - Russian economy struggles but survives; world alliances realigned.
  - Russia becomes forcibly isolationist. The long-term effect would likely strengthen Russia as they would become more independent.

### **DIME: U.S. Perspective on Ukraine and Russia**

- Diplomatic/International:
  - Russian and Ukrainian delegates meet
    - Putin desires: Crimea to be recognized as Russian territory
    - "Demilitarization and denazification" of Ukraine
    - Ukraine to declare neutrality regarding NATO
  - Phone call with French President, Putin stated he wants Ukraine to become a demilitarized neutral country and wants the global community to recognize his takeover of Crimea
  - Countries Supporting Russia:
    - Venezuela blames U.S. and NATO for violating the Minsk records; voices strong support for Russia
  - Over 6000 Russian citizens arrested for protesting
  - Chinese Foreign Minister is looking to aid in ceasefire, peace talks
  - Zelensky calling for admittance into the EU
  - Un passes a resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine and demanding the immediate removal of Russia's military
    - Expresses global diplomatic isolation of Russia but does

not alter the course of the war

- Military:
  - Russia:
    - Military Partnerships within the current conflict
      - Belarus
      - Chechnya
      - Syria
    - ~ 150,000 troops within Ukraine
    - ~ 2,750 tanks (18,000 stored)
    - ~ 1,500 combat aircraft
    - ~ 8,969 artilleries (16,000 stored)
    - Russia has a much larger military capability, but they are essentially fighting a country wide insurgency force.
  - Ukraine:
    - Military Partnerships within current conflict:
      - NATO (lethal aid, but no troops)
      - NGO non-lethal aid
      - EU
    - ~ 200,000 active personnel + large reserve and civilian support
    - ~ 1,150 tanks (1,400 stored)
    - ~ 231 combat aircraft
    - ~ 1,952 artilleries
    - Ukraine's Civilian Population is an extremely useful tool because "civilians get to shoot first"
- Informational/International:
  - Refugees traveling through Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania into Western countries such as Germany, Italy, and France
    - EU will agree on Thursday to grant refugees temporary residence
- Economic:
  - Shell to exit ventures with Russian gas and related entities
  - Exxon to halt oil and gas project in Russia
  - Plummet of rubles' value by over 30%
  - Oil prices assessed to increase due to the loss of Russian gas supply
  - Biggest shipping firm Maersk announces it would halt container movement to and from Russia
  - The U.S. has frozen the U.S. assets in Russia's central bank
  - The U.S. has also blacklisted a major Russian wealth fund to restrict Russian access to money from abroad
  - The U.S. has restricted exports of high-tech products to Russia
  - Germany halted the certification of the Nord pipeline
  - EU placed sanctions on Russian banks and on Russian individuals such as Putin and Lavrov

## Sources

1. [MENAFN](#)
2. [CNN](#)
3. [MSN](#)
4. [IbTimes](#)
5. [CFR](#)
6. [CityAm](#)
7. [Reuters](#)
8. [Washington Times](#)
9. [CFR](#)
10. [WLRN](#)
11. [NY Times](#)
12. [Aljazeera](#)
13. [Understanding War](#)
14. [Janes](#)

## Canadian/American Trucker Convoys

### BLUF

- American truckers have begun a convoy with goals of protesting COVID-19 restrictions.

### Analysis

#### Starbursting

- Who:
  - American truckers (Peoples Convoy consisting of around 25 convoys) mimicking Canadian truck drives (Freedom Convoy)
- What:
  - American truckers begin a convoy, which raises concerns for security authorities
- When:
  - Beginning in the last week of February, American truckers start trip
  - Date of expected convergence is projected between March 1 and March 7
- Where:
  - Destination of truckers: Washington, D.C.
  - Targeted Destination: The Beltway, which is a major highway surrounds the U.S. capital
- Why:
  - American truckers are hoping to protest COVID-19 restrictions including mask mandates and vaccination requirements
- How:
  - Some of the American convoys aim to shut down the D.C. Beltway to apply pressure on policy makers



### Chronology

- January 28, 2022
  - Protests against U.S. and Canadian regulations barring unvaccinated truck drivers from crossing the border begins
- January – February 2022:
  - Canadian truckers create border blockades
  - Canadian Prime Minister invokes and later revokes emergency powers
  - Canadian truckers are detained while their bank accounts are frozen
- February 22, 2022:
  - Pentagon analyzes request for assistance from the U.S. Capitol Police and the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
- February 23, 2022:
  - Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin approves request of Columbia National Guardia assistance with traffic control
  - The “People’s Convoy” leaves California for Washington, D.C. – an 11-day trek
- February 26, 2022:
  - 300 National Guard personnel to assist at designated traffic posts and select Capitol entry points
- March 1, 2022:
  - President gives State of the Union speech
  - Significant date because potential for convergence

### SWOT Analysis on behalf of U.S. decision Makers

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Capitol Police and the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency are supported by National Guard personnel</li> <li>• D.C. Metropolitan Police are prepared with 400 D.C. National Guard troops and 50 vehicles to support traffic posts</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unknown amount of convoy numbers</li> <li>• Mixed intentions present within the convoys</li> <li>• Difficult to judge needed or appropriate response</li> <li>• Truckers continue even as restrictions ease across the country</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional assistance to D.C. security authorities/agencies in Metropolitan areas</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic control operations may be overwhelmed by Peoples Convoy</li> <li>• Closing of transportation routes has potential to disrupt U.S. economy</li> </ul>

### Sources

1. [US News](#)
2. [The Guardian](#)
3. [Defense One](#)
4. [The Hill](#)
5. [NPR](#)
6. [Army](#)
7. [Reuters](#)
8. [Washington Post](#)

## Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina

### BLUF

- On February 22nd, EUFOR, the EU's peacekeeping force, announced the deployment of 500 additional reserve forces to Bosnia on top of the existing 600 troops amid fears the crisis in Ukraine could "potentially cause instability in Bosnia." The following day, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said more support was needed for "countries like Georgia, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina" to help them "pursue the path that they have freely chosen." Bosnia has made it a strategic goal to join NATO and the EU. However, Bosnian Serbs, led by Serb members of the presidency and Putin ally Milorad Dodik, object to joining the US-led military alliance. Bosnia has been going through its worst political crisis since the end of the Balkan wars of the 1990s, with Bosnian Serbs challenging state institutions as part of their long-time bid to secede and eventually join neighboring Serbia.
- The division and angst in Bosnia and Herzegovina risks splitting the country completely in 2 as the Republika Srpska pushes for their agenda back by Russia. As Russia is active against Ukraine currently this is concerning as Bosnia is in the early phase of where Ukraine was, that they wanted to join NATO. Republika Srpska, already appointing legal members to their new government, they're attempting to strengthen themselves as Dodik has the goal of secession. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be able to stabilize themselves hopefully through the assistance of the EU and prevent any further inflammation coming from Dodik or Russia that would escalate this situation further.

### Analysis

#### Starbursting

- Who:
  - The EU Foreign Affairs
  - The Serb-majority Republika Srpska
  - The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and EUFOR peace enforcers
- What:

- The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to join NATO and the Bosnian-Serbs siding the Pro-Russian Dodik wish to remain neutral and out of NATO affairs to eventually secede to Serbia
- When:
  - Beginning in February of this year, but tensions of this division have grown over the past 2 decades by Dodik's party
  - The Republika Srpska has taken moves to solidify their views and position against Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Where:
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska
- Why:
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina have long wanted to join NATO and Russia has voiced that it would not support this movement as it has been against NATO encroachment over the past 2 decades as more European countries have joined

### Chronology

- March 2021:
  - Russian embassy said they would react if Bosnia took steps towards NATO, perceiving that move as a hostile threat
- December 2021:
  - Putin pledged his support to Bosnian-Serbs and offered financial aid to Republika Srpska
- January 5, 2022:
  - U.S. Treasury department places new sanctions against Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik
- February 10, 2022:
  - Republika Srpska voted its own judges and prosecutors
- February 19, 2022:
  - Croatian National Assembly threatened legal procedures if there are not more Croatian presences in national institutions
- February 21, 2022:
  - EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting
- February 23, 2022:
  - Dodik says that Bosnia should not take sides in the Russian-Ukraine conflict
- February 24, 2022:
  - EU to double its size by sending in 500 more peacekeeping reserves in Bosnia as a precaution

### SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The international response to countries desiring to join NATO being supportive</li> <li>● EUFOR peacekeepers as reinforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethnic division; lack of strong unity</li> <li>● Strong ties to Serbia over Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>● Tipping point approaching as Russia is active against</li> </ul>

	Ukraine
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EU taking action (sanctions) against the autonomous zone as well as Dodik</li><li>• EU using their financial aid as leverage against the RS</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dodik threatening to pull Republika Srpska from Bosnia and join Serbia</li><li>• Russia backing Dodik</li><li>• Hostility from Republika Srpska against the Bosnian government</li></ul>

## Sources

1. [Forbes](#)
2. [The Defense Post](#)
3. [Aljazeera](#)
4. [US News](#)
5. [Aljazeera](#)

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*“The question shouldn’t be what we ought to do, but what we can do” – Rory Stewart*

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