



The most chaotic day yet of the Russia-Ukraine crisis

By: Alexander Ward and Quint Forgey

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Usually, your friends here at NatSec Daily like to start off with a single, in-depth story. But so much happened today that we felt the better service was to provide you with all of today's big Russia-Ukraine news in one place. So here we go.

Early this morning, Russia's Defense Ministry announced that some of its forces were pulling back from the Ukraine border — potentially signaling a cooling of tensions. But shortly thereafter, NATO Secretary General **JENS STOLTENBERG** told reporters that “so far, we have not seen any sign of de-escalation on the ground,” adding: “Everything is now in place for a new attack.”

Experts also were skeptical that some Russian troops were heading back to their barracks, with some observers noting that the supposedly retreating units were already far from the border. Plus, those Russian forces hailed from the military districts closest to Ukraine, meaning they would be close by if called upon. Still, analysts like the Rand Corporation's **SAMUEL CHARAP** told us: “Better these signals than more bellicose ones.”

Then, Russian President **VLADIMIR PUTIN**, speaking after his meeting in Moscow with German Chancellor **OLAF SCHOLZ**, said he didn't want a war in Ukraine and that he hoped to resolve the standoff diplomatically. Putin claimed that the West was open to discussing missile deployments and the scope of military exercises in Europe — issues the Kremlin has long complained about.

Talks on those topics could resolve some of Putin's grievances, but not his main one: Ukraine's desire to join NATO. Scholz indicated to reporters that closing the military alliance's open door to Kyiv might be worth avoiding the worst-case scenario.

“The fact is that all involved know that NATO membership for Ukraine is not on the agenda. Everyone must step back a bit here and make it clear to themselves that we just can't have a possible military conflict over a question that is not on the agenda,” he said after meeting with Putin.

As if that wasn't enough, the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, asked Putin to diplomatically recognize two breakaway, Moscow-backed regions of Ukraine. Both areas in Ukraine's east, the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, declared their independence in 2014 but aren't regarded as sovereign nations by any country. Earlier this month, a senior administration official told NatSec Daily that "if Moscow changes its recognition posture, it could then claim the push for independence led Ukraine to 'attack'" — thereby providing Russia with a pretext for an invasion. Putin today called the situation in the Donbas a "genocide."

"To build the case for independence, Russian politicians are advancing this legislation on the false basis that Ukraine is preparing to forcibly retake this territory and that Kyiv has systematically denied local residents their basic rights," the official told us at the time. "In line with its previous interventions, Russia would portray its actions as defending ethnic Russians and coming at the request of a sovereign government for assistance."

It's possible that's already happening: A report in Russian media outlet TASS carried an unconfirmed claim by Donetsk officials that the Ukrainian military fired a grenade launcher near the village of Zaichenko. However, such claims are made often, and even Russian media (sometimes) points out when they're unsubstantiated.

In the cyber sphere, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry's website was taken offline by what it claims was a distributed denial of service, or DDoS, attack. A separate Ukrainian agency, the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security, said the website of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had also been hit. Furthermore, the agency said that Ukrainian banks PrivatBank and Oschadbank had been targeted by the DDoS attack. The Ukrainian Cyberpolice said in a tweet that it had evidence that unidentified individuals were sending out text messages about fraudulent Ukrainian ATM failures. PrivatBank, however, denies being targeted by a cyberattack.

Meanwhile, diplomacy kicked into overdrive, as President **JOE BIDEN** hopped on the phone with French President **EMMANUEL MACRON** and Secretary of State **ANTHONY BLINKEN** spoke with Russian Foreign Minister **SERGEY LAVROV**.

Finally, Biden just addressed the crisis in a White House speech, saying "we should give diplomacy every chance to succeed." He confirmed the U.S. was willing to discuss arms control and transparency issues with Russia, but wouldn't compromise on a nation's territorial integrity and ability to choose its own course. The president also said that while it would be "good" if Russia's 150,000 forces pulled back from Ukraine, the U.S. had yet to verify that claim. In fact, he said, American analysts assess Putin's forces remain in a "threatening position." Biden also reiterated that the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline "will not happen" if there's a larger invasion.

Biden also made his most pointed comments to date, promising to "respond forcefully" if Russia targets Americans in Ukraine.

Tuesday was perhaps the busiest day yet in the ongoing security crisis — and the flurry of developments come just one day before U.S. intelligence says Russia plans to launch its larger invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainian President **VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY** has declared Wednesday a nation of national unity and called on Ukrainians to fly the flag and sing the national anthem in unison.



NATO's 'high readiness' under high pressure from Russia

By: Teri Schultz
February 24th, 2022

Russia's aggression both unifies NATO and puts it under enormous pressure to provide deterrence and reassurance. Teri Schultz looks at how the alliance is preparing for whatever comes next.

"He's the greatest gift to NATO since the end of the Cold War," former director of the US Central Intelligence Agency David Petraeus says of Russian President Vladimir Putin. "He set out to make Russia great again; what he's really done is make NATO great again by his actions," Petraeus told DW. "That threat has unified NATO in a way it hasn't been since the [Berlin] Wall came down and the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union dissolved."

But if the 30-member alliance is benefitting from the shared threat assessment, it's also being scrutinized as to how it responds to Russia's decision to order troops into Ukraine, in what the US has called the launch of a war. While NATO has no obligation to militarily defend non-member Ukraine, allies feel a sense of moral duty to uphold Ukrainian sovereignty and international law, even if that's from afar, since no other country has agreed to put boots on the ground in case of attack.

When it comes to alliance territory, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg emphasizes reinforcement measures have been taken. "We have over 100 jets at high alert and there are more than 120 allied ships at sea," he said Tuesday, "from the high north to the Mediterranean. We will continue to do whatever is necessary to shield the alliance from aggression."

In response to Putin's recognition of Ukraine's breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk earlier this week and his decision to send more forces into eastern Ukraine, the US added a thousand more troops to its already bolstered presence in the Baltics.

Speaking from Estonia, Kadri Liik, a senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, welcomed the move. "I don't think there is a direct threat to the Baltic states right now," she told DW before Putin's overnight announcement of what he called a "military operation" into Ukrainian-controlled territory. "But at the same time, the situation is nervous. If we are going to see a large-scale war in Ukraine in the coming days or weeks then, of course, that would make the situation much more tense in all the surrounding countries and also it would increase the danger of misreadings and accidental clashes on all fronts."

Lute: Show the show of force

But while it largely falls to individual allies to decide what they can contribute to NATO's eastern flank, not everyone thinks the alliance is maximizing its joint resources. "Where's the VJTF?!" exclaims former US ambassador to NATO Doug Lute, referring to the very high-readiness element of the NATO Response Force (NRF), comprising a bit under half the alliance's 40,000-strong rapid-reaction capability. "If it's the 'spearhead,' as [the NATO secretary general] calls it," Lute explained, "then it's time to form the spearhead!"

The retired three-star general, who has also served as the US deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan, Lute believes NATO should immediately assemble the force — made up of land, air, maritime and special operations components. It could be set up somewhere in Europe now, he said, for quick deployment if and when needed. While the VJTF would only be deployed in case of a threat to an ally, "there's the potential for conflict in Ukraine to have spillover effects onto NATO territory," Lute warned. "If you have such a force, and in this instance, a crisis of a generation... if you don't use it or you don't at least display it, then you really don't have a force."

Spillover to cyberspace

One of the spillover effects could come from cyber attacks, which Ukraine has been experiencing intensively in recent days, and against which NATO has been working with Kyiv for years. Colin Clarke, director of research at the Soufan Center, emphasizes it's critical to build up that resilience. "I think the priority for Ukraine at the moment should be anticipating areas where the Russians might launch a cyberattack," he said, adding that means "Tier 1 targets should receive extra attention in terms of active cyber defense, especially critical infrastructure."

Clarke says while cyber-attacks are often seen as separate from military action, "it behooves Ukraine to conceptualize Russia's capabilities as a broad portfolio, with cyber just one of many tools at Moscow's disposal." He adds that "information warfare" is a "critical enabler" for the

Kremlin, and urges the Ukrainian government to remind its people that "Russia will be highly active in the coming days and weeks in the 'gray zone' and to be on guard against a range of mis-, dis-, and mal-information narratives."

What's got to give?

On Wednesday, Ukraine's closest European Union and NATO neighbors, Lithuania and Poland, launched an appeal to bring Kyiv closer, urging an immediate offer of EU candidate status to Ukraine.

In a trilateral statement, the presidents of the three countries stated that "given the significant progress in the implementation of the Association Agreement and internal reforms, as well as the current security challenges, Ukraine deserves EU candidate status and the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania will support Ukraine in achieving this goal."

At the same time, however, Michael Bociurkiw, a senior fellow with the Washington, DC-based Atlantic Council, says Ukrainians are wondering whether they should concede to Putin's demands to give up their hopes to join NATO.

Ukraine's ambassador to the UK mentioned the idea in an interview with the BBC in recent days and while it was quickly walked back. Bociurkiw, who is currently in Lviv, Ukraine, says the statement was no accident.

"I think (Ukrainian officials) were floating that idea" he concludes, and he says some of the people he's talked with say "if that's what it takes to avert war, maybe we should do it." Bociurkiw says this would only be seriously considered by Kyiv if pressure comes from NATO itself to give Russia this off-ramp from the crisis.

"On one hand, you to talk to people here who say, 'if that ever happens, people will be out on the streets,'" he says, "but I'm not so sure about that anymore. I think the main thing people want to avoid right now is all-out war."



How NATO factors into the Ukraine-Russia conflict

By: Meredith Deliso
February 24, 2022

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/nato-factors-ukraine-russia-conflict/story?id=83090926>

Ukraine is not a member of NATO, though the international security alliance has been a key player in its ongoing conflict with Russia, which escalated to a full-scale invasion by Russian forces Thursday.

Since the United States helped form NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in 1949 to counter Soviet aggression in Europe, the alliance has grown to 30 member countries, including three former Soviet republics -- the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In 2008, NATO appeared to open the door to membership to two more former Soviet republics when its heads of government declared that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO."

Neither have formally received a pathway to eventual membership, with corruption concerns and a lack of consensus among members seen in part as holding back Ukraine's invitation. Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded that Ukraine never join the alliance as he seeks to limit NATO's presence in Eastern Europe.

Putin's military operation has prompted NATO allies, worried about further escalation, to issue sanctions meant to impact the Russian economy, bolster troops along the alliance's Eastern flank and repeatedly warn that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all.

In the wake of Russia's attack on Ukraine, President Joe Biden announced that NATO will convene a summit Friday to "affirm our solidarity and to map out the next steps we will take to further strengthen all aspects of our NATO alliance."

Biden has repeatedly said the U.S. won't be sending troops to engage with Russia in Ukraine, though he has recently authorized the deployment of ground and air forces in Europe to support NATO's eastern flank allies -- Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania -- in response to Russian aggression. Following Thursday's attack on Ukraine, Biden said he has authorized additional forces to deploy to Germany as part of NATO's response. According to a senior Defense Department official, 7,000 service members will be deployed to Germany in the coming days.

"Our forces are not going to Europe to fight in Ukraine but to defend our NATO allies and reassure those allies in the East," Biden said during an address Thursday. "As I made crystal clear, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power."

Article 5 commitments

During a video address days before he announced a military operation in Ukraine, Putin linked the current crisis directly to Russia's NATO demands, which include a guarantee that NATO stop expanding to the East and pull back its infrastructure from Eastern European countries that joined after the Cold War. He accused the U.S. and NATO of ignoring Russia's demands and blamed the West for the current crisis in Ukraine. The potential impact of the Ukraine conflict on U.S. interests is considered "significant," by the Council on Foreign Relations, which said in part that the conflict "risks further deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations and greater escalation if Russia expands its presence in Ukraine or into NATO countries."

"I think we shouldn't get fixated only on Ukraine," Doug Lute, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO and ABC News contributor, told ABC News Live following Putin's speech. "[Putin's] ambitions beyond that are to essentially rewind the clock 30 years and reverse the progress made in Western Europe, certainly Central and Eastern Europe, and if possible, break the ties between the United States and its European allies."

Were the conflict to go beyond Ukraine and impact NATO members, that could lead the organization to invoke its mutual self-defense clause -- what's known as Article 5 of the NATO treaty, which states that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." If one ally is attacked, the others will respond with necessary action, including armed force, "to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

The first and only time NATO invoked Article 5 was in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, in support of the U.S. On Thursday, Biden said the U.S. and its NATO allies "will meet our Article 5 commitments" if necessary in response to Russian aggression, though they are seeking to deescalate the conflict through increased sanctions.

"If [Putin] did move into NATO countries, we will be involved," Biden told reporters. "The only thing that I am convinced of is -- if we don't stop now, he'll be emboldened. If we don't move against him now with these significant sanctions, he will be emboldened."

U.S. officials see Article 5 as another deterrent for any further Russian aggression.

"Is it a possibility that Putin goes beyond Ukraine? Sure, it's a possibility, but there's something very powerful standing in the way of that -- that's something we call Article 5 of NATO," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an interview with ABC's David Muir on Thursday. "The president's been very clear that we will defend every inch of NATO territory. I think that's the most powerful deterrent against President Putin going beyond Ukraine."

Cyberattack question

One "gray area" around NATO's Article 5 response is Russian cyberattacks and their impacts beyond Ukraine, according to U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), who oversees the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

"The real deal is if they suddenly decide to shut down all the power in Ukraine, chances are that may shut down the power in eastern Poland, where American and NATO troops are located," Warner told reporters Thursday. "If they shut down the hospital systems in Poland, and people die because you can't operate, we are suddenly outside of the hypothetical realm of what could constitute what's called an Article 5 violation, where if you attack one NATO nation, you attack all 30 NATO nations. And these hypotheticals become a reality."

If Russia responds to NATO allies' sanctions with cyberattacks, "we are again going into uncharted territory," he said.

Last year, NATO said the alliance would consider whether to invoke Article 5 in response to a cyberattack "on a case-by-case basis."

When asked by ABC White House correspondent MaryAlice Parks on Thursday if the White House thought a cyberattack against a NATO member would trigger an Article 5 response, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that'd be a "point of discussion."

"That, again, is up to the NATO alliance to determine, but obviously a cyberattack does constitute an attack, so that would certainly be a point of discussion among the NATO members," she said.



As Russia charges across Ukraine, can the West stop a more expansive conflict?

By: Judy Woodruff and Dan Sagalyn
February 24th, 2022

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/as-russia-charges-across-ukraine-can-the-west-stop-a-more-expansive-conflict>

For more on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the U.S. and European reactions, we get three views. Doug Lute, a retired Army lieutenant general and former U.S. ambassador to NATO, Andrew Weiss, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Angela Stent, a Georgetown University professor, join Judy Woodruff to discuss.

Read the Full Transcript:

Judy Woodruff:

And for more now on Russia's invasion of the U.S. and European reaction, we get three views.

Retired Lieutenant General Doug Lute had a 35-year career in the U.S. Army and served on the White House National Security Council staff during the George W. Bush and Obama administrations. He also served as U.S. ambassador to NATO during the Obama administration.

Andrew Weiss served in the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations on the National Security Council staff and the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. He's now vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. That's a think tank.

And Angela Stent worked in the State Department during the Clinton administration and served as a top U.S. intelligence officer on Russia during the George W. Bush administration. She is now a professor at Georgetown University.

Welcome, all three of you, back to the "NewsHour."

The first thing I want to ask you is what you think Vladimir Putin is trying to accomplish here.

And, Doug Lute, I'm going to start with you.

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute (Ret.), Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO:

Well, I think his objective is clear, and it's regime change.

I think, on the other hand, he will be reluctant to try to occupy all of Ukraine. And that's where the rub is. The difference between overthrowing the Zelensky regime, replacing it with a puppet government is one thing, but it's a big gap between that and being able to control Ukraine, the size of Texas, with 44 million people.

Judy Woodruff:

Angela Stent, is that what you believe Vladimir Putin's goal here is? And — because if it is, there's a big gap between those two things.

Angela Stent, Director, Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies, Georgetown University: I do believe it's his goal. He wants to subservient Ukraine. He wants a Ukraine that will listen to Russia and stop moving westward. And, for that, he indeed needs regime change.

But, as Doug said, Russia doesn't want to bear the cost of an occupation. It would be expensive. It would take too many soldiers. And so the question is, is he going to be able to install a government that will have enough support from the people and that will do Russia's bidding?

And that also opens the question of Western Ukraine, which Michael Kofman raised. If they want to do this, in fact, in the end, they're going to have to take Western Ukraine as well. And there's bound to be a large amount of resistance there too.

Judy Woodruff:

Andrew Weiss, how do you see what Putin is trying to do here? And I guess I'm asking, is it realistic, given the difficulty of controlling a country of, what, over 60 million people, if he says that's not his intention?

Andrew Weiss, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

I believe that Vladimir Putin means business in Ukraine.

And I think he's perfectly happy with a destroyed Ukraine that starts to come apart, in which pieces either float back to Russia, or, as we saw in 2014, where, basically, government disappears overnight. And, in the end, I think he either expects that somehow, magically, there's a silent majority in Ukraine that wants to be ruled by Russia.

I think he's profoundly mistaken on that count. But he's talked about that publicly. On the other hand, I think he also is a rather ruthless person who'd be happy to pass the parcel to the West and basically take a broken Ukraine with no military and then turn to the United States, the European Union, and the international community and say, OK, you guys can take care of this mess. I have proved my point.

Judy Woodruff:

General Lute, do you see anything the West can do at this point to stop this march forward on the part of the Russians and Vladimir Putin?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute:

Unfortunately, Judy, I think deterrence here has obviously failed. And I don't see a major obstacle posed by the West to Vladimir Putin's objectives.

There are two other obstacles, though, that we should watch. One is the Dnieper River, which essentially divides Ukraine north-south about in half, between the eastern half and the western half. That's a major geographic obstacle, physical obstacle.

And then the other obstacle is the one we have all been referring to, and that's the resistance of the Ukrainian people.

Judy Woodruff:

And we're waiting to see how that develops.

And, meantime, Angela Stent, you have these sanctions that the West is imposing. Do you see those having any kind of meaningful effect on what Putin is deciding to do on a day-to-day basis?

Angela Stent:

I mean, they will certainly have an economic effect on the individuals, on the people who deal with the major banks that have now been sanctioned, in terms — longer terms of the industry with the export controls.

But, unfortunately, I don't think they will have any impact on Vladimir Putin's decision-making. We have seen him, particularly this last week in these diatribes that he — on television, in his pronouncements, where — which are widely not factual and don't have a basis in reality about what Ukraine is.

So I don't think that the prospect of some of his friends being sanctioned or banks being sanctioned, it's not going to change his calculus.

Judy Woodruff:

Andrew Weiss, what about that? Now that we have seen this next level of sanctions being imposed by the United States, by the U.K. and others, do you see that having an effect?

Andrew Weiss:

I think the U.S. and Western response, in the level of coordination and joint action, is quite impressive. And we're going to see far-reaching effects from the sanctions that have been announced and the ones that will come as early as this evening and tomorrow morning from the European Union.

The challenge is, the theory right now that I believe Western policy-makers have is, they're going to see spectacular effects in Russia asset markets, we will see dislocation and we will see

disruption in everyday life. The hope is that that somehow promotes cleavages in Putin's relationship with the Russian elite and with the Russian people.

There's a problem with the theory of the case, which is that, for the Russian elite, they're more Putin's employees than they are as equals. And when it comes to the Russian people, their lives are quite hard. And I think they know that their government has a tremendous capacity for repression and violence. And they will steer clear of anything that looks like a direct challenge to Vladimir Putin's rule.

Judy Woodruff:

I want to come back, Doug Lute, to what you said a minute ago about the ability of the Ukrainian people themselves to stave off the worst here.

How do you see that unfolding? And then the question becomes, how do you — do you see this conflict in Ukraine spilling out into other countries in Eastern Europe?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute:

Well, I think first of all, in terms of spillover effects, I don't see a military spillover, because just beyond Ukraine is the bright red line of the NATO boundary.

And I think President Putin understands that he does not wish to pick a fight with NATO itself. But we are already seeing some spillover effects. We saw the traffic jams headed west out of Kyiv. Those displaced persons will eventually reach the Polish and Romanian borders, mainly, two NATO allies, and become refugees. There's a humanitarian crisis associated with those displacements.

And then we're also seeing, Judy, the early returns of the economic spillover effects. The global energy market is already tight. Prices are high, and they're going to go higher. All of that will fuel the inflation, which is also preexisting.

Judy Woodruff:

And, Angela Stent, is — I mean, you're someone who has studied Vladimir Putin for a long time. Do you see part of what he's doing is a waiting game to see if the West — right now, it may look mainly divided, but that may not last.

Angela Stent:

Yes.

And, certainly, if the conflict goes on and on, in some of the scenarios that Andrew Weiss was pointing out, I think you will see a crack in Western unity. Europe, the United States, we have a lot of problems we ourselves are dealing with.

And I do also think that we have to remember that, once a war has started, you don't know. Accidents can happen. You don't know what the cost of the war is going to be. And it is possible that some of our NATO allies on the eastern flank, Ukraine's neighbors, could somehow be affected. And that could be a real crisis point for NATO.

We do know that, if you look at the treaties that the Russians presented in December, that Vladimir Putin also has his sights on Central and Eastern Europe. So we hope that that's not the next phase in this war.

Judy Woodruff:

And, Andrew Weiss, how are you looking at that, that really terrible — this is bad enough as it is, but the terrible prospect that it could spread?

Andrew Weiss:

I believe that the opportunities for spread are nontrivial.

And we now have a permanent Russian military presence in Belarus. So the security landscape in Europe is now fundamentally altered, particularly if the Ukrainian military, as Michael Kofman was saying a minute ago, basically loses in a spectacular fashion. And so you will end up with basically a new European sort of Cold War, and you will end up with a standoff that's increasingly unstable.

I don't think it necessarily means that NATO and Russia will tangle. But it does mean that accidents, as Angela was just saying, might happen. It also means that the United States is going to have to make major resource allocations to be the backbone of European security.

Unfortunately, our European allies just don't have the kind of military capability that the United States brings to this crisis.

Judy Woodruff:

So, Doug Lute, we could be down the line looking at a much greater U.S. commitment in Europe?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute:

I think we will, undoubtedly.

As was just stated, the European allies don't simply have the capability of defending themselves right now. And you see this early on, Judy, by way of the sorts of forces that the U.S. is committing on a national basis to the defense in the east, so rapid reaction forces, high-end helicopters, aircraft.

The F-35 for the first time is in Central and Eastern Europe, long-range precision strike, intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities. These are high-end military capabilities that take decades to develop. And the Europeans, by and large, don't have them.

Judy Woodruff:

And just quickly, finally, to you, Angela Stent, there's some reporting today about Vladimir Putin's isolation.

You have spoken to us about that and — when you have been on this program before. Is there any prospect you see that there's significant pushback to him inside his own inner circle?

Angela Stent:

It's very hard to see that at the moment. I think the theory that, if his inner circle is sanctioned, they may get restive, I think we have to test that. But they have what they have at the pleasure of the czar, of Vladimir Putin himself.

So, at the moment, I don't really see those fissures emerging, but who knows? Further down, they might.

Judy Woodruff:

Well, we thank all three of you, Angela Stent, General Doug Lute, Andrew Weiss.

Thank you very much.



Why the war in Ukraine could get ‘much more brutal’ in the days ahead

By: Judy Woodruff and Dan Sagalyn
February 28th, 2022

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/why-the-war-in-ukraine-could-get-much-more-brutal-in-the-days-ahead>

Doug Lute, a retired Army lieutenant general and former U.S. ambassador to NATO, Andrew Weiss, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Adam Smith, a former U.S. Treasury official who served on the National Security Council staff, join Judy Woodruff to discuss Russia's invasion, the global response, the impact of sanctions and whether Ukrainians can continue the resistance.

Read the Full Transcript

Judy Woodruff:

For more now on Russia's invasion and the global response, we're joined by retired Lieutenant General Doug Lute. He served on the National Security Council staff during both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations. He was also U.S. ambassador to NATO during the Obama administration.

Andrew Weiss served in the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations on the National Security Council staff and in the State Department. He's now with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. And Adam Smith is a former U.S. Treasury official and served on the National Security Council staff during the Obama administration. He's now a partner with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, an international law firm.

Welcome, all three of you, to the "NewsHour."

Doug Lute, let me start with you and the military situation.

We had been hearing that the Russians were having a more difficult time than they expected. But just in the last few hours this afternoon, we're hearing about increased shelling of Kharkiv. We're hearing and seeing evidence the Russians are moving closer to Kyiv.

What is your understanding of what the military situation is right now?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute (RET.), Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO:

Well, Judy, I think we should appreciate that we're in the very early days of what we should expect to be a long, protracted military campaign.

Clearly, even in these early days, Russia, however, is off its timetables. It has failed, in my view, to sustain momentum in any one of the multiple fronts that they have opened, neither the north, the center, nor the south.

My read is that they're recovering from some bad assumptions up front in their military planning. So, for example, the Ukrainians are fighting. The Russian forces, on the other hand, are largely unsynchronized. And, finally, the West is staying united. There are no fissures in the western political and economic sanctions regime.

So I think that there's some assumptions that they have to recover from. There are capabilities, however, that Russia still has and has not yet employed, mass fires, including at civilian targets, in the cities. They have not shut down the Internet. They have not shut down the communications links. They have not turned the lights off in Kyiv.

And I expect this to be much more brutal in the days ahead.

Judy Woodruff:

They are managing to kill some civilians, but I hear you saying this is the very early stages of that.

Andrew Weiss, in connection with all of this, with the Western support, we're hearing more countries say they're prepared and are now planning to ship weapons to the Ukrainians.

How fast will those weapons get to Ukraine? Can they get there fast enough to make a difference?

Andrew Weiss, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

So, it's a really good question.

Yesterday and over the weekend, we saw European leaders make dramatic and unprecedented decisions. The Germany chancellor, Olaf Scholz, announced, for the first, time Germany will send weapons into an active conflict. This is a major, almost seismic change in German foreign policy.

And then, equally impressive, the European Union is going to use its capacities, which are financial, towards military aid for Ukraine. The question on the Ukrainian side is, there's probably limits on the absorptive capacity of the Ukrainian military, based on the fact that they're in the fight and getting equipment and other material to them trained up and deployed, is something that doesn't happen overnight.

Longer-term, the question is, as the military advance continues that General Lute was describing, is, how does the Ukrainian force fall back if it needs to, and what do we do in the West to support them in a desperate situation if the Russians continue to escalate?

I think that's the real challenge ahead. Vladimir Putin is very likely to escalate things. He's not likely to walk out of Ukraine with his tail between his legs.

Judy Woodruff:

And it's a reminder, as we watch this — we're all watching this hour by hour, expecting to know where things stand. But as both of you are pointing out, this is going to be drawn out.

Let me bring you into the conversation now, Adam Smith.

We have seen, I guess you could say, unprecedented economic sanctions raining down on the Russians. What are you seeing that — and how do you see it making a difference in Moscow?

Adam Smith, Former Treasury Department Official:

So, it's not just unprecedented in name. It is unprecedented in type, in style. It is — this has never been done, the entire G7 deciding to sanction the central bank of a major economy never been done at all.

Whether or not the impact will lead to the outcome that we all want, I think time will tell. There are going to be two levels of this impact. The first, we're already seeing. And that's sort of the shock and the panic. That's the ruble falling by 40 percent. That's the Moscow Stock Exchange seizing up. That's people trying to dollarize assets quickly.

That is going to continue. But that will subside to a degree. And then, over time, in the space of weeks and certainly months, the broader economic sanctions, both with respect to the Central Bank, which are very, very impactful, the sanctions with respect to export controls and otherwise, will start to hit.

And then I think that, over time, again, in the space of weeks and certainly months, the impact on the economic fortunes of the average Russian, let alone Mr. Putin, I think will start to wane significantly.

But, again, this is unprecedented for the world community in this context.

Judy Woodruff:

But I — do I hear you saying, Adam Smith, though, that people in Russia are not going to feel this in the immediate — in the days ahead?

Adam Smith:

No, no, the panic, they're feeling right now, the panic — that's the reduction in the price of the value of the ruble, the increased interest rates will lead to inflation. That will all happen.

But that's pretty much a panic response. The more impactful issue, the more impact, where sanctions actually will learn — will turn to bite, that's going to be in the weeks and months to come, when the Central Bank runs out of money that it can use, when the ability for Russians to import things will cease or seize up significantly.

So, there's this panic approach right now, which will certainly be impactful. But the real impact of squeezing Mr. Putin, I think that's going to take a few weeks, unfortunately, if not longer.

Judy Woodruff:

Adam (sic) Weiss, how do you see Vladimir Putin feeling all this? Do you agree it could take weeks, if not longer, for him to feel any real pain from this?

Andrew Weiss:

Well, there's one important issue that President Biden has highlighted up front. The Western governments are carving out exceptions for purchases of Russian oil and gas amid all these unprecedented financial sanctions.

And so, if you look at just very rough numbers, in 2021, Russia exported 4.3 million barrels of oil per day. And, today, Russia can maybe expect interruptions on the order — unprecedented order that Adam Smith was just describing.

But that means, every day, Russia is potentially poised to import — I'm sorry — to export hundreds of millions of dollars in oil. And the question will be, do Western governments eventually realize that, just as we're causing disruption, we're allowing the Russians to refill their coffers?

And so does something need to be done to basically ratchet up the pressure? The danger in even thinking about that is the potential knock-on harm that could cause to our own economies. And given the importance of things like price at the pump, that's been something that Western leaders have been unwilling to entertain in past years.

But given what we're watching on television, I think there will be pressure on them to do something in the weeks ahead as this war gets worse.

Judy Woodruff:

And I hear — as I hear all of you talking about weeks and even months, I'm going to come back to you, Doug Lute.

Is the Ukrainian military prepared to hold on? Or the Ukrainian people, are they prepared to hold on for the weeks and even months that I hear the three of you saying it's going to take for some of these heavy sanctions and other support — supportive moves by the West toward Ukraine to take effect?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute:

Well, look, as this extends into weeks and months, the key question here, the key variable will be logistics.

First of all, we heard from Samantha Power the logistics of the humanitarian relief effort, both in Poland and other neighboring states, but also in Western Ukraine itself, and then the logistics of the military fight. The Ukrainian military will not be able to sustain itself. We have to resupply anti-armor weapons systems, anti-air weapon systems, rations, medical supplies, and so forth.

And that resupply effort will be launched largely on the same routes that Nick Schifrin described, that is, the routes going out of Poland in particular, but Slovakia, Romania as well, back in through Western Ukraine and into the heartland. So logistics are going to be key here, Judy.

Judy Woodruff:

And staying with you, Doug Lute, is the West prepared to do that down the road? What's your sense?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute:

I think the West is beginning to marshal that kind of major logistics effort.

But these are, again, the very early days in that effort. And all the security assistance, the different weaponry and supplies and so forth that have been offered by national governments across the NATO alliance and beyond have to be assembled, they have to be transported, and they have to get into the hands of the right people in Ukraine.

That is a major logistics problem.

Judy Woodruff:

So much to think about here.

We thank the three of you for helping us understand where we are. Doug Lute, Andrew Weiss, Adam Smith, thank you very much.

Adam Smith:

Thank you.



How the West Can Help Ukraine

By: David Rothkopf

March 3rd, 2022

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-the-west-can-help-ukraine?ref=scroll>

There is a consensus among Western leaders and strategic thinkers about how to respond to Russia's brutal and unjustifiable aggression against Ukraine. Unprecedented and sweeping economic sanctions, moving NATO forces toward its eastern frontiers, and providing substantial lethal aid to Ukraine are the pillars of this response.

While this approach may not be sufficient to stop Russian forces from seizing Kyiv, Kharkiv, and other cities, it has already aided Ukraine in slowing Russian offensives, and should be useful in supporting a protracted Ukrainian insurgency against the Russian occupiers. If the will to maintain economic pressure on Russia remains strong enough for long enough, it could also create real incentives for Russia to negotiate and, perhaps, to withdraw.

But in the next few days, it is already clear that Russia is going to increase its pressure on Ukraine. Its tactics—which have already included indiscriminate missile and artillery attacks on civilian centers and the use of prohibited weapons, including cluster and thermobaric munitions—will grow even more inhumane. The civilian toll will rise. In all likelihood, it will rise greatly. Vladimir Putin, frustrated with his progress to date, sensing what he must do next and anticipating the Western response, has prepared the ground for his stepped-up attacks by rattling his nuclear saber. He has asserted that he has put his “defensive” nuclear forces on alert. Earlier, he made reference to what he asserted would be the unprecedented costs should NATO or others step in to try to stop his invasion of his democratic neighbor.

His goal was to forestall any consideration of NATO putting troops on the ground to stop him or of introducing any other military efforts to counter his onslaught, such as air attacks. His warning was effective. Western leaders have ruled out no-fly-zones or other approaches that might be both difficult to implement and carry with them the risk of triggering “World War III” or a devastating nuclear exchange.

So pressure to do more is likely to grow even as the options for doing more have been severely limited.

Not only does this situation create real, deep conundrums for Western planners and profound unease for the otherwise brave defenders of Ukraine, it raises real long-term questions.

Notably, if the conclusion from this war is that nuclear-armed states have the ability to do whatever they want to their neighbors, however cruel and unjustified, because the risks of fighting back against them are too high, the world will not be left a safer place.

Consider for example, Putin's calculations regarding further reconstituting his warped vision of a Russian empire if he were to feel that NATO's Article 5 guarantees—that all members will come to the aid of any member who is attacked—were actually just a paper tiger. Would he feel that he could roll his tanks into Latvia without fear of being challenged because so many Western leaders consider the threat of nuclear war too high to ever challenge him?

Will NATO—at the moment its renaissance is being celebrated—actually reveal to its principal adversary that it is not really up to the job for which it was intended?

These are not easy questions to answer. The risks of nuclear war are as real as they are ghastly. But the risks of giving all the world's Putins the license to run roughshod through their neighborhoods are also, as history shows, profound.

Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, former National Security Council (NSC) director for European affairs, said to me, "Western governments are terrified of Russia's nuclear saber-rattling. We've lost our nerve in the face of shallow threats."

Tom Nichols, a long-time professor at the U.S. Naval War College and writer of the "Peacefield" newsletter for *The Atlantic*, framed the situation in the following way: "The war in Ukraine is brutal and horrific. But none of that is an argument for a plunge into the abyss."

But, Nichols cautions, "We are all suffering from the 'CNN effect,' watching this devastation in real time. It's hard not to be emotional about it—I am—but a NATO intervention would be the greatest gift Putin could ask for and risks catastrophic consequences."

What options do we have?

Lt. Gen. Doug Lute, former U.S. ambassador to NATO and former deputy U.S. national security adviser, recommends: "We should focus on anti-armor Javelins and anti-air Stinger missiles, getting as many as possible as fast as possible into the hands of Ukrainian forces and setting up resupply networks in Poland and Romania to sustain the effort over time. These are easy to transport and distribute, relatively simple to use and have already proven effective against Russian forces. We should be stockpiling these now and providing truck transport that can be

handed off to Ukrainians at the border. We should take steps to ensure communications for the Ukrainian regime with secure digital comms, including satellite access. The ability of the leadership to communicate is crucial to holding together the military and the civilian resistance.”

Lute emphasizes that now is the time to take such actions while Russia’s attentions are focused away from the western part of the country—the ones that border the EU—and where a long-term resistance is likely to be based. He also advises that more of the private sector should be mobilized (as has happened with recent energy company and airline efforts to pull out of Russia) and that we continue to “pay attention to the flanks” by cultivating the engagement and support of potential new NATO members like Finland and Sweden.

On my Deep State Radio podcast this week, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bill Taylor added that the U.S. could provide more forms of technical assistance like helping the Ukrainian Air Force counter Russian jamming of their radio frequencies, providing Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) while we still can get such larger weapons systems into the country, and considering new sanctions like those targeting Russia’s oil sector. (Canada has just announced energy sector sanctions against Russia.)

But what do we do about the moral hazard associated with caving in to Putin’s nuclear gamesmanship? The former NSC senior director for arms control and nuclear proliferation in the Obama White House, Jon Wolfsthal, said: “Putin’s threats are designed to shield him from US/NATO response while he takes conventional action against Ukraine. While abhorrent, it has been clear all along that we were not going to commit troops to Ukraine for a variety of reasons, including the risk of nuclear war (President Biden is 100% right on that). I don’t think [Putin] will use nukes, knows it would be suicide, and not clear his military would support that action.”

Wolfsthal continues, “I don’t agree that failure to send troops or ‘defend’ Ukraine adds to the danger that he might roll into a NATO state. I believe that he is very well-aware that any kinetic move against NATO territory would trigger a full Article 5 response. This is one of the reasons he has moved against non-NATO states and why is he so adamant that Ukraine not join NATO. He knows he would never be able to reabsorb it into greater mother Russia. His attack has united NATO in a remarkable way. And it has shown NATO states that they can be strong and protected without making nuclear threats. And it shows how extreme and unhinged making nuclear threats are.”

Joe Cirincione, a distinguished fellow at the Quincy Institute and nuclear non-proliferation expert and advocate, observed, “Nuclear weapons are praised by most theorists as providing stability, as keeping the peace in Europe. But here we have Putin using nuclear weapons as a shield to wage conventional war—the kind of war in Europe nuclear weapons were supposed to prevent.”

While he concurs our current strategies are effective and may define the limits of what we can and should do and while he also does not believe Putin would attack NATO, after the conflict, Cirincione argues: “After the war, we will have a brief window to discuss not just what our policies should be going forward but to examine what went wrong with our policies in the past. This was not supposed to happen. Either the invasion or the nuclear risks. So, why did it? What could we have done better? I think we have to go back to the 1990s and examine our policies for NATO expansion (Should we have moved so quickly? Could we have reassured Russia more fully?). But also on the nuclear front.”

In a recent article, Cirincione cited a 2007 warning from former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and former Sen. Sam Nunn, that “unless we moved step by step to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, we would “be compelled to enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence.”

Cirincione says we are now “in that world.” He adds: “If we assume that there must be a diplomatic termination of this war (it is possible that it could end with a palace coup against Putin but I wouldn’t bet on it), then we are going to have to offer Putin some face-saving way out. We are going to have to address his legitimate security concerns (and he does have some).”

Among the suggestions he favors are, “pulling our 100-150 tactical nuclear weapons out of Europe in exchange for reduction in his force, restoring the ban on intermediate-range nuclear weapons that ended when Trump tore up the INF treaty, getting rid of the pointless missile interceptors and silos we deployed in Poland and Romania that Putin fears could be used to house offensive nuclear weapons... getting real about the ‘strategic stability talks’ to include immediate, deep reductions in nuclear forces, making mutual declarations to never use nuclear weapons first and making that the international nuclear gold standard all states should follow, [with] mutual steps to reduce the alert levels of nuclear forces by taking them off hair trigger alert and (as some already do) taking the warheads off of the delivery vehicles.”

Lute says, “Before Putin backs down, he will double down.” That is certainly true. But a growing consensus is that if the U.S. and our allies maintain our resolve and our unity and by ratcheting up existing measures rather than taking steps that risk escalation, in the end Putin and the Russians will likely have to withdraw from Ukraine without having achieved any of their major goals.



What a no-fly zone over Ukraine would mean for the U.S. and NATO

By: PBS NewsHour
March 7th, 2022

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/what-a-no-fly-zone-over-ukraine-would-mean-for-the-u-s-and-nato>

There have been growing calls in recent days for the United States and NATO to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Ukrainian President Zelensky reiterated the plea on Monday, but what is a no-fly zone and how would it work? For that we turn to two former U.S. ambassadors to NATO. Retired Army Lt. General Doug Lute and Kurt Volker join Judy Woodruff to discuss.

Read the Full Transcript:

Judy Woodruff:

Over the past few days there have been growing calls for the United States and NATO to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy reiterated the plea today. But what is a no-fly zone and how would it work?

For that, we get two views.

Retired Army Lieutenant General Doug Lute served on the National Security Council staff during both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations. He was also U.S. ambassador to NATO during the Obama administration. And Kurt Volker had a 23-year career as a diplomat. He too served as U.S. ambassador to NATO during the George W. Bush administration. He was also a special representative for Ukraine negotiations during the Trump administration.

And we welcome both of you back to the "NewsHour."

I am going to start with you, Kurt Volker.

Let's talk about that no-fly zone. Explain exactly — you are one of the few people that has come out and been outspoken and saying that it is something that should be done.

Why do you think so, and how exactly would it work? What is it?

Kurt Volker, Former U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine:

Right.

Well, let's start with the moral obligation. When we see civilians being killed like this and what Putin is doing to Ukraine now, it's very reminiscent of the worst days of the 1930s and what Hitler did in Europe. And we told ourselves, never again. So

And we need — we have a requirement to do something here. We have done no-fly zones in the past. Every circumstances is different. We have done them in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Northern Iraq.

But the whole principle behind it is humanitarian. It is to save civilian lives, prevent them from being bombarded by the sky. And I think, in this case, we would have to do it differently than in other cases. We would essentially be telling a Putin that we are not going to attack Russian ground targets unless fired upon, we're not going to attack Russian aircraft unless they come into the zone and refuse to leave.

We just want to create a clear space where there are no attacks against civilians to allow humanitarian assistance to flow and civilians to leave safely.

Judy Woodruff:

And what spaces would those be?

Kurt Volker:

I would say this should be over Kyiv, the largest population center in Ukraine, and west of there in Western Ukraine, keeping it away from Russia's borders.

Judy Woodruff:

So, Doug Lute, what do you make of this?

I'm not able to hear.

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute (Ret.), Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO:

Sorry. Sorry, Judy.

Judy Woodruff:

There we go.

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

We should be going every possibility, along the lines that Kurt said, to relieve the humanitarian situation, which is atrocious, and uncalled for, and amoral. But we should do so in ways that don't risk the broadening of the conflict.

Look, the reality is that most of the human tragedy, most of the civilian casualties in Ukraine, are caused not by the Russian air force, which would have something to do with a no-fly zone, but rather by ground forces, so artillery, rocket and missile fire.

So I don't think the no-fly zone would have much to do with the humanitarian situation. Furthermore, the Russian air force is among the most ineffective parts of the campaign right now. So, again, it's not going to have a big impact on the humanitarian situation.

It does, however, have a big impact in terms of broadening the conflict. Somebody has to impose the no-fly zone. I would not trust some sort of bargain with Vladimir Putin that he would abide by rules having to do with a no-fly zone.

Judy Woodruff:

Well...

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

In classic terms, that no-fly zone requires taking out, attacking opposing air defense systems. That would put the forces of the no-fly zone in direct contact with the Russians.

Judy Woodruff:

Well, let's take those points one at a time.

Back to you, Kurt Volker, on Doug Lute's that much of the — what's going on right now in Ukraine is on the ground, that there's not much air action, so this wouldn't make that much difference?

Kurt Volker:

The Ukrainians have taken out, I believe the number now is 49 fixed-wing aircraft. So, yes, the Russians have been using them. Yes, the Ukrainians have been doing well.

But it does mean that the air force is part of this. He's absolutely right it is not the main part of it now, but it's what the Ukrainians are asking for. And they will do the ground part. Their armed forces, their military, their people are ready and, in fact, effectively resisting the Russians on the ground. And that will continue.

This airspace safety is something that I think the people of Ukraine would see as extremely important for their freedom of movement and ability to get to safety.

Judy Woodruff:

What about that point, Doug Lute?

And then I do want to go back to Kurt Volker on your point about the larger — widening the conflict.

But what about the people of Ukraine seeing it as being the West supporting them?

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

Well, clearly, Western or American air support in support of the Zelenskyy regime, in support of the Ukrainian people would be a major plus-up for Ukrainian people.

But I think there's an American interest here. There's a NATO interest here, too. And the countervailing interest is not to broaden the conflict and not to become a direct participant, a protagonist in this war.

Why? Because of the very high potential that that direct conflict could lead to unintended consequences and an escalation that could take us all the way up the chain.

Judy Woodruff:

Kurt Volker, speak to that point, that once you get — and once you have U.S. planes involved, you're risking a wider, much wider conflict with the — between the U.S. and Russia.

Kurt Volker:

Right.

First off, we have to take that very seriously. This is not something you do lightly or not something you do half-heartedly. It's a serious risk. So we have to pay attention to that.

But a couple of points on this. One, Vladimir Putin's forces are doing badly in Ukraine as it is without any outside help. The last thing Vladimir Putin wants is to widen the war. He doesn't want to bring in the U.S. or other NATO countries that would make his effort harder. So he's going to be very careful about what he does if we do something like this.

The second thing is that, if Putin succeeds in overtaking Ukraine, against all of our judgment, all of our moral sense of what is right or fair, and takes over Ukraine, he will move to the next place. He will move to Moldova. He will intimidate Georgia. There's a risk of the Baltic states.

So, at some point, we're going to have to confront Vladimir Putin. I would much rather do it when we have a Ukrainian government and a Ukrainian military ready to fight than wait until we are on much worse footing.

Judy Woodruff:

Doug Lute, what about that?

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

Well, I think Kurt just made my point.

If the aim here is to confront Vladimir Putin in the air over this — in the skies of Ukraine, then I think a no-fly zone would accomplish that. But I don't think that's in our interests.

Judy Woodruff:

Because?

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

Because it runs the risk, again Judy, of this unintended escalation of the war.

Once we start direct contact with the Russians, there is no telling where that ends. And I certainly would not — I certainly would not trust the word of Vladimir Putin to abide by some sort of humanitarian gesture by way of the no-fly zone.

Look, we couldn't trust him in any of his statements over the last decades. And he told us as well that he wouldn't invade Ukraine. So I don't think there's any trust here to be had.

Judy Woodruff:

Kurt Volker, there clearly would be the risk of this spinning out of control. And we hate to think about nuclear, but that's part of the equation, isn't it?

Kurt Volker:

It certainly is.

And, as I said, we have to take this very seriously. I'm not suggesting that anybody trusts Vladimir Putin. I'm suggesting that Vladimir Putin can read the lines on the battlefield, and realize that he does not want U.S. forces engaged.

If there is any nuclear use — I think this is something that we need to communicate very clearly — there should be never any use of nuclear weapons. We don't want to do it. We don't want to see Russia do it. And if there is, that is something that we would very firmly oppose, and Vladimir Putin should know that.

We don't want this — as everyone has said, we don't want this to get out of hand or any larger than what it is.

Judy Woodruff:

I do want to ask both of you about one other thing, and that is the plan or conversation, now serious discussion, Doug Lute, about having Poland provide planes to the Ukrainians that they could use, which would then be replenished — or that Poland would then be resupplied with U.S. planes.

But what about that scheme?

Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute:

Well, I doubt that the first part of that swap, Judy, would have a major impact.

These are Soviet vintage aircraft that the Poles are offering to the Ukrainians. And there are a lot of questions, a lot of complexities. Are there Ukrainian pilots available? Are there Ukrainian air bases available? Who's going to provide the munitions? Who's going to do the maintenance for these aircraft? So, this is no simple — simple swap.

The second part of the deal, however, I'm very attracted to. And that's the notion that, if there are American F-16s available to provide today to our Eastern European allies, then we should be making that move immediately.

Judy Woodruff:

And very quickly, Kurt Volker, do you see this as making a difference or not?

Kurt Volker:

First off, I do see it as making a difference.

And on Doug's points about part one, Ukrainians are already flying MiG-29s. They do have trained pilots. And they are flying out of Ukrainian airspace and Ukrainian airfields. So this would be an additive element to what the Ukrainians are already able to do. That would be important.

Unfortunately, I have learned this evening that the Poles are now saying that this is not going to happen. I think that's a shame. And I think we should be looking at other alternatives, such as Slovakia and Romania, because the overall package is a good one to get more capability to the Ukrainians.

Judy Woodruff:

Well, the conversation is so important at a time when people are feeling desperate as they watch what's going on. And no question that's how many Ukrainians are feeling right now.

Doug Lute, Kurt Volker, thank you both very much.

Kurt Volker:

Thanks, Judy.



Point of View: Mocker of the Sport

By: Jack Graves

March 10th, 2022

<https://www.easthamptonstar.com/opinion-columnists/2022310/point-view-mocker-sport>

You would think that Vladimir Putin would have chosen a sport other than judo, “the gentle way.”

It was the widespread bullying in his high school — so horrifyingly evident now in Putin’s brutal invasion of Ukraine — that prompted judo’s founder, Jigoro Kano, to seek out a jujutsu instructor, and then to develop his own method of unarmed combat that enabled weaker opponents to defeat stronger ones, the idea being that softness could control hardness. Kano said, when it was proposed, in 1932, that judo become an Olympic sport, “I regard it as a principle of life . . . a means for personal cultural attainment. . . . All things connected with it should be directed to its ultimate object, the Benefit of Humanity.”

According to the Wikipedia account I’ve been citing, Kano thought of judo as “a route to self-improvement and the betterment of society in general.” Striking, it should be added, is prohibited in competitions.

I learned after writing the above that judo’s international governing body had suspended Putin as its honorary president and ambassador on Feb. 27, though there are those who argue that the organization should ban him outright, for by his bloody war crimes he has made a mockery of the tenets of his sport.

While it seems likely that Ukraine will ultimately, given the preponderance of Putin’s military strength, fall, the world’s united condemnation of his actions and its efforts to combat them on such a broad front may, in the end, trip up the dictator. One can only hope. A retired general, Doug Lute, said on the PBS news show last night that smaller countries had prevailed over more powerful ones in the past. Were that outcome to come to pass, it would be supremely ironic in Putin’s case.

Meanwhile, we can take heart in knowing that the sympathies of so many throughout the planet are wholeheartedly with the besieged Ukrainians. The moral outrage is palpable. It's the first time I can remember feeling so allied with everyone else.



'Easy decision' for Putin to choose diplomacy: US acting ambassador to Ukraine

February 20th, 2022

Martha Raddatz interviews former NATO Ambassador Doug Lute and Kristina Kvien, U.S. acting ambassador to Ukraine, in Lviv on "This Week."

<https://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/easy-decision-putin-choose-diplomacy-us-acting-ambasador-83014840>



Former NATO ambassador: Ukrainians 'resisting invasion by Russian forces'

ABC News' Stephanie Ramos speaks with former U.S. Ambassador to NATO Lt. Gen. Doug Lute about the threat of a full-scale invasion by Russian troops into Ukraine.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/nato-ambassador-ukrainians-resisting-invasion-russian-forces-83121766>



Former NATO ambassador: Russia will be held 'accountable'

ABC News' Linsey Davis speaks with former U.S. Ambassador to NATO Lt. Gen. Doug Lute about the international response to Ukraine's war as Russian troops bomb major cities.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/video/nato-ambassador-russia-held-accountable-83216526>



Former NATO ambassador: Russian tanks moving to East Ukraine would be ‘invasion’

In Ukraine, former U.S. ambassador to NATO Doug Lute dissects what Russia’s latest moves mean for concerns of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/nato-ambassador-russian-tanks-moving-east-ukraine-invasion-83035584>



Putin’s autocratic leadership is a ‘poisonous mixture’ for decision making

ABC News’ Kyra Phillips speaks to ABC News contributor Gen. Robert Abrams, along with Lt. Gen. Doug Lute about the latest tactics and strategies in Ukraine.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/putins-autocratic-leadership-poisonous-mixture-decision-making-83144023>



Ambassador Doug Lute discusses tensions with Russia over Ukraine

ABC News’ Linsey Davis speaks with Lt. Gen. Doug Lute, former U.S. permanent representative to the North Atlantic Council from 2013 to 2017, about tensions between the U.S. and Russia over Ukraine.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/ambassador-doug-lute-discusses-tensions-russia-ukraine-82473536>