

## Headlines:

- **US Bans Russian Oil**
- **US Bioweapons in Ukraine?**
- **Direct Russia-Ukraine Talks Stall**
- **Zionist President Visits Turkey**
- **Facebook to Allow Posts Urging Violence Against Russia**
- **India Fires Missile into Pakistan**

## Details:

### US Bans Russian Oil

The US expanded the economic war on Russia by banning Russian oil imports into the country.

US President Joe Biden is looking to hurt Russia, due to its invasion of Ukraine and resorted to economic warfare with this unilateral act has strained the Western alliance, as Europe imports 45% of its energy from Russia. Moscow responded by threatening to close a major gas pipeline to Germany, whilst Russian deputy prime minister Alexander Novak said: *“A rejection of Russian oil would lead to catastrophic consequences for the global market.”* For now, a broad U.S.-European ban appears elusive. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz made clear that his country, Europe’s largest consumer of Russian energy, has no plans to join in any ban. In response, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman hinted that the US could act alone or with a smaller group of allies. *“Not every country has done exactly the same thing,”* Sherman said, *“but we have all reached a threshold that is necessary to impose the severe costs that we have all agreed to.”*

### US Bioweapons in Ukraine?

The US has dismissed Russian accusations of having bioweapons labs in Ukraine as Russian propaganda. But last week Undersecretary of State, Victoria Nuland admitted that there are *“biological research facilities,”* and that the US was concerned Russian forces might seize them.

The Pentagon admits the US government has worked with 26 facilities in Ukraine and the labs are not bioweapons facilities but leftover pathogens from the Soviet Union’s bioweapons program.

The US has been very secretive on what research was being carried out and what viruses are stored in Ukraine. Russia has claimed without evidence the US is developing biological and chemical weapons in Ukraine and that it discovered efforts to clean up these programmes when it launched its *“special military operation.”* The website of the US Embassy in Ukraine says: *“The US Department of Defence’s Biological Threat Reduction Programme collaborates with partner countries to counter the threat of outbreaks (deliberate, accidental, or natural) of the world’s most dangerous infectious diseases.”* The Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, told the Senate Intelligence Committee that Ukraine *“operates a little over a dozen”* biolabs for biodefence and public health response. She said the US has, at least in the past, *“provided assistance”* to the labs *“in the context of biosafety”*.

### Direct Russia-Ukraine Talks Stall

As the Ukraine war passed its third week, the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine met for face-to-face talks in Turkey in the first high-level contact between the two sides. Ukraine’s foreign minister said he discussed a 24-hour ceasefire with his Russian

counterpart but no progress was made as the Russian foreign minister defended its invasion and said it was going as planned.

The meeting was described as “difficult” and the Ukrainian foreign ministers said: “I want to repeat that Ukraine has not surrendered, does not surrender, and will not surrender.”

Ukraine’s leading negotiator confirmed on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> that talks were on pause and will continue soon as the two sides are now communicating via video conference. “A technical pause has been taken in the negotiations until tomorrow. For additional work in the working subgroups and clarification of individual definitions. Negotiations continue,” Mykhailo Podolyak, an advisor to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, wrote on Twitter. So far, Ukraine and Russia haven’t shared many details about the negotiations, but the two sides have signaled that progress has been made.

### **Zionist President Visits Turkey**

‘Israeli’ President Isaac Herzog visited Turkey on a two-day state visit, where he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss areas of mutual cooperation. The trip was part of a gradual rapprochement between the two countries. It was the first high-level meeting between Turkish and ‘Israeli’ leaders in years. Herzog said the visit represented “a very important moment in relations between our countries. “I feel it is a great privilege for both of us to lay the foundations for the cultivation of friendly relations between our states and our peoples and to build bridges that are critical for all of us.”

### **Facebook to Allow Posts Urging Violence Against Russia**

Facebook announced this week that users in some countries will be allowed to call for violence against Russians and Russian soldiers, in a temporary change to its hate speech policy. The social media company is temporarily allowing some posts that call for death to Russian President Vladimir Putin or Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Many major social media platforms have announced new content restrictions around the conflict, including blocking Russian state media RT in the EU, and have demonstrated carve-outs in some of their policies during the war.

Whilst social media platforms enforced policies such as bans during conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria, that included any criticism of Western soldiers, this U-turn is now seen by many as the latest in a long line of double standards when national interests rather than free speech are the priority.

### **India Fires Missile into Pakistan**

India on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March confirmed that there was an “accidental firing of a missile” into Pakistan, calling it “deeply regrettable.” The confirmation came more than a day after the Pakistani military said an Indian “unarmed supersonic” missile had struck its territory damaging civilian property but causing no casualties. An Indian subsonic missile, flying at mach 3 speed across 80 miles of Pakistani territory would have had disastrous consequences if it happened amid an actual security crisis. The speed of the missile would indicate it was a nuclear capable missile, and although it was tracked inside Pakistan until it fell in the country, there was no response from Pakistan and no way for them to dismiss it was a nuclear attack! It also fell in a sensitive area. Islamabad has warned Delhi to “be mindful of the unpleasant consequences of such negligence” and to avoid a repeat.