



US Treasury Imposes Sanctions On President Putin As Ground Firefight Breaks Out In Kiev

Description

USA: (Update 18:17 ET): It's official, the US Treasury has pulled the trigger on **personal sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin** and his top ministers:

Inbox: "U.S. Treasury Imposes Sanctions on Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov" pic.twitter.com/df15AJEROY

— Scott Stedman (@ScottMStedman) [February 25, 2022](#)

The US Treasury text reads in part:

Today, the United States, in coordination with allies and partners, continued to forcefully respond to Russia's unjustified, unprovoked, and premediated invasion of Ukraine by **imposing sanctions on President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, as well as other members of Russia's Security Council.** This builds on other sweeping actions that the United States and partners took earlier this week targeting the core infrastructure of the Russian financial system, including sanctions against Russia's largest financial institutions, restricting the ability of the Government of the Russian Federation to raise capital, and cutting it off from access to critical technologies. Cumulatively, these actions impose unprecedented diplomatic and economic costs on Russia and further isolate it from the global financial system and international community.

Russian leaders including Putin himself have in past statements warned that sanctions against the sitting head of state would be **seen as tantamount to an act of war.**

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(Update 18:00 ET): In his latest late night video address to Ukrainians, President Zelensky has warned his fellow citizens that “This night will be difficult, very difficult” – in words that also broadly referenced the totality of the war itself. Specifically it served as a rallying speech to prepare forces to defend the capital as there’s widespread reports that Russian forces are to move in imminently.

“This night they will launch an assault. The enemy will use all of their power on all fronts to break our defense. This night we have to stand ground. **The fate of Ukraine is being decided now.”**

Zelensky said: **“This night will be difficult, very difficult. But the morning will come.”**

Zelenskiy: “Russia will try to break our resistance with all its might. Tonight the enemy will begin storming us. We need to withstand them!” He says Chernihiv, Symy, Kharkiv, Donbass, the south & especially Kyiv could come under attack pic.twitter.com/ugElrJICjH

— Alec Luhn (@ASLuhn) [February 25, 2022](#)

Additionally, even private citizens are said to be arming themselves, also at the urging of the country’s defense ministry.

Circulating social media videos that street battles have begun around midnight local time:

?????? Sounds like street battles in Kyiv. pic.twitter.com/tUmmFXkvrl

— Ali Özkök (@Ozkok_A) [February 25, 2022](#)

Sen. Rubio dropping some hints of US weapons into battle zone, perhaps revealing too much:

Tonight and for weeks to come [#Ukraine](#) has a few “Welcome to [#Kyiv](#)” surprise gifts for their uninvited guests

— Marco Rubio (@marcorubio) [February 25, 2022](#)

According to a report from a CBS News [correspondent on the ground](#):

...[people streamed into a makeshift recruitment center](#) in Kyiv on Friday morning, saying they were ready to die to defend their city. One commander said thousands had reported for duty — very few of them with military experience. Guns were being distributed to those who showed up, and the commander said they were quickly running out.

Ukraine’s president said at least 137 people were killed in the first day of Russia’s assault, and with fighting reportedly reaching downtown Kyiv, that was likely to rise quickly.

Meanwhile, there are strong rumors circulating that Russian ICBMs could be on the move from Russian bases, possibly in response to NATO on Friday announcing a larger mobilization that will concentrate troops in nearby Baltic and Eastern European states...

Videos have begun to circulating social media this evening of Russian Topol-M ICBM's on the move, reportedly in Moscow.

Make of it what you will, everyone will have their own opinion on this one.

pic.twitter.com/6gtrN98TDX

— Aurora Intel (@AuroraIntel) [February 25, 2022](#)

Via the BBC:

Russian advance on Kyiv



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(Update 16:40pm ET): Ukraine and Russia are reportedly in discussions over a time and place for cease-fire and peace talks. According to Ukrainian President Zelensky's spokesman, "The sides are holding consultations."

NEWS: Ukraine discussing with Russia a place and time for talks about a cease-fire and peace, Bloomberg's [@DarynaKrasno](#) reports. Zelenskiy's spokesman, Serhiy Nykyforov: "The sides are holding consultations."

— Jennifer Jacobs (@JenniferJJacobs) [February 25, 2022](#)

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(Update 15:10pm ET): NATO Chief Stoltenberg announced on Friday that **elements of the 40,000 troop-strong NATO Response Force (NRF)** would be activated for the first time.

As [Axios](#) notes:

Stoltenberg has called Russia's invasion of Ukraine "the most serious security crisis we have faced in Europe for decades." The NRF will deploy "on land, at sea, and in the air" in eastern Europe for the purposes of collective defense.

Details: *The secretary general said that the size of the NRF has tripled since 2014, but that not all forces would be deployed. He also said that NATO countries would be providing additional weapons and air-defense systems to Ukraine at the request of its government.*

What he's saying: *"We are deploying [the NRF] to ... prevent any miscalculations, any misunderstandings that we are not ready to protect and defend all our allies," Stoltenberg said. "This is something that all allies have agreed to do."*

- *He added that eastern-flank allies "are extremely concerned. They are close to the fighting in Ukraine, and they also border Russia, and they've seen not only the military buildup and the ongoing war in Ukraine, but also seen the very threatening rhetoric because this goes far beyond Ukraine."*
- *"Russia's attack on Ukraine is more than an attack on Ukraine. It's a devastating horrendous attack on innocent people in Ukraine, but it's also an attack on the whole European security order. And that's the reason why we take it so extremely seriously," Stoltenberg said.*

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(Update 13:02pm ET): NATO Chief Stoltenberg said on Friday that **NATO members would provide more weapons and air defense systems to Ukraine**, according to the *Wall Street Journal's* Anthony DeRosa.

Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg: NATO to provide more weapons including air defense systems to Ukraine

— Anthony DeRosa (@Anthony) [February 25, 2022](#)

After some confusion, *BILD* journalist Julian Röpkke clarifies that Stoltenberg *did not say NATO would be providing the weapons* – **rather, individual NATO members would do so on their own accord.**

He did not say this!

He said individual NATO countries decided to supply such systems.

NATO is not supplying any weapons to Ukraine.

— Julian Röpkke?? (@JulianRoepcke) [February 25, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, Stoltenberg also said that **cyberattacks on NATO members might be enough to trigger “Article 5,”** which considers an attack against one ally as an attack against all allies.

JUST IN – Cyberattacks by Russia on members of the alliance “can trigger Article 5,” warns NATO head Stoltenberg.

— Disclose.tv (@disclosetv) [February 25, 2022](#)

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(Update 12:45pm ET): Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday threatened Sweden and Finland with “military consequences” if they were to join NATO.

Russia just threatened military consequences against Finland and Sweden.

They f***** insane. pic.twitter.com/w4BfHfYYEW

— Femi (@Femi_Sorry) [February 25, 2022](#)

Russia just threatened two countries (Sweden & Finland) with what they called “military consequences” if they ever think about joining NATO.

Unbelievable ? [#Ukraine](#) [#russia](#) [#nato](#) [#sweden](#) [#Finland](#) pic.twitter.com/HUWLVdZrke

— Intel_Radar ? (@intel_radar24) [February 25, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, German Defense Minister Lambrecht said on Friday that he fears Russian President Vladimir Putin won’t hesitate to attack NATO partners.

“We still have some hope that he won’t cross any othee borders. But I have to honestly say: That’s not a certainty!”

German Defense Minister Lambrecht fears that Russian President Putin won’t even shy away any longer from an attack against NATO partners: “We still have some hope that he won’t cross any othee borders. But I have to honestly say: That’s not a certainty!”

<https://t.co/GyQ0uFqAwa>

— Michael Knigge (@kniggem) [February 25, 2022](#)

NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, meanwhile, said on Friday that NATO would be deploying 'response force units' to Eastern Europe in order to bolster defenses.

[#BREAKING](#) NATO deploying response force units to bolster defences: Stoltenberg
pic.twitter.com/zIY8PEfLIK

— AFP News Agency (@AFP) [February 25, 2022](#)

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(Update 11:50am ET): While it seemed like a long shot from the beginning, the prospect of talks between Russia and Ukraine was cast into doubt as the Kremlin said Ukraine had stopped responding after rejecting Moscow's initial offer of a meeting in Minsk, the capital of Belarus.

Instead, Ukraine sought a meeting in the Polish capital, Warsaw, the Kremlin said, adding it had heard nothing further. There was no immediate word from Ukraine on the Russian comments. The diplomatic to and fro comes as fighting continues on the ground with Russian forces having entered the capital Kiyv.

Of course, as Bloomberg adds, any talks would likely struggle to find common ground on the question of "neutrality" for Ukraine, which has sought to join NATO and draw closer to Europe.

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(Update 10:20am ET): Following news that Russia is ready to send a delegation to Minsk for Ukraine talks, moments ago the Kremlin announced that Putin has agreed to organize negotiations after Zelensky said he was ready to discuss Ukraine's "neutral status" (i.e., not joining NATO). Here are the latest headlines from Reuters:

- KREMLIN SAYS PUTIN HAS AGREED TO ORGANISE NEGOTIATIONS AFTER ZELENSKIY SAID HE WAS READY TO DISCUSS UKRAINIAN NEUTRALITY
- KREMLIN SAYS WE HAVE NOTIFIED THE UKRAINIANS OF PROPOSAL TO HOLD TALKS IN MINSK
- KREMLIN SAYS PUTIN HAS CALLED BELARUS'S LUKASHENKO TO ORGANISE MINSK TALKS WITH UKRAINE
- KREMLIN SAYS PUTIN HAS AGREED TO ORGANISE NEGOTIATIONS AFTER ZELENSKIY SAID HE WAS READY TO DISCUSS UKRAINIAN NEUTRALITY

The ruble and Russian stocks, as well as US and European stocks, extended gains after Putin aide Dmitry Peskov conveyed the offer of talks in Minsk, the capital of Russian ally Belarus. The Kremlin also notes that while the Ukraine initially proposed talks in Warsaw instead, it then broke off contact.

Separately, the Kremlin said that Ukrainian nationalists have deployed missile systems in residential areas in big cities, a move which the Kremlin dubbed as “very dangerous.”

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Moscow will only talk if Ukraine’s army surrenders. “We’re ready for negotiations at any time, as soon as the Ukrainian armed forces respond to our president’s call, stop resistance and lay down their weapons,” Lavrov said in the Russian capital.

While Zelenskiy also called for negotiations with Putin, there was no indication of Ukraine acceding to Russian demands to surrender. Nor was there any sign of a halt to the fighting. Sirens warned Kyiv residents to take shelter from early morning as Ukraine’s armed forces said their units were engaging Russian armor to the north.

Zelenskiy said that Russian aircraft were attacking residential areas of the capital. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said it had “entered the defense phase,” with shots and explosions heard across the city. “The enemy is already in Kyiv,” he said.

As noted earlier, Chinese President Xi Jinping told Putin in a call earlier on Friday that he supported negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, according to China Central Television. It cited Putin as saying that he was ready to conduct high-level talks.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Zelenskiy and his government as “puppets.” Putin has said that he wants to replace Ukraine’s leadership, calling it a “junta.” Despite the talks offer, the assault on Ukraine is ongoing to secure the “de-militarization” of the country, Zakharova said.

In an address, **Zelenskiy said that Ukraine was not afraid “to talk about neutral status,” but went on to demand security guarantees and say that the country’s fate depended on its army.** Earlier, he said that his intelligence services had identified him as Russia’s top target, but that he is staying in Kyiv and his family will remain in the country. “They want to destroy Ukraine politically by destroying the head of state,” he said. In a video call last night, the Ukraine president told EU leaders that “This might be the last time you see me alive” Axios reported adding that “they are coming for me, but I am staying” (of course, the former leader of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani also told everyone he was staying right up until he disappeared).

The Ukraine president appeared rather irritated at Italy’s Prime Minister, Mario Draghi, slamming the fact the the former ECB head fact apparently undermined or criticized the fact that Zelensky did not show up at the call they agreed to have this morning. According to reports, Draghi had successfully secured a carve out for Italian luxury goods from the EU’s package of economic sanctions against Nato, which an EU diplomat reportedly said ‘Apparently selling Gucci loafers to oligarchs is more of a priority than hitting back at Putin.’

Today at 10:30 am at the entrances to Chernihiv, Hostomel and Melitopol there were heavy fighting. People died. Next time I'll try to move the war schedule to talk to [#MarioDraghi](#) at a specific time. Meanwhile, Ukraine continues to fight for its people.

— ?????????? ?????????? (@ZelenskyyUa) [February 25, 2022](#)

As a reminder, Italy was one of the nations (along with Germany, Hungary and Cyprus) that refused to agree to kick Russia out of SWIFT.

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Earlier:

Russia said it was willing to hold talks with Kyiv even as its forces pressed their military advantage to close in on Ukraine's capital and its embattled leadership.

With the war in its second day, the Kremlin said that President Vladimir Putin was ready to authorize negotiations with Ukraine on possible "neutral status" for the country. The ruble and Russian stocks extended gains after Putin aide Dmitry Peskov conveyed the offer of talks in Minsk, the capital of Russian ally Belarus.

US equity futures are spiking on reports from Interfax that **Russia is ready to send a delegation to Minsk for Ukraine talks.**



"As you know, today the President of Ukraine Zelensky announced his readiness to discuss the neutral status of Ukraine": Interfax reports Dmitry Peskov, Russian press secretary, said earlier today.

"Initially, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the purpose of the operation was to help the LNR and the DNR, including through the demilitarization and denazification of

Ukraine. And this, in fact, is an integral component of the neutral status”

“In this context, in response to Zelensky’s proposal, Vladimir **Putin is ready to send a Russian delegation to Minsk at the level of representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the presidential administration for negotiations with the Ukrainian delegation”

US equity futures reacted instantly...



This move has erased all of the week’s (post-Putin) losses for the Nasdaq...



The Ruble is rallying, almost erasing all of the losses from the last two days...



Reactions in other markets (crude, gold, bonds) are all muted for now.

by Tyler Durden

Category

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