

Ukraine Defense Ministry: Russians Allegedly Used Phosphorus Bombs in Mariupol

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Ukraine is checking unverified information that Russia may have used chemical weapons while besieging the southern Ukrainian port city of Mariupol. Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister, Hanna Maliar announced it.

Asked whether the second stage of the war has already begun in Ukraine, she confirmed that the hot phase was already underway.

"We have a war going on, and in fact, it is in its hot phase. We have ongoing battles. For example, the Armed Forces repulsed six enemy attacks last night. Although we have data on the temporarily occupied territories where the enemy is trying to establish its power, the territory from which the enemy was knocked out and which the enemy did not reach is much larger," said the deputy minister.

According to Malyar, today we cannot talk about a calmer situation, it is incorrect. Indeed, the intensity of fighting has abated, but the enemy's desire to advance deep into the territory does not decline, Maliar noted.

Reuters reported that Russia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On April 12, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told reporters in Moscow that on April 11, the Russian army thwarted an attempt by air and artillery fire to retake about 100 Ukrainian troops from Mariupol. The Russian general named the area of operation of the factory as the place of operation and said that about 50 Ukrainian soldiers were liquidated and 42 threw down their weapons. This information



has not been confirmed by other sources.

The Interfax news agency is reporting that the pro-Russian separatist forces in the self-proclaimed republic of Donetsk have denied using chemical weapons in Mariupol.

On April 11, the British Ministry of Defense said that the use of phosphorous munitions by the Russian military in the Donetsk region increases the likelihood that they will do the same in Mariupol, as the fight for the city intensifies.

The information that the Russian mili-

tary used chemical weapons near the Azovstal factory in Mariupol was spread by the representatives of the 'Azov' regiment on the night of April 11. This area of the city is protected by 'Azov'.

The use of chemical weapons by the Russian military in Mariupol has not yet been confirmed by the US Department of Defense. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Trass said she was working with partners to verify the details.

For more than a month, the Russian occupation forces have been besieging the

city of Mariupol in the Donetsk region, which has been almost completely destroyed by rockets and airstrikes. According to the city mayor, more than 10 thousand civilians were killed in Mariupol.

On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian troops shell and destroy key infrastructure, and massively fire on residential areas of Ukrainian cities, towns, and villages using artillery, MLRS, and ballistic missiles.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Rada pro-Russian MP, Putin's friend Viktor Medvedev Arrested in Ukraine

Rada pro-Russian MP and close to Putin, Viktor Medvedev, was arrested in Ukraine.

A photo of the detainee was released by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and he said that the security service had conducted a special operation. Details are still unknown.

Medvedev is a propagandist of pro-Russian ideas in Ukraine and a lobbyist for Russian interests. He is an opposition platform - a leader for life. Putin is the godfather of Medvedev's son.

Medvedev is suspected of high treason and was under house arrest before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. After the Russian attack, it was reported that his wife had fled to Belarus, and later Medvedev also fled.

Putin says Bucha is 'Just as Fake' as Assad's Use of Chemical Weapons

Russian President Vladimir Putin says the massacre in Bucha by Russian troops is 'Fake'

As Putin claims, "similar provocations" were being made in Syria when Bashar al-Assad was accused of using chemical weapons in Syria.

"It was later revealed that this is a fake. It is the same fake as in Bucha," Putin told a joint news conference with his Belarusian counterpart.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. Thousands of civilians were killed. More than 10 million people became refugees and refugees. Russian soldiers brutally beat civilians.

Hundreds of civilians have been found here in the Kyiv region after the city of Bucha was liberated from the Russians. Some of them were in the basement, contracted, and bullets had been fired from behind. Russians kill women, children, and the elderly.

NGOs Suggest Steps to Reduce Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia



NGOs believe that the government of Georgia should reduce the country's economic dependence on Russia, use the country's transit function more efficiently, and accelerate Georgia's economic integration with Western countries.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian NGOs have issued 10 Recommendations to the Government of Georgia on Economic Issues, which include ways to reduce economic dependence on Russia and increase the economic and political security of the country.

According to the statement, Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the international sanctions imposed on Russia in response to this will hurt the Georgian economy, however, the NGOs claim that at this stage, the current situation in Georgia will not lead to an economic crisis.

As the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have forecasted, the Georgian economic growth rate will be lower than projected at the beginning of the year, due to the ongoing hostilities in Ukraine. As NGOs note in their recommendations, how hard the Georgian economy will suffer also depends on the steps taken by the Georgian government. According to them, the government should use the strategic opportunities that are being created, in particular — to reduce Georgia's economic dependence on Russia, use the country's transit function more efficiently, and accelerate Georgia's economic integration

with Western countries.

As the statement reads, to reduce economic dependence on Russia, the Georgian government should begin "more active and expeditious" work on reaching free trade agreements with "all strategic partners".

"Increasing the geographical

area of free trade will reduce Georgia's dependence on imports of Russian products and exports of Georgian products to the Russian market," the statement reads.

The NGOs also note that the government and municipalities should not subsidize entrepre-

neurial activities that increase Georgia's economic dependence on Russia, noting that this approach should apply to both business grants and concessional loans, as well as price subsidies.

It is also noted in the statement that even though electricity and natural gas imported

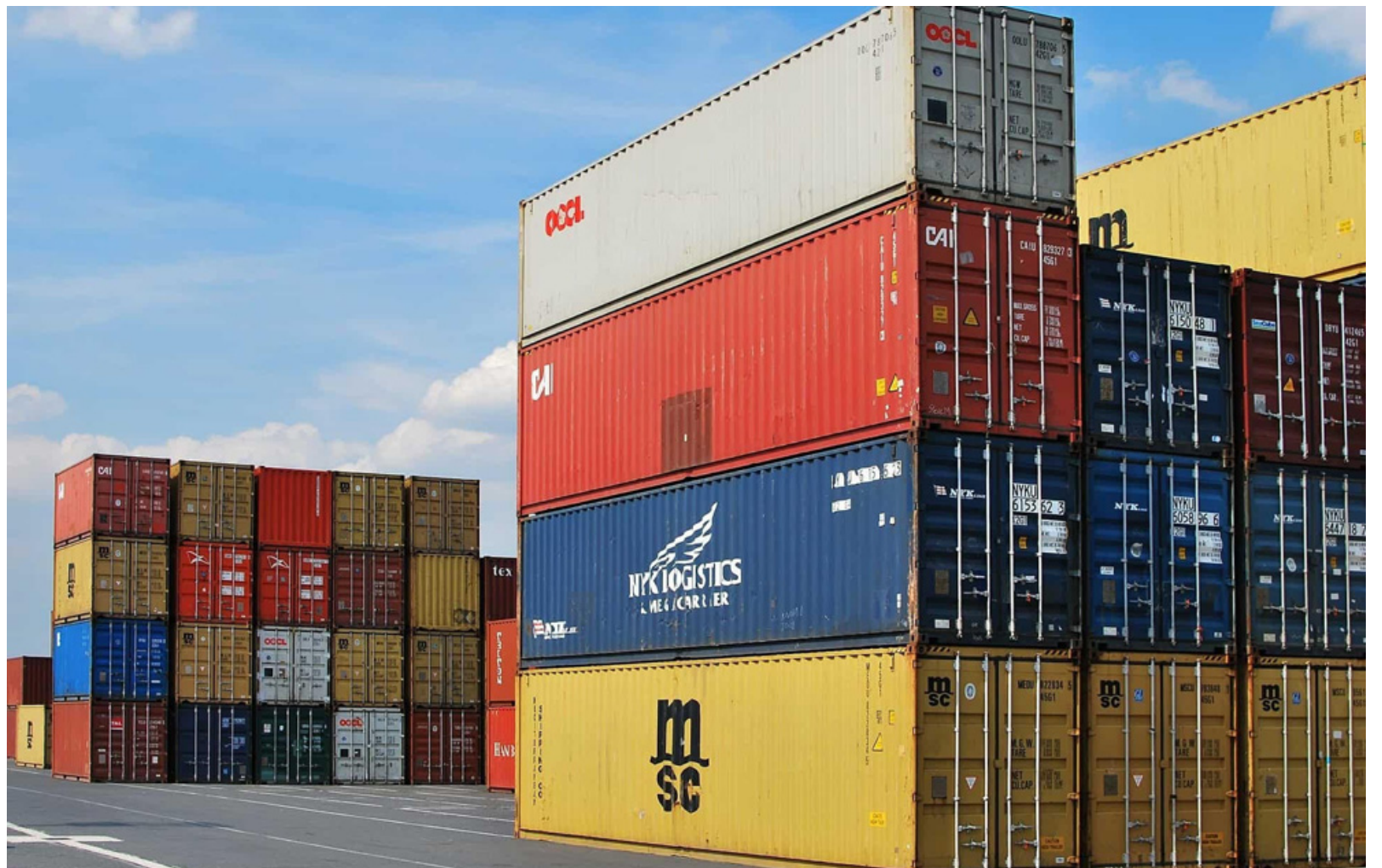
from Russia have not accounted for a large share of Georgia's domestic consumption in recent years, it is important to further reduce it.

"Recent events have reminded us once again that Russia is using its energy resources and electricity exports as leverage for political pressure, which is detrimental to the country's energy security and poses significant risks to sustainable economic development," the NGOs note.

The statement also suggests that the Government of Georgia should take advantage of new opportunities, stressing that due to the created geopolitical reality, the role of Georgia as a transit country is growing.

"It is realistic that the demand for transit of Azerbaijani oil and gas to Europe via Georgia, as well as the cargo from Central Asian countries, will be increased," reads the statement, adding that Georgia should enhance its transport potential by accelerating infrastructure development and modernization.

The NGOs Emphasize that the Government of Georgia should state clearly that Georgia will not be used to circumvent sanctions against Russia.



According to the statement, due to the created geopolitical reality, the role of Georgia as a transit country is growing.

Weather

Wednesday, April 13

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 3°C

Thursday, April 14

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 15°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 5°C

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30th anniversary of German-Georgian diplomatic relations

On 13 April 2022, Germany and Georgia celebrate the 30th anniversary of their bilateral diplomatic relations. Germany was the first country to appoint an ambassador to Georgia, shortly after its independence from the Soviet Union in 1992. That year, on 13 April, German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher paid an official visit to Tbilisi, sending a strong signal for the recognition of Georgia's sovereignty and trust in its democratic development by the international community.

The visit was a new beginning in a long-standing friendship: The first German travellers to Georgia arrived in the 18th century. Swabian settlers established more than twenty colonies in Kvemo Kartli. Throughout the years, Georgia became an attractive country for German travellers, scientists and specialists in various fields to settle. Their footprints have been preserved until today: Some of the most beautiful streets and squares of Tbilisi bear the signature of German architects. In 1918, Germany importantly supported the independence of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia through its diplomatic and military representation in Tbilisi. Eminent Georgians who studied in Germany include Ivane Javakhishvili, Konstantine Gamsakhurdia and Davit Saradjishvili.

Today, Germany and Georgia continue their close political cooperation, with Germany actively supporting Georgia's aspirations to move closer to EU and NATO. In recent years, Germany gave its support to the Association Agreement with the EU and the visa liberalisation scheme.

In addition, Germany has always been particularly committed to resolving the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia: German diplomat Dieter Boden, acting on UN instructions, engineered a plan for the resolution of the Abkhaz issue and presented it to the Security Council. In 2008, then foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier held intensive talks to convince all stakeholders to avert the conflict. In recent years, the highest representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, now in the capacity of federal president, visited Georgia and reaffirmed Germany's commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the field of development cooperation, Germany has provided over 1.2 billion euros of bilateral assistance to Georgia since 1992. From early on, Germany played a key role in reforming the Georgian justice system and restoring electricity supply after the collapse of the Soviet Union, both crucial preconditions for Georgia's economic development.

Nowadays, German-Georgian cooperation focuses on energy and energy efficiency, technical vocational education, sustainable urban development, private sector development and good governance. Furthermore, Germany supports sustainable forest management, biodiversity and the national parks and other protected areas. In the vital field of education, Germany contributes to strengthening Georgia's dual and practice-oriented vocational education, increasing the availability of skilled specialists for the Georgian labour market. A key driver of bilateral economic relations, the German-Georgian business association unites more than 160 member companies.

The dynamic relations between Germany and Georgia would not be possible without the strong social and cultural ties that unite the two countries. One phenomenal milestone in recent years was Georgia's participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair as a guest of honour in 2018. On this occasion, about 250 Georgian books were translated into German language, an additional 200 publications about Georgia appeared on the German market.

Finally, military cooperation has been and continues to be an indispensable part of bilateral relations. For twenty years, the German Bundeswehr has assisted Georgia with the development of its national armed forces, establishing a non-commissioned officers' (NCO) school and providing military supplies, transport and other equipment. Germany initiated the "Substantial NATO-Georgia Package", continues to be one of its major sponsors today and leads the initiatives for military engineering, for the Defense Institution Building School and for military medical capacity building. More than 2300 young Georgians study in Germany and German is one of the most-taught languages in Georgia.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze in Georgia in 2018
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President Frank-Walter Steinmeier with the director of the Schuchmann winery Roland Burdiashvili in Kakheti
© Federal Government of Germany / Jesco Denzel



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Eduard Shevardnadze
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30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall with President Salome Zurbishvili and German Ambassador Hubert Knirsch
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