

Ofcom Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin

18 July 2022

In Breach

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, various times

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, various times

RT News, RT, 2 March 2022, 09:00

Donbass Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, RT, 1 and 2 March 2022, various times

Summary

This document sets out Ofcom's Decisions on the above 29 programmes which were broadcast on RT between 27 February 2022 and 2 March 2022. The 29 Decisions have been grouped in some cases based on the type of programme and date of broadcast. The licence for the RT service was, at the time of broadcast, held by Autonomous Non-profit Organisation TV-Novosti ("TV Novosti")¹.

Ofcom was alerted to these programmes by a combination of complaints from viewers and Ofcom's own monitoring. All of the programmes were broadcast in the wake of the launch of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Ofcom considered that the programmes raised issues warranting investigation under the due impartiality rules set out in Section Five of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code ("the Code"). When dealing with matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to current public policy, such as wars or areas of conflict (in these cases, specifically the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region), all Ofcom licensees must comply with the special impartiality requirements in the Code. These rules require broadcasters to take additional steps to preserve due impartiality – namely by including and giving due weight to a wide range of significant views.

In accordance with our published procedures, Ofcom has decided that all of the programmes² breached the Code for the reasons set out in full in each corresponding Decision:

- *RT News, RT, 27 February 2022 at 05:00; 06:00; 07:00; 08:00; 09:00; 10:00; 11:00; 12:00; 13:00; 14:00; 15:00; 16:00; 17:00; 18:00 and 19:00 (15 programmes);*
- *RT News, RT, 1 March 2022 at 05:00; 06:00; 07:00; 08:00; 09:00; 12:00; 15:00; 16:00; 17:00; 18:00, 19:00 and 20:00 (12 programmes);*
- *RT News, RT, 2 March 2022 at 09:00 (one programme); and,*
- *Donbass Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, RT, 1 and 2 March, various times (one programme).*

Ofcom considers that these breaches were serious and repeated, and we are minded to consider them for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

¹ Ofcom revoked ANO TV Novosti's licences for the RT service on 18 March 2022 on the basis that Ofcom did not consider ANO TV Novosti fit and proper to hold a UK broadcast licence. See <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins/content-sanctions-adjudications/decision-ano-tv-novosti>.

² Full transcripts of the *RT News* programmes are contained in annexes accompanying each corresponding Decision, and a programme summary is included in the *Donbass Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* Decision.

RT News

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	RT
Date & time	27 February 2022 at 05:00; 06:00; 07:00; 08:00; 09:00; 10:00; 11:00; 12:00; 13:00; 14:00; 15:00; 16:00; 17:00; 18:00 and 19:00
Category	Due impartiality in news
Summary	RT failed to ensure due impartiality in its news coverage of a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, in 15 news programmes. Each of the 15 programmes was in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 & 5.12.

Introduction

This document sets out Ofcom's Decisions in relation to 15 investigations into the above news programmes, each around 30 minutes long. These were broadcast on RT on Sunday 27 February 2022, on the hour between 05:00 and 19:00 inclusive, during the fourth day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022. The licence for the RT service was held at the time by Autonomous Non-profit Organisation TV-Novosti ("TV Novosti").

In this document, we have set out some general considerations that we have applied to each of the 15 investigations in relation to:

- the background to our investigations;
- the conflict in Ukraine;
- the background to Ofcom's due impartiality regime;
- Ofcom's [Guidance to Section Five](#) (the "Guidance") of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code ("the Code"); and
- the application of [Section Five](#) of the Code in these investigations.

Given the 15 programmes contained similar content broadcast on the same channel and on the same day, these general considerations apply to all the investigations. However, despite containing some similar content, each programme was a standalone news bulletin reporting events which evolved

throughout the day. Therefore we have considered each programme individually and reached a Decision in relation to each individual news bulletin.

In response to Ofcom's formal request for comments, TV Novosti, who held the licence for RT, provided representations on the content of each programme as well as general representations which applied to all 15 investigations, which we have summarised below in the 'TV Novosti's general representations' section.

In response to Ofcom's Preliminary Views finding all 15 programmes in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12, TV Novosti provided general representations, which are also set out below under 'TV Novosti's general representations'.

In addition, we have set out below Ofcom's response to some of the points TV Novosti made in its general representations, where these are applicable across all 15 investigations.

We have set out the description of the content and Ofcom's Decision for each investigation, as well as any reasoning specific to a particular programme, individually. We considered TV Novosti's specific representations each time we reached a Decision.

Ofcom was alerted to these 15 programmes by a combination of complaints from viewers and Ofcom's own monitoring. The complaints we received included that these bulletins contained "propaganda" and "misinformation". Ofcom considered that the programmes raised issues warranting investigation under the due impartiality rules set out in Section Five of the Code in accordance with our published [procedures](#). Due to the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, and the high public interest, we informed TV Novosti that it was necessary for us to expedite these investigations at the outset.

Background

Background to our investigations

RT is a global news and current affairs channel largely produced in Russia and funded by the Russian Federation.

On 2 March 2022, following the imposition of sanctions by the EU which affected the ability of third parties to provide services to TV Novosti, RT ceased to broadcast on regulated platforms in the UK.

On 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the two broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service, as well as the licence held by TV Novosti for the RT Europe service¹.

The RT broadcast channel, licensed by Ofcom, was made for UK audiences, providing a Russian perspective on UK and global news and current affairs related programming. It broadcast in English. In the UK, the channel was broadcast on satellite and terrestrial platforms.

RT News is a traditional news programme, with bulletin style news reports from both presenters in the studio and reporters outside the studio, as well as interviews with other RT reporters and guests in Russia, the UK and around the world. All the episodes of *RT News* between 05:00 and 19:00 on 27

¹ See [Decision to revoke licence – ANO TV Novosti](#), 18 March 2022.

February 2022 related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. A number of packaged news reports and/or interviews were repeated across many of these bulletins.

A full transcript of all 15 news programmes is contained in the Annex which accompanies these Decisions. Where a packaged news report or interview was repeated throughout several programmes under investigation, for ease we have given that report or interview a title and then used that title throughout these Decisions. The titles are indicated in each individual Decision and in the Annex.

In these Decisions, we have used the Ukrainian spelling for Ukrainian cities, except where we have transcribed or quoted contributors speaking from a Russian perspective in the programmes, for which we have used the Russian spelling. Direct quotes from TV Novosti's representations or captions reflect the same spelling as the original.

The conflict in Ukraine

On Thursday 24 February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, which has been internationally condemned. On 2 March 2022², the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations there³ and condemned the 24 February 2022 declaration by the Russian Federation of a "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Ofcom understands the Donbas (Russian spelling "Donbass") to be a disputed region in south-eastern Ukraine, which contains the cities Donetsk and Luhansk (Russian spelling "Lugansk"). Since 2014, this area has been the site of an ongoing conflict between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian state or military.

Ofcom's due impartiality rules

Reflecting our duties under section 319 of the Communications Act 2003 ("the Act"), Section Five of the Code requires that news in television and radio services is presented with due impartiality and that the special impartiality requirements set out in section 320 of the Act are met.

The special impartiality requirements include the preservation, in the case of every television service, of due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy. Section 320 of the Act requires Ofcom, for the purposes of setting the due impartiality rules in the Code, to take account, in particular, of the need to ensure the preservation of due impartiality in relation to: matters of major political or industrial controversy; and major matters relating to current public policy.

In addition to being news programmes, and for the reasons given below, Ofcom considered all the programmes from 27 February 2022 that we investigated were dealing with matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to current public policy, specifically the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Therefore, the following Code rules applied:

Rule 5.1: "News, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality".

² This was after the broadcasts covered in these Decisions.

³ See [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Demanding Russian Federation Immediately End Illegal Use of Force in Ukraine, Withdraw All Troops](#), United Nations, 2 March 2022.

Rule 5.11: “...due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy by the person providing a service...in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes”.

Rule 5.12: “In dealing with matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes. Views and facts must not be misrepresented”.

On 1 March 2022, we requested comments from the broadcaster as to how the content of all 15 programmes complied with these rules, in particular in relation to the coverage of the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Rule 5.1 places requirements on broadcasters both to report the news with due accuracy and to present it with due impartiality. Ofcom acknowledges that during times of war, the facts about what is happening in regions of conflict, for example determining from which side a missile originated, can be difficult to verify. However, broadcasters are still required to report the news with due accuracy. In the case of these 15 *RT News* programmes, we were concerned with TV Novosti’s coverage of the situation in the Donbas, which in all 15 programmes was highly critical of the policies and actions of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the area and appeared to lack any alternative viewpoints. Therefore, in our letter to TV Novosti launching the 15 investigations, we specified that they were concerned with the aspect of Rule 5.1 that deals with due impartiality only.

The Code makes clear that “due” means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. “Due impartiality” does not therefore mean an equal division of time must be given to every view, or that every argument must be represented. Due impartiality can be preserved in a number of ways and it is an editorial decision for the broadcaster as to how it ensures this.

The Code also makes clear that the approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to the content and the extent to which the content and approach are signalled to the audience. In addition, context, as set out in [Section Two \(Harm and Offence\) of the Code](#) is important in preserving due impartiality. Context includes a number of factors such as: the editorial content of the programme; the service on which the material is broadcast; the likely size, composition and expectation of the audience; and the effect on viewers who may come across the programme unawares.

Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code

Ofcom has published Guidance to assist broadcasters in complying with the due impartiality rules in Section Five of the Code, including the heightened requirements contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Amongst other things, Ofcom’s Guidance makes clear that: it is an editorial matter for the broadcaster

as to how due impartiality is preserved, as long as the Code is complied with⁴; and there are a range of editorial techniques for maintaining due impartiality.⁵

In relation to Rules 5.11 and 5.12, the Guidance explains these additional rules are necessary because of the nature of the subject matter concerned: a matter of major political and industrial controversy or major matter relating to current public policy is of a significant level of importance and is likely to be of the moment.

Our Guidance also states that the broadcasting of comments either criticising or supporting the policies and actions of any political organisation or government state will not be, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. Any broadcaster may do this provided it complies with the Code. However, depending on the specific circumstances of any particular case, it may be necessary to reflect alternative viewpoints or provide context in an appropriate way to ensure that Section Five of the Code is complied with.

Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations

The 15 programmes under investigation were news programmes and therefore Rule 5.1 applied.

In addition, Ofcom considered that the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to these programmes. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we also considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region in and of itself was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in this region at the time of the broadcasts. Russia had referred to historical and ongoing events in the Donbas as a justification for its invasion of Ukraine⁶. Relevant historical events include Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, following which, pro-Russian separatists in the eastern region of Donbas declared independence from Ukraine in self-proclaimed "People's Republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk. These events sparked a long-running conflict between Russian-backed separatists, local militia groups and Ukrainian Government forces. A significant amount of the military confrontation between Russian and Ukrainian forces at the time of the news programmes covered in these Decisions was taking place in the Donbas region. We recognised that given the centrality of the Donbas region to the rationale for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, TV Novosti would want to broadcast a Russian perspective on this issue. However, in doing so it had to comply with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

In our letter of 1 March 2022 to TV Novosti, we asked it to explain how the programmes complied with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 specifically in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, in order to help us reach Preliminary Views in these investigations⁷. TV Novosti agreed Rules 5.11 and

⁴ See paragraph 1.6, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/99177/broadcast-code-guidance-section-5-march-2017.pdf.

⁵ Ibid, paragraph 1.17.

⁶ See [Russia's Putin authorises 'special military operation' against Ukraine | Reuters](#).

⁷ Ofcom has previously made clear our approach to enforcing the special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Broadcasting Code. For example, in 2018, Ofcom found RT in breach of these requirements

5.12 were engaged in these programmes. As outlined in the Introduction, TV Novosti made general representations on the Preliminary Views, and having taken these into account, Ofcom then reached these Decisions.

The importance of the due impartiality regime

The due impartiality standards required under sections 319 and 320 of the Act form part of a tripartite series of measures (the others being a prohibition on paid political advertising⁸ and the provision of free party political and party election broadcasts according to defined rules⁹) designed to safeguard the integrity of democratic debate on matters of public concern by preventing influential broadcast media platforms from being hijacked by wealthy or well-placed interests promoting a partial agenda¹⁰.

As explained in the Government White Paper which led to the Act:

“[Due impartiality] obligations have played a major part in ensuring wide public access to impartial and accurate information about our society and the opportunity to encounter a diverse array of voices and perspectives. They ensure that the broadcast media provide a counterweight to other, often partial, sources of news. They therefore contribute significantly to properly informed democratic debate.”

The Courts have recently confirmed the ongoing importance of the due impartiality regime:

“There is nothing to suggest that the need for accuracy or impartiality in the broadcasting media, or the contribution that an adherence to those standards in broadcasting makes to a properly informed democratic debate, has diminished or is any less important to safeguarding the interests of citizens now than it was at the time of the White Paper or the enactment of the 2003 Act. Indeed, there is reason to consider that the need is at least as great, if not greater than ever before, given current concerns about the effect on the democratic process of news manipulation and of fake news”¹¹.

Ofcom considers the due impartiality requirements in broadcasting to be particularly important in situations where events are changing quickly and potentially harmful disinformation is available

in relation to the broadcast of seven programmes, six of which dealt with major matters regarding Russian foreign policy. See [Issue 369 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018. RT applied for judicial review of Ofcom’s decisions. RT’s claim was dismissed in full in the Administrative Court and Court of Appeal. RT has applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

⁸ See s.319(2)(g) and 321(2) of the Act.

⁹ S.333 of the Act provides that licences for certain broadcasters must require the inclusion of free broadcasts and the observance of the Ofcom Rules on Party Political and Referendum Broadcasts. Those Rules regulate party political broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties outside election periods); party election broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties during election periods); and referendum campaign broadcasts (offered to each designated referendum organisation before each referendum).

¹⁰ R (Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation TV-Novosti) v The Office of Communications, [2020] EWHC 689 (Admin), paragraph 21.

¹¹ Ibid, paragraph 23.

online. In addition, the Courts have recently confirmed that the importance of due impartiality is heightened in circumstances where it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of content which has been broadcast¹².

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and freedom. It constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and is one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every person.

As a public authority, it is unlawful for Ofcom to act in a way that is incompatible with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (“Article 10”)¹³. This right encompasses the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression as well as the audience’s right to receive information and ideas without interference¹⁴. Ofcom’s Code and Guidance are drafted, and given effect to, in accordance with Article 10. In particular, in carrying out its duties, Ofcom must have regard to the broadcaster’s freedom to discuss any controversial subject or point of view in its programming, as well as the requirement in the Code to preserve due impartiality on matters relating to major political or industrial controversy or major matters relating to current public policy.

It is well established that the freedom of expression of licensed broadcasters may legitimately be restricted where such measures are necessary to achieve the positive objective of maintaining fair and equal democratic discourse on influential media platforms to the benefit of society generally¹⁵. In order to establish that a limitation is “necessary”, relevant and sufficient reasons must be provided to justify the restriction, the restriction must correspond to a pressing social need, and it must be proportionate to the aim pursued. The legitimate aim pursued by the Act and the Code is to protect the rights of others, i.e. to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news by ensuring that other viewpoints are received by viewers who may then participate on an informed basis in the democratic processes.

By section 3(3) of the Act, Ofcom must, in performing its duties under subsection (1), have regard, in all cases, to (a) the principles under which regulatory activities should be transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed; and (b) any other principles appearing to Ofcom to represent the best regulatory practice.

Each and every time Ofcom applies the Code to broadcast content, Ofcom gives careful consideration to the broadcaster’s and the audience’s Article 10 rights. In order to reach a Decision on whether due impartiality was maintained in each of these programmes, Ofcom has had careful regard to the Article 10 rights and all the relevant contextual factors for each programme.

¹² Ibid, paragraph 68.

¹³ Section 6 Human Rights Act 1998.

¹⁴ *Lingens v Austria* (1986) 8 EHRR 407.

¹⁵ *Animal Defenders v United Kingdom* [2013] EMLR 28 and *R (On The Application of Animal Defenders International) v Secretary of State For Culture, Media and Sport* [2008] 1 AC 1312.

TV Novosti's general representations

Initial comments

As part of its initial comments, TV Novosti submitted general representations applying to all 15 investigations, as well as a 12-page document which summarised what it considered to be the alternative viewpoints represented throughout each of the 15 programmes, which it said demonstrated “how due impartiality was maintained by RT in each of the 15 news bulletins”. These specific representations are set out, in full, under each individual Decision¹⁶.

In its general representations, TV Novosti said:

“Since the day the events in Ukraine erupted, which made the conditions of 5.11 and 5.12 of the Broadcasting Code applicable, all people working in the RT newsroom were constantly reminded of the necessity to pay special attention to maintaining proper balance in the coverage. Director of Compliance was always on the line giving advice and guidance.

In all fairness, I don't think any other international broadcaster has been covering the Ukrainian events paying as much attention to the impartiality issue as RT did. Obviously, being a Russian channel we were totally prepared that our output would be viewed with extra scrutiny, both by regulators and our viewership, and went to extra lengths to make sure we provide the picture that's both true to facts and sufficiently balanced.

Surely...Ofcom may judge our efforts differently, but this was our sincere desire and effort.

....RT is not available in the UK now on any of the platforms that used to broadcast it, over a direct ban from either the EU, or the UK Government, or both. Perhaps Ofcom could in the current situation consider suspending the RT's license citing special circumstances, which leaves the possibility of having a proper investigation according to the Ofcom's rules and standards if, or when, situation permits”.

TV Novosti did not provide any representations (either general or in relation to individual programmes) to explain how the programmes complied with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 specifically in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

¹⁶ TV Novosti's initial representations in relation to the content that is the subject of these Decisions were received on 4 March 2022, prior to Ofcom's revocation of the three broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service on 18 March 2022.

Representations on Ofcom's Preliminary Views

Ofcom reached Preliminary Views finding all 15 programmes in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 and invited TV Novosti to make representations on these. In response, TV Novosti provided general representations. It did not comment on any specific programme subject to investigation.

TV Novosti stated that Ofcom's procedures "were established 'for the handling and resolution of complaints...about broadcasters' with 'broadcasters' being defined as 'any broadcaster licensed and/or regulated by Ofcom'". It submitted that "Ofcom has already revoked RT's licenses" and "the procedures for the investigations surely have no merit now and as such the request for representations on the Preliminary Views is redundant".

Ofcom's response to TV Novosti's general representations

We acknowledged that due to third party actions, by the time TV Novosti submitted its representations to Ofcom about the programmes broadcast on 27 February 2022, RT channels were no longer being broadcast within the UK; and that on 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service. However, the content subject to investigation was broadcast while TV Novosti held Ofcom licences. At that time, TV Novosti was responsible for compliance with the Code on its Ofcom licensed services. We previously confirmed to TV Novosti that, as set out above, we considered the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, as well as the high public interest and the need to maintain public confidence in the broadcast standards regime in the UK, meant that it was necessary for Ofcom to carry out these investigations in accordance with Ofcom's [Procedures](#) on an expedited basis at the outset. Therefore Ofcom's Procedures were still applicable to these investigations and the request for representations on our Preliminary Views was not redundant.

Ofcom's Investigations

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 05:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 05:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During this programme, RT presenter Peter Scott ("PS") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live report from RT reporter Roman Kosarev ("RK") in Donetsk ("the Kosarev Report");
- a report from RT reporter Igor Zhdanov ("IZ") about Kyiv ("the Zhdanov Report");
- a report from RT reporter Paula Slier ("PSI") about Western sanctions against Russia ("the Slier Report");
- a report with RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Western sanctions against Russia ("the Dubenskij Report");
- an interview about the Donbas region with Anya Parampil ("AP"), a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website ("the Parampil Interview");
- an interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao ("VG"), Chair Professor of Soochow University, China ("the Gao Interview"); and
- a live report about the Donbas region with RT reporter Donald Courter ("DC") ("the Courter Report").

Peter Scott began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

PS: *"Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Kiev locals film what they say is crossfire with advancing Russian forces, as numerous explosions are reported in the region around Ukraine's capital. And the SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement Western powers' decision to disconnect some Russian banks from its services. It's just gone 8am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott, taking over from Sean Thomas and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, we start with news from the newly recognised Donbass Republics where intense fighting continues along the front lines. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the Lugansk People's Republic ["LPR"] and local authorities allege a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught on fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Well, let's cross live now to our correspondent in Donetsk, Roman Kosarev. Roman, tell us what's happening on the ground right now".*

This was followed by the Kosarev Report, which included a clip of a female Donetsk resident ("DR"):

RK: *"Well, good morning. Here in Donetsk, it has been a relatively quiet night and, uh, in regards to what happened in Lugansk a little bit earlier, well, local authorities report that it was the local oil depot was struck by a ballistic missile. Now, this ballistic missile is called Tochka-U in Russian. Its NATO classification is Scarab-21. It's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case in that incident, but the People's Militia¹⁷ at the scene report huge, massive fires to the oil depot that's ablaze. Now, fortunately, there were no casualties there. However, back here in Donetsk, uh, there was a lot of fighting reported near the airport, and 152-millimeter howitzer shells have landed in the city of Donetsk and destroyed several houses. Fortunately, no casualties were reported there either. We managed to speak to one of the people that was, whose house was destroyed. Let's have a listen".*

DR: [English voiceover] *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

RK: *"Though there were no casualties overnight and on Saturday here in Donetsk, well, over the last 72 hours, at least seven civilians had been killed and, uh, a lot of civilian infrastructure was damaged as well. Thousands of people in Donetsk are still without access to water or electricity. Now, I visited a site also near the airport here in Donetsk on Saturday, where a kindergarten was shelled, and this is what I have witnessed at the scene.*

This kindergarten in one of Donetsk's districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way, right next to the kindergarten. Thankfully, it was done overnight. No kids were here, no teachers, and so nobody was hurt. But you can take a look all around me. This is a heavily populated residential area. There are people living in each and every one of these houses and I can see absolutely no military positions here at all. But the front line is located not very far away from here. But this place in Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed. Roman Kosarev, RT, Donetsk".

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS";*
- *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED"; and*
- *"DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING".*

This was followed by the Zhdanov Report, the Slier Report and the Dubenskij Report. The Parampil Interview was then broadcast with an introduction by Peter Scott, as follows:

PS: *"Well, the editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it then and continues to do so now".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling*

¹⁷ Ofcom understands this to be a reference to the Donetsk People's Militia, a pro-Russian separatist force in Donbas which was formed in 2014.

and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- "AMERICAN JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. HAS BEEN COVERTLY TRAINING UKRAINIAN FORCES"".

This was followed by the Gao Interview. The Courter Report was then broadcast, which included a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IK"), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. Peter Scott introduced the report:

PS: *"Well, today is the fourth day of the so-called Russian special military operation in Ukraine, with the situation developing very quickly on the ground. Let's get the latest live now from RT's Don Courter. What have been the most recent develop, developments in Russia's military operation?"*

DC: *"...Now, as for the reasons, as for the regions in which there is fighting going on¹⁸, the Russian defence ministry has said that neo-fascist armed, armed groups are taking tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera¹⁹ cars in the fighting. Let's take a listen".*

IK: [English voiceover] *"The nationalist battalions use so-called Bandera cars, which have increased off-road capability and are equipped with large calibre small arms or mortars. Let me remind you that this tactic is used by international terrorists in Syria".*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- "RUSSIA SAYS UKRAINE MILITIA GROUPS USE SAME ARMS AS SYRIAN TERRORISTS".

¹⁸ Although not explicit in this bulletin, we have taken the reference to "the regions in which there is fighting going on" here to include the Donbas region.

¹⁹ Ofcom understands this to be a reference to Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian nationalist leader who wanted to establish an independent Ukraine, assassinated in 1959.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services";*
- *Topic: "Kiev tells locals to hide in bomb shelters, go to metro amid fighting";*
- *Statement from Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine: "The decisive moment has come too close once since the all the issue of Ukraine's accession to the EU [sic]. I hope that Germany and Hungary will have the courage to support this decision";*
- *Topic on SWIFT measures: "Britain's Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from SWIFT payments system just a stepping stone with more sanctions yet to come";*
- *Statement from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Twitter account with voiceover: "We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression";*
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: "I will now propose to EU leaders the following measures: first, we commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets" [sic] and "We will work to prohibit Russian oligarchs from using their financial assets on our markets. All of these measures will significantly harm Putin's ability to finance his war";*
- *Topic: "EU to freeze Russian Central Bank assets, cut some banks from SWIFT", in which the RT reporter "cited Boris Johnson's statement that the UK will accept refugees from Ukraine";*
- *Topic on "Boost in weaponry" including "France, EU, Germany reaction including Germany deciding to send weapons to Ukraine";*
- *Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: "It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin"; and*
- *Topic: "Western countries discuss drastic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine. EU members shut airspace to Russian planes, Moscow responds in kind".*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 05:00 broadcast:

- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian actions";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe";*
- *"Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine";*
- *"Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia's actions in Ukraine";*
- *"Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes";*

- *“UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;*
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”;* and
- *“Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia’s conditions for talks”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, this programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. These are discussed under the individual report headings below.

Presenter’s Introduction and Kosarev Report

During the presenter’s introduction to the programme the following claims were made about the conflict in the Donbas:

- the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk were referred to as the *“newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics”* where it was said that *“authorities”* had claimed that *“the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot”;*
- *“several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks”;*
- *“Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling”;* and
- a *“massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot”* reportedly caused by *“a Ukrainian missile”.*

During the first live report from RT reporter Roman Kosarev, claims were repeated that *“the local oil depot was struck by a ballistic missile”* and *“the people’s militia at the scene report huge, massive fires to the oil depot that’s ablaze”* whilst a caption read *“UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*. The reporter also said, *“back here in Donetsk...there was a lot of fighting reported near the airport, and 152-millimeter howitzer shells have landed in the city of Donetsk and destroyed several houses”* which was followed by a clip of a Donetsk resident, whilst a caption read *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*.

The reporter further claimed that: in Donetsk on Saturday *“seven civilians had been killed and...a lot of civilian infrastructure was damaged”;* *“a kindergarten was shelled”;* and *“this place in Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed”.*

Parampil Interview

During an interview, Anya Parampil claimed that the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Courter Report

During the first live report from RT reporter Donald Courter, he said that *“the Russian defence ministry has said that neo-fascist...armed groups are taking tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook. They’re using so-called Bandera cars in the fighting”*, which was followed by a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, who said:

“The nationalist battalions use so-called Bandera cars, which have increased off-road capability and are equipped with large calibre small arms or mortars. Let me remind you that this tactic is used by international terrorists in Syria”.

This was accompanied by a caption that read *“RUSSIA SAYS UKRAINE MILITIA GROUPS USE SAME ARMS AS SYRIAN TERRORISTS”*.

In Ofcom’s view, the above comments about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region were highly critical. They amounted to accusations that the Ukrainians were deliberately attacking civilians and residential areas, including a kindergarten, using military grade weapons and the illegal tactics of terrorists, and had been doing so for the previous eight years, resulting in the deaths of thousands of people.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

We considered that all the factors set out under the “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” section above applied in this case.

As explained above, the broadcasting of highly critical comments concerning the actions of any government or state is not, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. It is essential that news programmes are able to report on controversial issues and take a position on those issues, even if that position is highly critical, particularly during times of conflict. However, a broadcaster must maintain an adequate and appropriate level of impartiality in its presentation of matters (and major matters) of political controversy. It may be necessary, in order to comply with the due impartiality requirements, that alternative viewpoints are broadcast.

In Ofcom’s view this programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which: contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region (for example, accusations that *“the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas ...”*); and/or challenged the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the Donetsk People’s Militia (“DPM”) or the Luhansk People’s Militia (“LPM”) (for example, the claim that a tactic said to be used by Ukrainian armed forces was *“used by international terrorists in Syria”*) was not included in any form in this programme.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations that: it had a “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict; staff in the RT newsroom were “constantly reminded of the necessity to pay special attention to maintaining” due impartiality; and RT’s “Director of Compliance was always on the line giving advice and guidance”. Ofcom acknowledged that this programme did include alternative perspectives on the conflict in Ukraine in

general terms, by highlighting that the Ukrainian state, the EU and other Western nations (including the UK and the US) had categorised the Russian military action as “*an act of aggression*” and “*war*” on behalf of an “*invading army*”. We also acknowledged that RT had included, and given due weight to, the widespread condemnation of Russia’s actions in Ukraine, by means of the significant economic and other sanctions that were being placed on Russia in response to the conflict in Ukraine, through statements from Western leaders Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Ursula von der Leyen and Chancellor Olaf Scholz. RT also represented that Western nations would be providing military assistance to Ukraine.

However, we considered that whilst the whole of this programme was devoted to the conflict in the Ukraine, there was a notable difference between how alternative viewpoints were reflected in those elements of the programme which reported on the Ukrainian conflict in general, as opposed to the situation in the Donbas specifically. In relation to the former, in Ofcom’s view, the viewpoints of the Ukrainian authorities and Western governments were reflected to some extent. However, these viewpoints did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region, specifically that Ukrainian forces were deliberately attacking residential areas, using “*terrorist*” tactics, and had been doing so for the last eight years.

We noted that various criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities referred to its actions in the Donbas since 2014. Given the Russian Government has been widely reported as justifying its invasion of Ukraine in part due to the alleged Ukrainian Government’s actions against the population in the Donbas in the period 2014 to 2022, we considered that these criticisms of the historic actions of the Ukrainian authorities were relevant to our consideration of whether due impartiality was preserved in this case.

We considered that the coverage about this issue (i.e. the conflict within the Donbas region of Ukraine) related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, and therefore it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Ofcom recognises that graphics or captions are editorial techniques which can contribute to the preservation of due impartiality. However, as we made clear in our December 2016 *Crosstalk*²⁰ Decision involving TV Novosti, whether graphics or captions do in fact maintain due impartiality in any specific programme will depend on all the relevant circumstances, such as the duration and nature of the programme and its subject matter, and the presence of any other factors in the programme which may contribute to helping to maintain due impartiality. We caution broadcasters against assuming that they can preserve due impartiality where required by solely or largely including graphics and captions. This is because, depending on the circumstances, captions or graphics may not enable sufficient weight to be given to an alternative view. Further, when ensuring that matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy are treated with due weight, we consider that the relative size and prominence and limited content within captions and graphics will make it significantly more difficult for broadcasters to ensure compliance with Rule 5.12. In this case, in Ofcom’s view the

²⁰ See [Issue 369 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018.

captions relating to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality and in fact, in our view, served to reinforce the highly critical allegations contained within this broadcast. For example, captions were included such as *“UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”*; *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*; *“RUSSIA SAYS UKRAINE MILITIA GROUPS USE SAME ARMS AS SYRIAN TERRORISTS”*. There were no captions which included any alternative views on this issue.

We further took into account TV Novosti’s representations that RT is a Russian channel and therefore it was “prepared that our output would be viewed with extra scrutiny”. TV Novosti said that it had strived to “provide the picture that’s both true to facts and sufficiently balanced”. Ofcom recognised that RT viewers would have expected to see news on the channel relating to the conflict in Ukraine from a predominantly Russian perspective and that, as stated above, determining facts during times of significant conflict can be more difficult. However, Ofcom’s investigation into this programme concerned due impartiality and not due accuracy. As stated above, in line with freedom of expression, it was legitimate for RT to broadcast news on the conflict in Ukraine from a Russian perspective and also to report on the allegations that were being made by Russian officials and spokespersons about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. However, it was still incumbent on TV Novosti to maintain due impartiality on this matter of major political controversy by including a wide range of significant alternative viewpoints and giving them due weight in this programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes, including, for example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom’s Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 06:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 06:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 06:00 episode, presenter Peter Scott ("PS") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a second live report from Roman Kosarev ("RK") in Donetsk ("Kosarev Report 2");
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a report from RT reporter Ilya Petrenko ("IP") about Western sanctions against Russia ("the Petrenko Report");
- a second report with Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Western sanctions against Russia ("Dubenskij Report 2");
- a report about freedom of expression, with an interview with RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anna Belkina ("AB") and political analyst Nikola Mirkovic ("NM"), ("the Belkina Report");
- an excerpt of the Gao Interview broadcast in the 05:00 programme ("Gao Interview 2"); and
- a second live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter ("DC") ("Courter Report 2").

Peter Scott began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

PS: *"Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Kiev locals film what they say is crossfire with advancing Russian forces, as numerous explosions are reported in the region around Ukraine's capital. Western powers ramp up their sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, with the SWIFT international payment system preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from its services. And while many countries condemn Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, China offers its support. It's just gone 9am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. We start with news from those newly recognised Donbass Republics where intense fighting continues along the front lines. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught on fire. Several people have also reportedly been injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Let's cross live now to our correspondent in Donetsk, Roman Kosarev. Roman, good morning to you. What is happening on the ground right now?"*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 2, which included a clip of a female Donetsk resident ("DR"):

RK: *"Indeed, an oil depot was struck in [LPR], by a ballistic missile and indeed a massive blaze has been reported at the scene there. Now, the ballistic missile in question is called Tochka-U in Russian. It's a Soviet weapon. Its NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now, it's a 2,000 kilogramme weapon and it's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously that was not the case in this instance. However, the people's militia in Lugansk do report casualties but no civilian deaths at the moment as they're fighting, uh, to, uh, with this blaze. Uh, now, indeed, shelling is taking place across the Donetsk People's Republic [DPR] here as well. Earlier on Saturday, uh, we heard several explosions here, and reportedly they were from, um, howitzer shells. They're 152-millimetre calibre shells that landed on the territory of the city of Donetsk. Several houses were damaged. However, no casualties have been reported. We managed to speak to one of the, one of the people that witnessed this attack".*

DR: [English voiceover] *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

RK: *"As a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended. Now, Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and unfortunately, uh, civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here are still, still have no access to water or electricity. Also, on Saturday morning, a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck in an area near the, near the airport, very close to the front line, and I visited that place, and this is the report that I sent from there [the programme then cut to a pre-recorded item of Roman Kosarev at a kindergarten in Donetsk]. This kindergarten in one of Donetsk districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way, right next to the kindergarten. Thankfully, it was done overnight. No kids were here, no teachers, and so nobody was hurt. But you can take a look all around me. This is a heavily populated residential area. There are people living in each and every one of these houses and I can see absolutely no military positions here at all. But the front line is located not very far away from here. But this place in Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed. Roman Kosarev, RT, Donetsk".*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- "EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED";
- "UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS";
- "DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING"; and
- "HEAVY UKRAINIAN SHELLING STRIKES KINDERGARTEN, NO ONE INJURED".

This was followed by the Parampil Interview (as above and with the same introduction by Peter Scott as in the 5:00 bulletin), the Zhdanov Report, the Petrenko Report, the Dubenskij Report, the Belkina Report and Gao Interview 2. The episode ended with Courter Report 2, which was introduced by Peter Scott and included a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IK"):

PS: *"Today is the fourth day of what Putin calls the special military operation in Ukraine, with the situation developing very quickly on the ground. Let's get the latest from RT's Don Courter, who is in Taganrog. Donald, the...what have been the most recent developments in Russia's military operation?"*

DC: *"...Now, as for Mariupol, the neo-fascist armed groups have been shelling civilian areas and they've even destroyed one school there. And also, the Ministry of Defence has been saying that they've been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook, using so-called Bandera cars. Let's take a listen to what they said"*

IK: [English voiceover] *"The nationalist battalions use so-called Bandera cars, which have increased off-road capability and are equipped with large calibre small arms or mortars. Let me remind you that this tactic is used by international terrorists in Syria"*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"DAY 4: RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION CONTINUES, FIGHTING ONGOING"*
- *"RUSSIA SAYS UKRAINE MILITIA GROUPS USE SAME ARMS AS SYRIAN TERRORISTS"*

TV Novosti's Response

RT provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services";*
- *Topic: "Kiev: We're brave, have sincerity and attention of civilized world";*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: "The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful, Ukrainians are brave. So, it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world" [sic];*
- *Statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson: "We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression" (with voiceover) and "the UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions the Russia has ever seen" [sic];*
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: "I will now propose to EU leaders the following measures: first, we commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its' transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central*

Bank to liquidate assets” and “this package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia’s access to the most important capital markets. And this sanctions will increase Russia’s boring costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia’s industrial base” [sic]²¹;

- Topic on “Sanctions Step-up... All bark and no bite? West to avoid sanctions on Russian energy sector. EU will ‘hold Kremlin accountable’ with wave of anti-Russia sanctions”;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *“This package of sanctions that been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia and it will hurt a lot”;*
- Statements from Daleep Singh, US Deputy National Security Adviser: *“But what I’ll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history” and “to be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world”;*
- Statement from Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister: *“You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supply because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies what impact it will have on our supplies”;*
- Statements from Joe Biden, President of the United States: *“We will limit Russia’s ability to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen to be part of the global economy. We will limit their ability to do that. We are going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military. We’ve cut off Russia’s largest bank - a bank that holds more than one third of Russia’s banking assets by itself – cut it off from the U.S. financial system” and “As we respond, my administration is using the tools — every tool at our disposal to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump”;*
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany with voiceover: *“It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin”;* and
- Topics: *“France, EU, Germany reaction including Germany deciding to send weapons to Ukraine” and “Western countries discuss drastic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine. EU members shut airspace to Russian planes, Moscow responds in kind”.*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 06:00 broadcast:

- *“Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia’s conditions for talks”;*
- *“EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister”;*
- *“EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian actions”;*
- *“Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression”;*
- *“Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces”;*
- *“Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces”;*
- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine”;*
- *“Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia’s actions in Ukraine”;*

²¹ Ofcom understands the quote broadcast was: *“This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia’s access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia’s borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia’s industrial base”.*

- *“Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes”;*
- *“UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;* and
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

The programme included Kosarev Report 2, the Parampil Interview and Courter Report 2. The Parampil Interview was repeated from the 05:00 broadcast. The Kosarev Report 2 and Courter Report 2 were almost identical to Kosarev Report 1 and Courter Report 1 in the 05:00 broadcast, and the minor differences are set out above. In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these three reports repeated the claims that:

- *the “Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas” in Donetsk and Luhansk;*
- *“several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks”;*
- *“Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling” using military grade “ballistic missile” and “howitzer shells”;*
- *“several houses were damaged”;*
- *“Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and...civilian deaths have been recorded... and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here... still have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck”;*
- *“Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed”;*
- *“suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”;*
- *“neo-fascist armed groups have been shelling civilian areas and they’ve even destroyed one school there”;* and
- *“the Ministry of Defence has been saying that they’ve been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook, using so-called Bandera cars”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 06:00 broadcast included a statement from President Zelenskyy concerning the conflict in general, that *"the world has seen that Ukrainians are strong. Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So, it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world"* and statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Ursula Von der Leyen, Josep Borrell, Daleep Singh, Christian Lindner, President Biden and Chancellor Scholz providing Western perspectives. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general or to Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoint of the Russian armed forces the DPM and the LPM, were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 06:00 broadcast were the same as those in the 05:00 broadcast, except for the following: *"HEAVY UKRAINIAN SHELLING STRIKES KINDERGARTEN, NO ONE INJURED"*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political and controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall,

due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 07:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 07:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 07:00 episode, presenter Peter Scott ("PS") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a third live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter ("DC") ("Courter Report 3");
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- an edited version of Kosarev Report 2 ("Kosarev Report 3");
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Peter Scott began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

PS: *"Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering the city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up their sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, with the SWIFT international payment system preparing to disconnect some banks from its services. And China opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying that such measures cannot solve Ukraine crisis. It's just gone 10am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott, and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, residents of Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, have shared videos of Russian forces entering the city as the local administration reports Russian military units in central areas. Let's get the latest now from RT's Donald Courter. Donald, you're on the ground in southern Russia, Taganrog. What do we know about what's happening in Kharkov at the moment?"*

This was followed by Courter Report 3, which began with discussion of conflict in Kharkiv, then continued as follows:

PS: *"The Russian defence ministry has described the city of Mariupol as a, as a fighting hotspot. What do we know about what's happening there?"*

DC: *"Well, the neo-fascist groups that have been fighting around there, have actually been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. According to Russia's Ministry of Defence, they've been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and shelling civilian areas there in Mariupol. Let's take a listen to what the Russian Ministry of Defence had to say".*

IK: [English voiceover] *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm, Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the*

school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations".

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*

This was followed by the Zhdanov Report and Kosarev Report 3. Kosarev Report 3 was broadcast as follows, with an introduction from Peter Scott:

PS: *"And now moving to the newly recognised Donbass Republics, where intense fighting with Ukrainian forces continues along the front line. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepared to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Roman Kosarev is in Donbass."*

RK: *"An oil depot was struck in [LPR], by a ballistic missile and indeed a massive blaze has been reported at the scene there. Now the ballistic missile in question is called Tochka-U, in Russian. Is a Soviet weapon, its NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now, it's a 2,000 kilogramme weapon and it's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case in this instance. However, the people's militia in Lugansk do report casualties but no civilian deaths at the moment as they're fighting to, uh, with this blaze. Now, indeed, shelling is taking place across the [DPR] here as well. Earlier on Saturday, we heard several explosions here, and reportedly they were from howitzer shells. They're 152-millimetre calibre shells that landed on the territory of the city of Donetsk. Several houses were damaged. However, no casualties have been reported. We managed to speak to one of the one of the people that witnessed this attack."*

DS: [English voiceover] *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance"*.

RK: *"As a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended. Now, Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and unfortunately, uh, civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here are still, still have no access to water or electricity. Also, on Saturday morning, a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck in an area near the, near the airport, very close to the front line, and I visited that place, and this is the report that I sent from there. This kindergarten in one of Donetsk districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way"*.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS";*
- *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED";*
- *"DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING";* and
- *"HEAVY UKRAINIAN SHELLING ALLEGEDLY STRIKES KINDERGARTEN, NONE INJURED".*

This was followed by the Parampil Interview (as above), Dubenskij Report 2, the Petrenko Report, and Gao Interview 2.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services";*
- *Topic: "Kiev: We're brave, have sincerity and attention of civilized world";*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: "The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful, Ukrainians are brave. So, it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world" [sic];*
- *Statements from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: "we commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets" [sic] and "This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets. And this sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base" [sic]²²;*
- *Statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson with voiceover: "We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression" and "the UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions the Russia has ever seen" [sic];*
- *Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany on-screen with voiceover: "It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin";*
- *Topic: "Boost in weaponry": "France, EU, Germany reaction including Germany deciding to send weapons to Ukraine";*

²² Ofcom understands the quote broadcast was: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

- *“Western countries discuss drastic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine” and “EU members shut airspace to Russian planes, Moscow responds in kind”;*
- *Topic on “Sanctions Step-up... All bark and no bite? West to avoid sanctions on Russian energy sector. EU will ‘hold Kremlin accountable’ with wave of anti-Russia sanctions”;*
- *Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: “This package of sanctions that been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia and it will hurt a lot” [sic];*
- *Statements from Daleep Singh, US Deputy National Security Adviser: “But what I’ll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history” and “to be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world”;*
- *Statement from Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister: “You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supply because they can no longer be paid for. And if it ends its gas supplies what impact it will have on our supplies”;* and
- *Statements from President Biden: “We will limit Russia’s ability to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen to be part of the global economy. We will limit their ability to do that. We are going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military. We’ve cut off Russia’s largest bank – a bank that holds more than one third of Russia’s banking assets by itself – cut it off from the U.S. financial system” and “As we respond, my administration is using the tools — every tool at our disposal to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump”.*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 07:00 broadcast:

- *“Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia’s conditions for talks”;*
- *“EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister”;*
- *“EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian actions”²³;*
- *“Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression”;*
- *“Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces”;*
- *“Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces”;*
- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine”;*
- *“Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia’s actions in Ukraine”;*
- *“Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes”;*
- *“UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;* and
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”.*

²³ Ofcom notes that this caption read “EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation” in the programme as broadcast.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze”;*
- *“the neo-fascist groups that have been fighting around [Mariupol], have actually been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook”;*
- *“according to Russia’s Ministry of Defence, they’ve been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and shelling civilian areas there in Mariupol”;*
- *“local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks”;*
- *“Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling”;*
- *“a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“shelling is taking place across the [DPR]”;*
- *“as a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended”;*
- *“Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours...civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here... still have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck”;* and
- the “suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.
- Courter Report 3 also included a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, who said: *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school”,* resulting in *“deaths among the civilian population”*.

Preservation of due impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia. These included statements from President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Ursula Von der Leyen, Josep Borrell, Daleep Singh, Christian Lindner, Chancellor Scholz and President Biden. As outlined in our Decision for the 06:00 broadcast, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions (cited above) which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 08:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through six complaints from viewers who said the programme was “bias[ed]” and contained “Russian propaganda”.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 08:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 08:00 episode, presenter Peter Scott (“PS”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a fourth live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter (“DC”) (“Courter Report 4”);
- Kosarev Report 3 (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Peter Scott began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

PS: *“A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials but Kiev doesn’t approve of the location. That’s as Russia’s military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Residents of Ukraine’s second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian troops entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Luhansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes such measures, saying they cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis.*

You’re watching RT International. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you’re joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow’s delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiation, Kiev says the location isn’t appropriate. Let’s get the latest from RT’s Donald Courter. Donald — what’s going on between these two countries? It seems that the negotiations just can’t seem to get off the ground”.

This was followed by Courter Report 4. The report began with a discussion on potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus and conflict in Kharkiv. It then moved onto discussion about fighting in and around the Donbas region, as follows:

PS: *“Now the Russian defence ministry has also described the city of Mariupol as being a fighting hotspot at the moment. What’s the latest from there?”.*

DC: *“Well according to Russia’s defence ministry, these neo-fascist armed groups have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They’ve been using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that have been equipped with light artillery and they have been heavily shelling civilian areas around Mariupol actually”.*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“DAY 4: RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION CONTINUES, FIGHTING ONGOING”*
- *“PUTIN TO UKRAINE’S ARMY: DON’T ALLOW POPULATION TO BE USED AS HUMAN SHIELDS”*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 3 (as above, with an introduction from Peter Scott which was an almost verbatim repeat of the introduction he gave in the 07:00 broadcast). The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast, during which a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””.*

This was followed by the Zhdanov Report, Dubenskij Report 2, the Petrenko Report and Gao Interview 2.

TV Novosti’s Response

RT provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: “The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services”;*
- *Topics: “Kiev: We say no to talks in Belrus as we didn’t choose this platform” [sic] and “Kiev: We’re brave, have sincerity and attention of civilized world”;*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: “I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago. Make the right choice. This is the most important decisions of your life” and “the world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful, Ukrainians are brave. So, it’s not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful then enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world” [sic];*
- *Statements from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “We commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets” [sic] and “this package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia’s access to the most important capital markets. And this sanctions*

will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base" [sic]²⁴;

- Statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson with voiceover: *"We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression"* and *"The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions the Russia has ever seen"* [sic];
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *"It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin"*;
- Topic: *"Boost in weaponry"* including *"France, EU, Germany reaction including Germany deciding to send weapons to Ukraine"*;
- Topics: *"Western countries discuss drastic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine"* and *"EU members shut airspace to Russian planes, Moscow responds in kind"*;
- Topic: *"Sanctions Step-up... All bark and no bite? West to avoid sanctions on Russian energy sector. EU will 'hold Kremlin accountable' with wave of anti-Russia sanctions"*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *"This package of sanctions that been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia and it will hurt a lot"*;
- Statements from Daleep Singh, US Deputy National Security Adviser: *"But what I'll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history"* and *"to be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world"*;
- Statement from Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supply because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies what impact it will have on our supplies"*; and
- Statements from President Biden: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen to be part of the global economy. We will limit their ability to do that. We are going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank - a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself - cut it off from the U.S. financial system"* and *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools - every tool at our disposal to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 08:00 broadcast:

- *"Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia's conditions for talks"*;
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister"*;
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation"*;
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression"*;

²⁴ Ofcom understands the quote broadcast was: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base"*.

- *“Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces”;*
- *“Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces”;*
- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine”;*
- *“Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia’s actions in Ukraine”;*
- *“Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes”;*
- *“UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;* and
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Luhansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze”;*
- *“neo-fascist armed groups have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook... using so-called Bandera cars... equipped with light artillery and they have been heavily shelling civilian areas around Mariupol”;*
- *“local authorities in both the Luhansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks”;*
- *“Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling”;*
- *“a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“shelling is taking place across the [DPR]”;*
- *“as a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended”;*
- *“Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours... civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here... still have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck”;* and

- the “suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.

Preservation of due impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 08:00 broadcast began with a short discussion of potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, followed by a statement from President Zelenskyy concerning the conflict in general, that “*I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago. Make the right choice. This is the most important decision of your lives*”. The programme also included statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Ursula Von der Leyen, Josep Borrell, Daleep Singh, Christian Lindner, Chancellor Scholz and President Biden. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or to Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included at any point and in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: “PUTIN TO UKRAINE’S ARMY: DON’T ALLOW POPULATION TO BE USED AS HUMAN SHIELDS”; “U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””; “UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”; “EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”; “DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”; and “HEAVY UKRAINIAN SHELLING ALLEGEDLY STRIKES KINDERGARTEN, NONE INJURED”. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant

alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 09:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through two complaints from viewers who said the bulletin was “propaganda”.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 09:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 09:00 episode, presenter Peter Scott (“PS”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a fifth live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter (“DC”) (“Courter Report 5”);
- an interview about peace talks with political commentator Ali Rizk (“AR”) (“the Rizk interview”);
- a third live report from Roman Kosarev (“RK”) in Donetsk (“Kosarev Report 4”);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Peter Scott began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

PS: *“A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn’t approve of the location and refuses to participate. That’s as Russia’s military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Residents of Ukraine’s second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian troops entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes the measures, saying they cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis.*

You’re watching RT International. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you’re joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now peace talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow’s delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiation, Kiev says the location isn’t appropriate. Let’s get the latest from RT’s Donald Courter. Donald — what’s going on between Russia and Ukraine on a diplomatic level? Why are these talks struggling to get off the ground?”

This was followed by Courter Report 5. The report began with a discussion on potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus and conflict in Kharkiv. It then moved onto discussion about fighting in the Donbas region, as follows:

PS: *“Defence ministry has also described the city of Mariupol as a hotspot of fighting at the moment. What do you know about that?”.*

DC: *“That’s right. The defence ministry is basically saying that neo-fascist armed groups in this area have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They’ve been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and they’ve been shelling civilian positions. They even destroyed a school. Let’s take a listen to what the defence ministry had to say about that”.*

IK: [English voiceover] *“On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia’s defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations”.*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“DAY 4: RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION CONTINUES, FIGHTING ONGOING”*
- *“MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*

This was followed by the Rizk Interview, which was broadcast with an introduction by Peter Scott as follows:

PS: *“Now, earlier political expert Ali Rizk told us that he still thinks that negotiations are possible, but it’s not clear who has the influence”.*

AR: *“Well, I think there’s always a chance of diplomacy, but my fear is the influence or the sway, the strength of the neo-Nazis. Your correspondent just mentioned the Azov Battalion, which is a well-known neo-Nazi group that has been active in the Donbass region for quite some time. Human organisations like Human Rights Watch have documented the, the violations carried out by such groups. And it’s been said, it’s reportedly said that it’s not necessarily, necessarily the case that Zelenskyy has the final say in matters, that he is under the sway of right-wing elements, like groups like the Azov Battalion”.*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 4, with an introduction from Peter Scott. The report included clips of two unnamed soldiers (“US1” and “US2”):

PS: *“Now moving on to the newly recognised Donbass Republics, where intense shelling by Ukrainian military units has been reported at residential areas, causing increasingly more damage. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far*

unclear. Let's cross live now to our correspondent in the Donbass region, Roman Kosarev. Roman, what's the latest on the front lines there?

RK: "Well, yes, indeed. Let's start with the front lines where both armies of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics are advancing deeper into the territory currently controlled by Ukraine. Now we've seen soldiers liberating towns and, uh, switching, switching Ukrainian flags to those of the [DPR] or [LPR]. Now, according to officials in both Republics, Ukrainian Army, as they retreat, they're destroying everything on its way. They're targeting civilian infrastructure. They're targeting people's homes as well as they're retreating from the oncoming Donetsk and Lugansk people's armies. Now the head of the [DPR], Denis Pushilin, says that this operation to liberate Donbass will end very, very soon. But it will only end once the entire [DPR] is free. And that sentiment is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".

US1: [English voiceover] "In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".

US2: [English voiceover] "The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".

RK: "Well obviously the situation on the front lines is very intense, but it's also very intense here in the city of Donetsk and all the nearby towns as civilians continue hiding in bomb shelters from the shelling that's, that's coming in here from the Ukrainian Army. Now on Saturday it was very loud here in Donetsk, as Ukrainian Army used 152-millimetre howitzer shells to, uh, to bomb a civilian population here. As we understand, one person had died here in Donetsk as a result of those attacks. Now, municipal transportation on Saturday was suspended until the shelling stopped. And here's a witness account from one of the local residents who witnessed the attack".

DR: "Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".

RK: "So this latest casualty brought the total number of deaths in the last 72 hours to eight people and scores of people have been wounded as a result of these attacks. Now civilian infrastructure had also been targeted. Over in Lugansk, an oil depot was damaged and massive blazes have been reported there as well. Uh, no deaths in that attack. However, some people were wounded and injured as a result of that attack. They are being treated in hospitals. Apparently, Ukrainian Army used ballistic missile. It's NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now it's a 2,000 kilogramme rocket that's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case this time around. However, the impact is definitely horrific. But once again, thankfully, there were no fatalities in that case".

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS";*
- *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED";*

- *“HEAVY SHELLING”*;
- *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*; and
- *“DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE AT FRONTLINE AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”* [sic]

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast. During this interview, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””*.

The Zhdanov Report, Dubenskij Report 2 and Gao Interview 2 were then broadcast.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: “The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services”*;
- *Topic: “Kiev: We say no to talks in Belrus as we didn’t choose this platform”* [sic] and *“Kiev: We’re brave, have sincerity and attention of civilized world”*;
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: “Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago.”* [sic] and *“the world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful, Ukrainians are brave. So, it’s not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world”* [sic];
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “We commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets”* [sic];
- *Statement from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, with voiceover: “We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”*;
- *Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, with voiceover: “It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin”*;
- *Topic on “Boost in weaponry” including “France, EU, Germany reaction including Germany deciding to send weapons to Ukraine”*; and
- *Topics: “Western countries discuss drastic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine” and “EU members shut airspace to Russian planes, Moscow responds in kind”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 09:00 broadcast:

- *"Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia's conditions for talks";*
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe";*
- *"Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine";*
- *"Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia's actions in Ukraine";*
- *"Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes";*
- *"UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes";*
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations";*
- *"European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT";* and
- *"EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets".*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under "Ofcom's Guidance to Section Five of the Code" applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme's reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *"authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze";*
- *"the defence ministry is basically saying that neo-fascist armed groups in this area have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook"; "they've been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and they've been shelling civilian positions";*
- *"they even destroyed a school";*
- *"Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school", resulting in "deaths among the civilian population";*
- *"intense shelling by Ukrainian military units has been reported at residential areas, causing increasingly more damage" in the Donbas;*

- *“authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks”;*
- *“Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling”;*
- *“a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“Ukrainian Army used 152-millimetre howitzer shells to... bomb a civilian population here. As we understand, one person had died here in Donetsk”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Several new claims were made in Kosarev Report 4, including:

- *“we’ve seen soldiers liberating towns and...switching Ukrainian flags to those of the [DPR] or [LPR]”;*
- *the “Ukrainian Army, as they retreat, they’re destroying everything on its way. They’re targeting civilian infrastructure. They’re targeting people’s homes as well”;*
- *“the head of the [DPR], Denis Pushilin, says that this operation to liberate Donbass will end very, very soon. But it will only end once the entire [DPR] is free”;*
- *“civilians continue hiding in bomb shelters from the shelling that’s... coming in here from the Ukrainian Army”;* and
- a clip of an unnamed soldier in the Donetsk militia, who said *“we must get our territories back from these evil people”.*

The Rizk Interview was a new report that did not appear in any of the previous broadcasts. It also featured content related to the Donbas region in Ukraine and was highly critical of Ukrainian forces. Ali Rizk said:

“... my fear is the influence or the sway, the strength of the neo-Nazis. Your correspondent just mentioned the Azov Battalion, which is a well-known neo-Nazi group that has been active in the Donbass region for quite some time... Human Rights Watch have documented the, the violations carried out by such groups...it’s reportedly said that it’s not necessarily... the case that Zelenskyy has the final say in matters, that he is under the sway of right-wing elements, like groups like the Azov Battalion”.

Preservation of due impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 09:00 broadcast included a statement from President Zelenskyy, concerning the conflict in general, that *"now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago"*. The programme also included statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Ursula Von der and Chancellor Scholz that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included at any point and in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *"MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*; *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*; *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED"*; *"HEAVY SHELLING"*; *"DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING"*; *"DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE AT FRONTLINE AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY"* [sic]; and *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: 'U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS'"*; *"VIDEOS EMERGE OF RUSSIAN FORCES ENTERING UKRAINIAN CITY OF KHARKOV"*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 10:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute bulletin through four complaints from viewers who said the programme lacked due impartiality, was “biased” and contained “Russian propaganda”.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 10:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 10:00 episode, presenter Peter Scott (“PS”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a sixth live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter (“DC”) (“Courter Report 6”);
- an interview about the conflict with researcher and author Dr George Szamuely (“GS”) (“the Szamuely Interview”);
- a fourth live report from Roman Kosarev (“RK”) in Donetsk (“Kosarev Report 5”);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Peter Scott began the programme with almost identical headlines and the same introduction as in the 09:00 episode set out above. This was followed by Courter Report 6. The report began with a discussion on potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus and conflict in Kharkiv. It then moved on to discussion about fighting in the Donbas region, as follows:

PS: *“Now the defence ministry, the Russian defence ministry, has also described the city of Mariupol as a hotspot of fighting. What can you tell us about that?”.*

DC: *“Well, neo-fascist, armed groups around that area have been basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook according to the Ministry of Defence. They’ve been using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery that these neo-fascist groups have been using to bomb civilian installations around that area. Let’s take a deeper look at what the Ministry of Defence said”.*

IK: [English voiceover] *“On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia’s defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations”.*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“DAY 4: RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION CONTINUES, FIGHTING ONGOING”;* and
- *“MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS”.*

This was followed by an interview with Dr George Szamuely ("GS"):

PS: *"Well, let's cross live now to Dr George Szamuely, a political expert and author of the book Bombs for Peace: NATO's Humanitarian War in Yugoslavia. Welcome to the programme. Thank you for joining us now. A few days ago, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he said he was open to diplomacy with Russia and Russia did propose a meeting today in Belarus, which Zelenskyy has now refused. But can you blame him or his officials for not wanting to meet on the territory of such a close ally to Russia? Even though the Donbass agreements were thrashed out in Minsk?"*

GS: *"Well, as you say, the agreements were thrashed out in Minsk. Look, the first priority at this stage should be to end the fighting. There will have to be some peace agreement worked out between Russia and Ukraine. Unfortunately, Zelenskyy is being egged on by his, uh, you know, Western sponsors who have actually served Ukraine very badly. Um, as your correspondent pointed out, you know, they've been training many of these neo-fascist battalions. You know, they're fighting in ways that they've been fighting in Syria, and there's basically, the more that Ukraine continues this fight, it will lead to greater and greater casualties. Eventually, Ukraine and Russia will have to, uh, sign a peace agreement, um, and basically, the longer this goes on, the worse it's going to get".*

PS: *"That actually brings me on nicely to my next question. Now the West is obviously providing lethal aid to Ukraine, and we recently had Germany making a U-turn and also now agreeing to send lethal aid. In your opinion, how is this shaping the conflict?"*

GS: *"Well, as I say it's, it's making things more difficult to create a resolution of this. Germany sending arms to Ukraine sends a very bad message to Russia. It just infuriates the Russians because they remember only too well the neo-Nazi brigades that were set up in 2014. And of course, you know, the Ukrainian, uh, collaborators, war criminals, who worked with the Nazi German invaders during the World War two. A war, incidentally, that went on after 1945. It took several years before these various, uh, neo-Nazi battalions were defeated. So it sends a very bad message that the Germans are getting so actively involved in Ukraine."*

The interview then moved on to talk about Western sanctions and the possibility of an escalation of the conflict.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS".*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 5, with an introduction from Peter Scott. The report included a clip of a second Donetsk resident ("DR2").

PS: *"Now, it's the fourth day of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army. Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from*

the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres and zooming out to Ukraine, these are the cities that Russia's military claims to have either seized or to be currently fighting for. As Ukrainian military units are reportedly retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk, the Republics, they have allegedly intensified shelling against residential areas, causing increasingly more damage. Local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight attacks. Meanwhile, a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have reported to be injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. We can go live now to our correspondent in the Donbass region, Roman Kosarev. Roman, what's the situation right now for the people in the Donbass region?"

RK: *"The situation is alarming indeed. The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

DR2: [English voiceover] *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me."*

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2,000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now People's Militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack."*

PS: *"And moving on to the front line now, what can you tell us about the engagements on the front, Roma?"*

RK: *"Well, according to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, Donetsk and Lugansk People's militias are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war."*

Now the head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well”.

US1: [English voiceover] *“In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well”.*

US2: [English voiceover] *“The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that’s mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up”.*

RK: *“It’s been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”.*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“MOSCOW SAYS DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”;*
- *“UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”;*
- *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”;*
- *“DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE POSITIONS AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”;* and
- *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”.*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””.*

The programme ended with the Zhdanov Report and coverage of Western sanctions against Russia.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: “The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services”;*
- *Topics: “Kiev: We say no to talks in Belrus as we didn’t choose this platform” [sic] and “Kiev: We’re brave, have sincerity and attention of civilized world”;*
- *Statements from President Zelenskyy: “Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as*

everyone saw it not so long ago” [sic] and “the world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful, Ukrainians are brave. So, it’s not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world” [sic];

- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: *“We commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets” [sic];* and
- Statement from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, with voiceover: *“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 10:00 broadcast:

- *“Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia’s conditions for talks”;*
- *“EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister”;*
- *“EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation”;*
- *“Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression”;*
- *“Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces”;*
- *“Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces”;*
- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine”;*
- *“Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia’s actions in Ukraine”;*
- *“Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes”;*
- *“UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;* and
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military.

We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze”;*
- *“neo-fascist, armed groups around [Mariupol] have been basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook according to the Ministry of Defence... using so-called Bandera cars... equipped with light artillery that these neo-fascist groups have been using to bomb civilian installations around that area”;*
- *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school”, resulting in “deaths among the civilian population”;*
- *“as Ukrainian military units are reportedly retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk, the Republics, they have allegedly intensified shelling against residential areas, causing increasingly more damage”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight attacks”;*
- *“a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”; “the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;* and
- *the “suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Several new claims were made in Kosarev Report 5, including:

- *the Ukrainian Army were “using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;* and
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations... reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”.*

The Szamuely Interview did not appear in any of the previous broadcasts and featured statements relating to the Donbas region that were highly critical of Ukrainian forces. George Szamuely said:

- *“Zelenskyy is being egged on by his...Western sponsors who have actually served Ukraine very badly...they’ve been training many of these neo-fascist battalions. You know, they’re fighting in ways that they’ve been fighting in Syria, and...the more that Ukraine continues this fight, it will lead to greater and greater casualties”*; and
- *“Germany sending arms to Ukraine sends a very bad message to Russia. It just infuriates the Russians because they remember only too well the neo-Nazi brigades that were set up in 2014”*.

Preservation of due impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that all the statements that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme, were the same as those in the previous news bulletins. These included statements from President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Ursula Von der Leyen, that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *“MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“MOSCOW SAYS DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”*; *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”*; *“DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE AT FRONTLINE AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”* [sic]; *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY*

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UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING"; and *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: 'U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS'"*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 11:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through a complaint from a viewer, who said the programme contained “unsupported and inflammatory” statements.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 11:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 11:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer (“AF”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a seventh live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter (“DC”) (“Courter Report 7”);
- an interview about the conflict with journalist Javed Rana (“JR”) (“the Rana Interview”);
- an edited version of Kosarev Report 5 (“Kosarev Report 6”);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- another report about Western sanctions on Russia, this time live, with Paula Slier (“PSI”) (“Slier Report 2”); and
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

AF: *“A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn’t approve of the location and refuses to participate as Russia’s military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Well, residents in Ukraine’s second largest city of Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering their city. Sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Also this hour, Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes the move, though, saying it won’t resolve the Ukraine crisis. Hello, welcome, you’re watching RT International. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials do appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow’s delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiations, Kiev says the location isn’t appropriate. So, let’s get more on this now and go to RT’s Don Courter. He joins us now. Don, we know that these two sides have been struggling to get some sort of talks off the ground and again there is disappointment it seems”.*

This was followed by Courter Report 7. The report began with discussion of potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus and then moved onto discussion about fighting in and around the Donbas region, as follows:

AF: *“And Don, just bring us up to date on the latest on events on the ground. Because there are reports that Russian forces have recently entered the city of Kharkov in the east of the country”.*

DC: *“That’s right. The Russian military has entered the city of Kharkov. It’s located in a region that borders both Donbass and the Russian Federation. Over the past several hours, we’ve been hearing*

reports that planes have been flying over that area. We've heard gun gunfire from that area, large bombs going off and according to the Ministry of Defence actually, hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers surrendered after the Russian military entered Kharkov and the reason for a lot of those sounds of explosions is that they've been saying that the Russian military has been destroying Ukrainian Army depots in the area."

AF: *"And also we know, Don, there is fierce fighting, isn't there? The Russian defence ministry has told us in the city of Mariupol. What's the latest?"*

DC: *"That's right. According to the Russian defence ministry, these neo-fascist armed groups are using tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery and they've been rolling up to civilian installations and bombing them indiscriminately. Let's take a listen to what the Ministry of Defence had to say".*

IK: [English voiceover] *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations."*

AF: *"Okay, so Kharkov. Mariupol at the centre of the fighting at the moment. So Don, just bring us up to date with other developments across the country."*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS".*

This was followed by the Rana Interview, which began with discussion of potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine and then moved on to discussion about fighting in the Donbas region, as follows:

AF: *"How concerned are you about the accusations that human shields are being used in this conflict? I know President Putin has made that claim against the Ukrainian military. We've heard the Ukrainian military make that claim about forces that are in the Donbass region at the moment".*

JR: *"I think that has been the typical tactics which have been used by militants across the region. When a military cannot face a bigger military then obviously, they will shield themselves into the population centres. That means that they are creating the conditions where the Russian military could possibly conduct air strikes on the population centre and then the Western media will make a lot of hue and cry and they will say the Russians are killing innocent citizens. The fact that the Russian – Ukrainian military – uh, they cannot face the Russian military power and that is why they have sought shelter inside the civilian population centres, but that would be at the cost of the innocent civilians. But*

let me give you a bigger picture. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of hue and cry about what is happening inside the Ukraine. One wonders to understand that the Americans have been bombing Iraq, have been bombing Libya and other Middle Eastern country and particularly I would refer here about Iraq on a very fast pretext of a presence of weapons of mass destruction. Now they say, it was intelligence failure, they took over, destroyed the entire country and directly, indirectly more than a million people have died there, and it has become a hotbed of the militancy and now they're talking about similar things in, in the Ukraine. They are making a hue and cry. Yes, there, unfortunately, there is a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, but there was a far bigger crisis in Afghanistan. The Americans killed over 200,000 people there, and similarly they have been killing tens of thousands in Libya and other countries. But again, it is a pure strategic game which is being played in that part of the world. Now I say that it smacks of the hypocrisy on the part of the Western medias when they talk about only one aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and they're forgetting of what they have been reporting and analysing when it comes to the Muslim countries. And they were simply silent. Even they were using the... Donald Trump invented the term of a beautiful, beautiful weapons. Does it make sense? The weapons always destroys people. So, I think there are, unfortunately, double standards, and that is at the heart, at the heart of the geostrategic politics being played in that part of the world".

During this interview, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"UKRAINE ARMY REPORTEDLY INTENSIFIES ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS".*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 6. This report was a re-broadcast of Kosarev Report 5 (as above), which was broadcast in the 10:00 bulletin, but with the questions from Peter Scott edited out and with the following introduction from Andrew Farmer:

AF: *"It is the fourth day of Russia's so-called special military operations in Ukraine, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army. Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Now in the newly recognised Donbass republics there is intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reported too in residential areas, causing more damage. Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. Local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot near [LPR]. Local authorities there claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have reportedly been injured too, but the numbers are so far unclear. RT's Roman Kosarev has more now from the Donbass region".*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS"".*

The programme ended with Slier Report 2, then Gao Interview 2.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Headline: *"The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev: We say no to talks in Belrus as we didn't choose this platform"* [sic];
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago"* [sic];
- Statement from Prime Minister Boris Johnson: *"Swift is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It's incredibly important for tightening the economic ligature and the Putin regime and today you've seen more and more countries – France and others – coming forward to say that they will not block a banning boycott of SWIFT"* [sic];
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO"*; and
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: *"We commit to ensuring that certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harmed their ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse assets of Russian Central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the Central Bank to liquidate assets"* [sic].

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 11:00 broadcast:

- *"Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia's conditions for talks"*;
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister"*;
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation"*;
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression"*;
- *"Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces"*;
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces"*;
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe"*;
- *"Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine"*;
- *"Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia's actions in Ukraine"*;
- *"Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes"*;
- *"UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes"*;
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations"*;

- *“European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”; and*
- *“EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze”;*
- *“these neo-fascist armed groups are using tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook... using so-called Bandera cars...that are equipped with light artillery and they’ve been rolling up to civilian installations and bombing them indiscriminately”;*
- *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school” resulting in “deaths among the civilian population”;*
- *“there is intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reported too in residential areas, causing more damage”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot near [LPR],”;*
- *“local authorities there claim Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”; “the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- *the Ukrainian Army were “using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*

- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations... reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- *the “suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

The Rana Interview was new and also featured content related to the Donbas region in Ukraine and was highly critical of Ukrainian forces. Andrew Farmer said: *“How concerned are you about the accusations that human shields are being used in this conflict? I know President Putin has made that claim against the Ukrainian military”*. The presenter also made clear that *“We’ve heard the Ukrainian military make that claim about forces that are in the Donbass region at the moment”*. However, in his answer to this question, Javed Rana said: *“they are creating the conditions where the Russian military could possibly conduct air strikes on the population centre and then the Western media will make a lot of hue and cry and they will say the Russians are killing innocent citizens”*; and *“they cannot face the Russian military power and that is why they have sought shelter inside the civilian population centres, but that would be at the cost of the innocent civilians”*.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. We acknowledged that this programme contained, in the introduction to the Rana Interview, a statement which reflected, to some extent, the perspective of the Ukrainian military: *“We’ve heard the Ukrainian military make that claim [regarding human shields] about forces that are in the Donbass region at the moment”*. However, this was a brief reference in a segment that was otherwise entirely critical of the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas. We did not consider this was sufficient to provide due weight on an appropriately wide range of significant views as required by Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Aside from this brief statement, in Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any other alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 11:00 broadcast included statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson and British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, concerning sanctions and the conflict in general, *“SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin’s Russia. It is incredibly important for tightening the ligature, the economic ligature around the Putin regime. And today you’ve seen more and more countries, France and others, coming forward to say that they will not block a banning, a*

boycott of SWIFT” and “this long running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO”, respectively. The programme also included statements from President Zelenskyy and Ursula Von der Leyen that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoint of the Russian armed forces the DPM and the LPM, were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in Donbas: *“MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS”; “UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”; “MOSCOW SAYS DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”; “EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”; “DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE AT FRONTLINE AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY” [sic]; “DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”; and “U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political and controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom’s Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 12:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through three complaints from viewers who said the programme was “Russian propaganda” and lacked due impartiality.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 12:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 12:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer (“AF”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- an eighth live report about the Donbas region with Donald Courter (“DC”) (“Courter Report 8”);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a second live report about Western sanctions on Russia with Paula Slier (“PSI”) (“Slier Report 3”);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- the Belkina Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in the following introduction:

AF: *“A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn’t approve of the location and refuses to participate, as the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Meanwhile, residents of Ukraine’s second largest city Kharkiv film what they say are Russian forces entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze. And Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China, though, opposes the move, saying it won’t resolve the Ukraine crisis.*

Hello, good afternoon, you’re watching RT International. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end as Moscow’s delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiations while Kiev says that the location is not appropriate. Well, let’s get more on this now from ah, RT’s Don Courter. Don, good afternoon to you again. What are the hopes, then that these peace talks can go ahead you think, given that we’ve seen attempts for them to start and also fail over the last few days?”.

This was followed by Courter Report 8, which began with discussion of potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus and then moved onto discussion about conflict in Kharkiv and in the Donbas region, as follows:

AF: *"Another city too where there's been fierce fighting, Don, is Mariupol. What's the Russian defence ministry been saying there?"*

DC: *"Well it's saying that neo-fascist armed groups are basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery and they've been rolling up to civilian areas, bombing civilian infrastructure indiscriminately. Let's take a listen to what the Ministry of Defence said about it".*

IK: [English voiceover] *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations".*

The report then moved on to cover events in Chernobyl and the North Crimean Canal.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*

This was followed by Kosarev Report 6 (as above) which was broadcast in the 11:00 bulletin, with the following introduction by Andrew Farmer:

AF: *"With reports now to advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in the east of the country. Now marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In the newly recognised Donbass Republics, intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reportedly hitting residential areas, causing more damage. As we said earlier, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, and local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far though unclear. Roman Kosarev has more from the Donbass region."*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS""*

This was followed by the Zhdanov Report, the Slier Report 3, the Petrenko Report, Gao Interview 2 and the Belkina Report.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Headline: *"The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services";*
- Topic: *"Kiev: We say no to talks in Belsrus as we didn't choose this platform" [sic] and "Kiev tells locals to hide in bomb shelters and its metro stations";*
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago" [sic] and "the world has seen that Ukranians are strong, Ukranians are powerful, Ukranians are brave. So it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful then enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilized world" [sic];*
- Statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson: *"Swift is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It's incredibly important for tightening the economic ligature and the Putin regime and today you've seen more and more countries – France and others – coming forward to say that they will not block a banning boycott of SWIFT" and "the UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions the Russia has ever seen" [sic];*
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".*
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *"Let's not kid ourselves, Putin will not change his course overnight but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already in the last week the Russian stock-market sank by more than 30 percent. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions";*
- Topic on *"Sanctions Step-up... All bark and no bite? West to avoid sanctions on Russian energy sector. EU will 'hold Kremlin accountable' with wave of anti-Russia sanctions";*
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *"This package of sanctions that been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia and it will hurt a lot" [sic];*
- Statements from Daleep Singh, US Deputy National Security Adviser: *"But what I'll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history" and "to be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world";*
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets. And*

this sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base" [sic]²⁵;

- Statement from Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supply because they can no longer be paid for. And if it ends its gas supplies what impact it will have on our supply";* and
- Statements from President Biden: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen to be part of the global economy. We will limit their ability to do that. We are going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank - a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself - cut it off from the U.S. financial system."* and *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools — every tool at our disposal to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 12:00 broadcast:

- *"Ukraine says it is not satisfied with Russia's conditions for talks";*
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Kiev hands out 10,000 guns to volunteers willing to fight Russian forces";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe";*
- *"Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine";*
- *"Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia's actions in Ukraine";*
- *"Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes";*
- *"UK, Poland, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes";*
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations";*
- *"European Union says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT";* and
- *"EU to put restrictive measures on Russian Central Bank assets"*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military.

²⁵ Ofcom understands the quote broadcast was: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base"*.

We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze”;*
- *“neo-fascist armed groups are basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook...using so-called Bandera cars...that are equipped with light artillery and they’ve been rolling up to civilian areas, bombing civilian infrastructure indiscriminately”;*
- *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school”, resulting in “deaths among the civilian population”;*
- *“intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reportedly hitting residential areas, causing more damage”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will...not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian Army were *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations...reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the

inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 12:00 broadcast included a statement from Chancellor Scholz concerning sanctions and the conflict in general, *"Let's not kid ourselves. Putin will not change his course overnight, but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already, in the last week, the Russian stock markets sank by more than 30%. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions"*. This statement was not included in the 11:00 broadcast. The programme also included statements from President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Josep Borrell, Daleep Singh, Ursula Von der Leyen, Christian Lindner and President Biden, that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included at any point and in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *"MOSCOW SAYS DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY"*; *"MOSCOW: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS ATTACK MARIUPOL RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*; *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*; *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED"*; *"DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING"*; *"DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE POSITIONS AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY"*; and *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: 'U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS'"*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under

the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 13:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 13:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 13:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer ("AF") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a ninth live report with Donald Courter ("DC") ("Courter Report 9"), which focussed exclusively on the potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine;
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the first eight seconds of the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- a third live report about Western sanctions on Russia with Paula Slier ("PSI") ("Slier Report 4"); and
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which was followed by Courter Report 9 and a clip of Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, giving a speech on the ongoing situation. This was then followed by a re-broadcast of Kosarev Report 6 (as above), with the following introduction by Andrew Farmer:

AF: *"Okay, that was Vladimir Putin speaking just a short time ago on the current situation in Ukraine. Now it is the fourth day of this latest conflict and with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in the east of the country, here are videos of eyewitnesses from Ukrainian Kharkov showing that Russian, the Russian Army, has entered that city. Kharkov's mayor himself confirmed the information. According to him, part of the Russian forces are in the central part of that city as well. Russian defence ministry has said that Ukrainian nationalist battalions used to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and have also tried to target the school in the city itself. Let's listen."*

IK: [English voiceover] *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations."*

AF: *"Meanwhile, fighting is reported in the suburbs of Kiev. We are seeing some buildings caught on fire there amid the clash, the local mayor in his video address does say that Ukrainian forces have repelled that Russian move. Now marked in red here and blue on this map are the two Donbass republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres*

beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics do claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far unclear. More now from Roman Kosarev in the Donbass region.”

This was followed by the first eight seconds of the Parampil Interview, which was interrupted to return to a statement from President Putin. This was then followed by the Petrenko Report, Slier Report 4, and Gao Interview 2.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: “The SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement western powers decisions to disconnect some Russian banks from its services”;*
- *Topic: “Kiev: We say no to talks in Belsrus as we didn’t choose this platform” [sic];*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: “Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago” [sic];*
- *Topic on “Sanctions Step-up...All bark and no bite? West to avoid sanctions on Russian energy sector. EU will ‘hold Kremlin accountable’ with wave of anti-Russia sanctions”;*
- *Statements from Prime Minister Boris Johnson: “The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions the Russia has ever seen” [sic] and “SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin’s Russia. It’s incredibly important for tightening the economic ligature and the Putin regime and today you’ve seen more and more countries – France and others – coming forward to say that they will not block a banning boycott of SWIFT” [sic];*
- *Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: “This package of sanctions that been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia and it will hurt a lot” [sic];*
- *Statements from Daleep Singh, US Deputy National Security Adviser: “But what I’ll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history” and “to be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world”;*
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia’s access to the most important capital markets. And*

this sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base" [sic]²⁶;

- Statement from Christian Lindner, German Finance Minister: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supply because they can no longer be paid for. And if it ends its gas supplies what impact it will have on our supply";*
- Statements from President Biden: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen to be part of the global economy. We will limit their ability to do that. We are going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank – a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself – cut it off from the U.S. financial system" and "as we respond, my administration is using the tools — every tool at our disposal to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump";*
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO";* and
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *"Let's not kid ourselves, Putin will not change his course overnight but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already in the last week the Russian stock-market sank by more than 30 percent. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions".*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 13:00 broadcast:

- *"EU, UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe";*
- *"Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine";*
- *"Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia's actions in Ukraine";*
- *"Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes";*
- *"UK, Germany, France, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes";*
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations";*
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT";*
- *"EU to put restrictions on Russian Central Bank assets";* and
- *"Ukraine confirms peace talks in Belarusian city of Gomel".*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major

²⁶ Ofcom understands the quote broadcast was: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“Ukrainian nationalist battalions used to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and have also tried to target the school in the city itself”;*
- *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas... and the school”, resulting in “deaths among the civilian population”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics do claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city...they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks...many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will...not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- *the Ukrainian Army were “using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;* and
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations... reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy

that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that all statements that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within this programme, were the same as those in previous news bulletins. These included statements from President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Josep Borrell, Daleep Singh, Ursula Von der Leyen, Christian Lindner and President Biden. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions (cited above) which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 14:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 14:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 14:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer (“AF”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live report about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov (“KR”) (“the Rozhkov Report”);
- a fourth live report about Western sanctions on Russia with Paula Slier (“PSI”) (“Slier Report 5”);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- the Belkina Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement from President Putin and coverage of developments regarding the potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. The introduction also included the following statement about fighting in the Donbas region:

AF: *“...And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze...”*

This was followed by the Rozhkov Report and Slier Report 5.

This was followed by Kosarev Report 6 (as above), with the following introduction by Andrew Farmer:

AF: *“Now let’s run through what’s been happening on the ground in Ukraine. It is the fourth day of this latest conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces too against the Ukrainian Army in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage, which they say show Russian forces entering Ukraine’s second city Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Russia’s defence ministry says a Ukrainian nationalist battalion, meanwhile, used heavy artillery to attack residential areas in the suburbs of the city of Mariupol in south-eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces, it’s claimed, also targeted a school in the city itself”.*

IK: [English voiceover] *“On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and a school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia’s defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations.”*

AF: *“Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes, the local mayor in a video address, says the Ukrainian forces, though, have repelled Russian attacks. And overnight an unverified video here appeared from Kiev apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital, close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. Around 25 kilometres from the capital are reports an explosion has caused a large fire at an oil depot. This unverified video does show the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. Marked in red and blue on this map are Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced too that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far unclear, but with more on the situation in the Donbass region, here’s Roman Kosarev”.*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””.*

The programme ended with Gao Interview 2 and the Belkina Report.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“Kiev: We say no to talks in Belsrus as we didn’t choose this platform”* [sic];
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. They can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is mentioned as a platform for this negotiations. A platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again as everyone saw it not so long ago”* [sic];
- Topic: *“EU to freeze Russian Central Bank assets, put some banks from SWIFT”* [sic];
- Statement from Prime Minister Boris Johnson: *“SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin’s Russia. It’s incredibly important for tightening the economic ligature and the Putin regime and today you’ve seen more and more countries – France and others – coming forward to say that they will not block a banning boycott of SWIFT”;*
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *“This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO”;* and
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *“Let’s not kid ourselves, Putin will not change his course overnight but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is*

paying. Already in the last week the Russian stock-market sank by more than 30 percent. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions”.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 14:00 broadcast:

- *“EU, UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister”;*
- *“EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation”;*
- *“Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression”;*
- *“Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces”;*
- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Biden: U.S. Forces will not engage in conflict with Russia in Ukraine”;*
- *“Australia bans RT broadcasts over Russia’s actions in Ukraine”;*
- *“Ten European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes”;*
- *“UK, Germany, France, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations”;*
- *“Brussels says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT”;*
- *“EU to put restrictions on Russian Central Bank assets”;* and
- *“Ukraine confirms peace talks on Ukraine-Belarus border”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“Russia’s defence ministry says a Ukrainian nationalist battalion...used heavy artillery to attack residential areas in the suburbs of the city of Mariupol in south-eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces, it’s claimed, also targeted a school in the city itself”;*
- *“Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas...and the school”, resulting in “deaths among the civilian population”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*

- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks...many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian army are *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations... reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 14:00 broadcast included the topic, *“EU to freeze Russian Central Bank assets, cut some banks from SWIFT”*. The programme also included statements from President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and Chancellor Scholz, that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM, were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions (cited above) which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. However, we considered that all of these captions related to the conflict in general or to Western sanctions. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 14:00 broadcast were the same as those in the 13:00 broadcast. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 15:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through five complaints from viewers who said the programme was “Russian propaganda”.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 15:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 15:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer (“AF”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live report from RT reporter Peter Oliver (“PO”) about Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“the Oliver Report”);
- an edited version of the Rozhkov Report previously broadcast at 14:00 (“Rozhkov Report 2”);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Gao Interview 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme); and
- the Belkina Report (repeated from the 06:00 programme).

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement that President Putin was reported to have *“put Russia’s strategic deterrence forces, including nuclear forces, on high alert”*. The introduction also included the following statement about fighting in the Donbas region:

AF: *“...And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze...”*.

This was followed by the Oliver Report and Rozhkov Report 2.

Kosarev Report 6 (as above) was then broadcast, with the following introduction by Andrew Farmer:

AF: *“Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced too that the Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at the fuel depot here in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured, although the exact numbers are so far unclear. With more now from the Donbass region, here is Roman Kosarev”*.

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””*.

This was followed by Gao Interview 2 and the Belkina Report.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"NATO promises huge new arms deliveries to Ukrainian forces. White House: There is no threat to Russia from the U.S. or NATO"*;
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *"Let's not kid ourselves, Putin will not change his course overnight but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already in the last week the Russian stock-market sank by more than 30 percent. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions"*;
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO"*.
- Topic: *"Kiev: We say no to talks in Belarus as we didn't choose this platform"* [sic]; and
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukrainian-Belarus border, near the Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all airplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks"* [sic].

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 15:00 broadcast:

- *"EU, UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister"*;
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation"*;
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression"*;
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces"*;
- *"Russian TV channels including RT banned in Poland, Finland, Australia"*;
- *"European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes"*;
- *"UK, Germany, France, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes"*;
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, some go to metro stations"*;
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect select Russian banks from SWIFT"*;
- *"EU to put restrictions on Russian Central Bank assets"*; and
- *"Ukraine confirms peace talks on Ukraine-Belarus border"*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a huge blaze erupted at the fuel depot here in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city...they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will...not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian Army were *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations...reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 15:00 broadcast included the report, *"NATO promises huge new arms deliveries to Ukrainian forces. White House: There is no threat to Russia from the U.S. or NATO"* and a statement from President Zelenskyy (displayed in a caption with an English voiceover), concerning the conflict in general, that *"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border near the Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all aeroplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks"*. This statement was not included in the 14:00 broadcast. The programme also included statements from Chancellor Scholz and Liz Truss that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions (cited above) which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. However, we considered that all of these captions related to the conflict in general or to Western sanctions. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 15:00 broadcast were the same as those in the 14:00 broadcast. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast

news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 16:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 16:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 16:00 episode, presenter Andrew Farmer ("AF") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a second live report from Peter Oliver ("PO") about Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("Oliver Report 2");
- an interview with journalist Ben Norton ("BN") about the conflict ("the Norton Interview");
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 15:00 programme);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a report from RT reporter Maria Finoshina ("MF") about evacuees ("the Finoshina Report"); and
- coverage by Andrew Farmer of protests against the conflict in Russia.

Andrew Farmer began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement from President Putin about putting Russia's strategic forces on high alert. This was followed by Oliver Report 2, the Norton Interview and Rozhkov Report 2.

This was then followed by Kosarev Report 6 (as above), introduced in the same way by Andrew Farmer as in the 15:00 bulletin, above. During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- "UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS";
- "EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED"; and
- "DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING".

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- "U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: 'U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS'".

The programme ended with the Finoshina Report and coverage of protests against the conflict in Russia.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Headline: *"Talks agreed...Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on their way to Ukraine-Belarus border after Kyiv agreed to negotiate"*;

- Topic: *"NATO promises huge new arms deliveries to Ukrainian forces. White House: There is no threat to Russia from the U.S. or NATO"* including *"U.S. reaction to putting Russian strategic forces on high alert"*;
- Topic: *"White House: There is no threat to Russia from the U.S. or NATO"*;
- Statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General: *"This is a dangerous rhetoric, that's the reason why we both provide support to Ukraine, but also why we at last weeks and months have significantly increased presence of NATO in eastern part of alliance"* [sic];
- Topic: *"EU to freeze Russian central bank assets, cut some banks from SWIFT"*;
- Statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany: *"Putin wants to play in independent country of the world map, in Ukraine. He puts himself on the sidelines of the entire international community. We stand by your side, on the right side of history"* [sic];
- Topic: *"Ukrainian delegation agrees to Russia talks on Belarus border"*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border, near the Pripjat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all airplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks"*; and
- Topic: *"Ukraine operation: Day 4...Mayor says they repelled Russia as buildings ablaze in Kyiv suburb"* including voiceover and *"video of burning building in Kyiv suburb"* in which the *"address says that Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attack"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 16:00 broadcast:

- *"Ukraine confirms peace talks on Ukraine-Belarus border"*;
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister"*;
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation"*;
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression"*;
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces"*;
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe"*;
- *"Russian TV channels including RT banned in Poland, Finland, Australia"*;
- *"European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes"*;
- *"UK, Germany, France, Baltic states among counties banning Russian planes"*;
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, go to metro stations"*;
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect some Russian banks from SWIFT"*; and
- *"EU to put restrictions on Russian central bank assets"*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case. In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas in this attack to fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze”;*
- *“local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“a huge blaze erupted at the fuel depot here in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian Army were *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations...reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the

programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) and NATO in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 16:00 broadcast included the reports, *“Talks agreed...Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on their way to Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate”*; *“U.S reaction to putting Russian strategic forces on high alert”*; *“White House: There is no threat to Russia from the U.S. or NATO”*; *“Ukraine operation: day 4...Mayor says they repelled Russia as buildings ablaze in Kiev suburb”*. We also acknowledged the inclusion of a statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, concerning the conflict in general, that *“This is dangerous rhetoric. That’s the reason why we both provide support Ukraine, but also why we, over the last weeks and months, have significantly increased the presence of NATO in the eastern part of the alliance”*. The programme also included statements from President Zelenskyy and Chancellor Scholz. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM, were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. For example, We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *“UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”*; *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*; and *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast

news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 17:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through a complaint from a viewer who said the programme broadcast “misinformation”.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 17:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 17:00 episode, presenter Kevin Owen (“KO”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a third live report from Peter Oliver (“PO”) about Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“Oliver Report 3”);
- a live report from Paula Slier (“PSI”) about Western reaction to President Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“Slier Report 6”);
- an interview with political analyst Gilbert Doctorow (“GD”) about the latest developments in Ukraine (“the Doctorow Interview”);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 15:00 programme);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Finoshina Report (repeated from the 16:00 programme); and
- coverage by Kevin Owen of protests in Russia against the conflict.

Kevin Owen began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement from President Putin about putting Russia’s strategic forces on high alert. This was followed by Oliver Report 3, Slier Report 6, the Doctorow Interview and Rozhkov Report 2. Kevin Owen then introduced Kosarev Report 6 (as above), which included translated video footage of a female Luhansk resident (“LR”):

KO: *“Other developments to tell you about on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict. With reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army, in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage, which they say shows Russian forces entering Ukraine’s second city, Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. And in another eyewitness video in the Lugansk region, civilians can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including a tank, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and footage showing Kiev’s forces firing from inside residential areas and using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers that their basements are full of children”.*

LR: [English subtitles] *“Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!”*

Kevin Owen then went on to talk about fighting in Kyiv, before continuing:

KO: *“Well, a map now marked in red and blue. Here are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front*

line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In other developments, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. And local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meantime, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured there. The exact numbers are so far unclear. RT's Roman Kosarev reports from the Donbass region".

During this introduction, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"UKRAINE DEPLOYS ARMY IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS WITH PEOPLE AS HUMAN SHIELDS";*
- *"MOSCOW SAYS THAT DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY";*
- *"UKRAINIAN ARMY ALLEGEDLY INTENSIFIES ARTILLERY FIRE ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS";* and
- *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED".*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS"".*

The programme ended with the Finoshina Report and coverage of protests against the conflict in Russia.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as the ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the block";*
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: "We are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We are proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to landing, take off or overfly the territory of the European Union. That includes the private jets of oligarchs too" [sic];*
- *Statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General: "This is a dangerous rhetoric, that's the reason why we both provide support to Ukraine, but also why we at last weeks and months have significantly increased presence of NATO in eastern part of alliance" [sic];*
- *Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: "This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO";*
- *Topic: "Ukrainian delegation agrees to Russia talks on Belarus border";*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: "We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border, near the*

Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all airplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks";

- Topic: *"Ukraine operation: Day 4...Mayor says they repelled Russia as buildings ablaze in Kyiv suburb"* including voiceover and *"video of burning building in Kyiv suburb"* in which the *"address says that Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attack"*; and
- Topic: *"Anti-war protest... People across Russia protest against country's special operation"* including video of *"protesting people"* with voiceover.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 17:00 broadcast:

- *"EU closes entire airspace to Russian planes"*;
- *"Turkey: situation in Ukraine is war, will implement Montreux convention"*;
- *"Kyiv delegation confirms peace talks on Ukraine"*;
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister"*;
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation"*;
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression"*;
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces"*;
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe"*;
- *"Russian TV channels including RT banned in Poland, Finland, Australia"*;
- *"European countries close airspace to Russian civilian planes"*;
- *"UK, Germany, France, Baltic states among countries banning Russian planes"*;
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, go to metro stations"*;
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect some Russian banks from SWIFT"*;
- *"EU to put restrictions on Russian central bank assets"*; and
- *"EU proposes ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiaries on its territory"*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under "Ofcom's Guidance to Section Five of the Code" applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme's reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *"local authorities in both Republics claimed that several towns were targeted in missile attacks"*;

- *“a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will...not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- *the Ukrainian Army were “using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations...reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”; and*
- *the “suffering of the people of Donbass” was due to the “shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*
- *In the introduction to Kosarev Report 6, presenter Kevin Owen said: “in another eyewitness video in the Lugansk region, civilians can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including a tank, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and footage showing Kiev’s forces firing from inside residential areas and using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers that their basements are full of children”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) and NATO in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 17:00 broadcast included the reports: *“The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as the ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the block”*; and *“Anti-war protest... People across Russia protest against country’s special operation”*. We also acknowledged the inclusion of a statement from Ursula von der Leyen, concerning sanctions and the conflict in general, that *“we are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We’re proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered, and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to land in, take off, or overfly the territory of the European Union, and that includes the private jets of oligarchs too”*. This statement was not included in the 16:00 broadcast. The programme also included statements from Jens Stoltenberg, Liz Truss and President Zelenskyy, that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions (cited above) which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. However, we considered that all of these captions related to the conflict in general or to Western sanctions. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *“UKRAINE DEPLOYS ARMY IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS WITH PEOPLE AS HUMAN SHIELDS”*; *“MOSCOW SAYS THAT DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”*; *“UKRAINIAN ARMY ALLEGEDLY INTENSIFIES ARTILLERY FIRE ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”*; *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*; and *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS””*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and

necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 18:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through three complaints from viewers who said the programme was “biased” and “misleading”.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 18:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 18:00 episode, presenter Kevin Owen (“KO”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live report from RT reporter Caleb Maupin (“CM”) about Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“the Maupin Report”);
- a fourth live report from Peter Oliver about Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“Oliver Report 4”);
- Slier Report 6 (repeated from the 17:00 programme);
- an interview with political science academic John Laughland (“JL”) about the latest developments in Ukraine (“the Laughland Interview”);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 15:00 programme);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme); and
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Kevin Owen began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement from President Putin about putting Russia’s strategic forces on high alert. This was followed by the Maupin Report, Oliver Report 4, Slier Report 6, the Laughland Interview and Rozhkov Report 2. This was followed by Kosarev Report 6 (as above), with the following introduction by Kevin Owen:

KO: *“There’s reports for advances by Russian troops and Donbas forces against the Ukrainian Army, in various parts of the country... Let’s bring up the map up next, masked in, marked in red and blue here, are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line. While Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In other developments, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. And local authorities in both Republics, claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Eyewitness video next, from Lugansk region, civilians there can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including an armoured personnel carrier, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and footage showing Kiev’s forces firing from inside residential areas, as using civilian shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers that their basements are full of children”.*

LR: [English subtitles] *“Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!”*

KO: *“And, staying in the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, next, RT’s Roman Kosarev in the Donbass region, with the latest from there”.*

During this introduction, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"VIDEO SHOWS UKRAINIAN FORCES USING RESIDENTIAL AREAS FOR FIRING COVER;"*
- *"MOSCOW SAYS THAT DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY";* and
- *"UKRAINIAN ARMY ALLEGEDLY INTENSIFIES ARTILLERY FIRE ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS".*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS""*.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as the ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the block";*
- *Topic: "NATO's reaction to putting Russian strategic forces on high alert";*
- *Statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General: "This is a dangerous rhetoric, that's the reason why we both provide support to Ukraine, but also why we at last weeks and months have significantly increased presence of NATO in eastern part of alliance" [sic];*
- *Topic: "UK's top diplomat supports brits going to Ukraine to fight Russia" and "supporting people of UK going to Ukraine to fight Russia";*
- *Footage of the protests in the UK "against Putin and Russian military operation";*
- *Statement from President Zelenskyy: "We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border, near the Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all airplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks";*
- *Topic: "Ukraine operation: day 4... Mayor says they repelled Russia as buildings ablaze in Kyiv suburb" including voiceover of "video of burning building in Kyiv suburb" in which "address says that Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attack".*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 18:00 broadcast:

- *"EU proposes ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiaries on its territory";*
- *"EU closes entire airspace to Russian planes";*
- *"Turkey: situation in Ukraine is war, will implement Montreux convention";*
- *"Kyiv delegation confirms peace talks on Ukraine";*
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*

- *“NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe”;*
- *“Russian TV channels including RT banned in Poland, Finland, Australia”;*
- *“Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, go to metro stations”;*
- *“Brussels says it will disconnect some Russian banks from SWIFT”;* and
- *“EU to put restrictions on Russian central bank assets”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“local authorities in both Republics, claimed that several towns were targeted in missile attacks”;*
- *“Eyewitness video next, from Lugansk region, civilians there can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including an armoured personnel carrier, away from homes and residential buildings... amid multiple reports and footage, showing Kiev’s forces firing from inside residential areas, as using civilian shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers, that their basements are full of children”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian Army were *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations...”*

reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;
and

- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”*.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti’s various general representations in respect of its “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) and NATO in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 18:00 broadcast included the reports on *“NATO’s reaction to putting Russian strategic forces on high alert”*; *“UK’s top diplomat supports brits going to Ukraine to fight Russia”*; *“supporting people of UK going to Ukraine to fight Russia”*; and footage of the protests in the UK, *“against Putin and Russian military operation”*. The programme also included statements from Jens Stoltenberg and President Zelenskyy that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general, support for Ukraine or to Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoints of the Russian armed forces, the DPM and the LPM were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *“VIDEO SHOWS UKRAINIAN FORCES USING RESIDENTIAL AREAS FOR FIRING COVER”*; *“MOSCOW SAYS THAT DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”*; *“UKRAINIAN ARMY ALLEGEDLY INTENSIFIES ARTILLERY FIRE ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS”*; *“DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING”*; *“EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED”*; *“DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE POSITIONS AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY”*; and *“U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: “U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN*

FOR EIGHT YEARS"". Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 19:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through two complaints from viewers who said the programme was “propaganda” and “bias[ed]”.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 19:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the 19:00 episode, presenter Kevin Owen was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- an edited version of the Maupin Report from the 18:00 programme (“Maupin Report 2”);
- a fifth live report from Peter Oliver about Putin’s order to put Russian forces on high alert (“Oliver Report 5”);
- Slier Report 6 (repeated from the 17:00 programme);
- an edited version of the Laughland Interview from the 18:00 programme (“Laughland Interview 2”);
- a second live report from Konstantin Rozhkov (“KR”) about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine (“Rozhkov Report 3”);
- Kosarev Report 6 (repeated from the 11:00 programme);
- the Parampil Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- coverage by Kevin Owen of anti-war protests around the world.

Kevin Owen began the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme in an introduction, which included a statement from President Putin about putting Russia’s strategic forces on high alert. The introduction also included translated video footage of a Mykolaivka resident (“MR”) and two unnamed Russian soldiers (“US3” and “US4”):

KO: *“The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as a ban on this channel RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the bloc. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on the way tonight to the Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate, quote, ‘without preconditions’. And as Russian troops continue to advance in the Donbass, Ukrainian forces are accused of escalating indiscriminate shelling of the area”.*

US3: [English subtitles] *“How are you? Are you hurt?”*

MR: [English subtitles] *“No, no.”*

US4: [English subtitles] *“Where did the missile fall?”*

MR: [English subtitles] *“They are shooting there...”*

This was followed by Maupin Report 2, Oliver Report 5, Slier Report 6, Laughland Interview 2, and Rozhkov Report 3. Kevin Owen then introduced Kosarev Report 6 (as above).

KO: *“Let me brief you now on developments on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in various*

parts of the country, marked in red, let's bring up the map and blue here, are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line. While Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In this video from the Lugansk region, is said to show civilians trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including an armoured personnel carrier, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and other images, showing Kiev's forces firing from inside residential areas, where it's claimed they're using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman is heard warning Ukrainian soldiers, that there are children in their basements".

LR: [English subtitles] *"Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!"*

KO: *"Despite the Russian Army's advance, the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks, including in Mykolaivka where Russian military forces rescued this elderly woman".*

US3: [English subtitles] *"How are you? Are you hurt?"*

MR: [English subtitles] *"No, no".*

US4: [English subtitles] *"Where did the missile fall?"*

MR: [English subtitles] *"They are shooting there..."*

KO: *"And, staying in the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, RT's Roman Kosarev is in the Donbass region with more".*

The Parampil Interview (as above) was then broadcast and during this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, which included the following:

- *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: "U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS""*.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- *Headline: "The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as the ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the block";*
- *Topic: "NATO's reaction to putting Russian strategic forces on high alert";*
- *Statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General: "This is a dangerous rhetoric, that's the reason why we both provide support to Ukraine, but also why we at last weeks and months have significantly increased presence of NATO in eastern part of alliance" [sic];*
- *Topic: "EU foreign policy chief: Moving to ban RT, Sputnik from broadcasting";*
- *Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: "Today we are taking a crucial step to turn off the tap of the Russian*

information manipulation in Europe. We are banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in European Union". [sic];

- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: *"We are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We are proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to landing, take off or overfly the territory of the European Union. That includes the private jets of oligarchs too" [sic];*
- Topic: *"High Alert...UK's top diplomat supports brits going to Ukraine to fight Russia";*
- Topic on Liz Truss: *"supporting people of UK going to Ukraine to fight Russia";*
- Statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary: *"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO";*
- Voiceover of the protests in the UK *"against Putin and Russian military operation";*
- Topic: *"talks agreed";* and
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"To be honest I do not believe in the outcome of this meeting but let them try. So that not a single citizen of the Ukraine has any doubts that I as president did not try to stop the war when there was at least a small chance but a chance nether the less" [sic].*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 19:00 broadcast:

- *"EU proposes ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiaries on its territory";*
- *"EU closes entire airspace to Russian planes";*
- *"Turkey: situation in Ukraine is war, will implement Montreux convention";*
- *"Kyiv delegation confirms peace talks on Ukraine";*
- *"EU and UK impose sanctions on Russian President and Foreign minister";*
- *"EU, UK freeze assets held by Putin, Lavrov over Russian military operation";*
- *"Ukraine condemns Russian military operation as act of aggression";*
- *"Ukraine urges civilians to use Molotov cocktails against Russian forces";*
- *"NATO announces extra troop deployments in Eastern Europe";*
- *"Russian TV channels including RT banned in Poland, Finland, Australia";*
- *"Kiev urges locals to hide in bomb shelters, go to metro stations";*
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect some Russian banks from SWIFT";* and
- *"EU to put restrictions on Russian central bank assets".*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, it repeated the claims that:

- *“this video from the Lugansk region, is said to show civilians trying to force Ukrainian Army troops...away from homes and residential buildings...amid multiple reports and other images, showing Kiev’s forces firing from inside residential areas, where it’s claimed they’re using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman is heard warning Ukrainian soldiers, that there are children in their basements”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way”;*
- *“the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes”;*
- *“on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city... they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells... one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks... many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings”;*
- *“the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people...scores of people have been injured as well”;*
- *“civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity”;*
- *“Denis Pushilin said that this operation will... not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated”;*
- the Ukrainian Army were *“using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military”;*
- *“Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields”;*
- *“some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in...Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations... reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”;* and
- the *“suffering of the people of Donbass”* was due to the *“shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people”.*

In the introduction to Kosarev Report 6, presenter Kevin Owen also said: *“Despite the Russian Army’s advance, the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks, including in Mykolaivka where Russian military forces rescued this elderly woman”.* This claim did not appear in any of the previous news bulletins.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked the inclusion of any alternative viewpoints on the matters of political controversy and current public policy

that were discussed in relation to conflict in the Donbas, for example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military.

We took into account TV Novosti's various general representations in respect of its "sincere desire and effort" to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict. We also acknowledged that the programme contained alternative viewpoints in relation to the wider conflict in Ukraine in general, including, for example, those of Western leaders (including from the EU, UK, and US) and NATO in relation to the sanctions being placed on Russia.

We were mindful that the 19:00 broadcast included the reports, *"EU foreign policy chief: Moving to ban RT, Sputnik from broadcasting"*, and statements from Josep Borrell and President Zelenskyy concerning sanctions and the conflict in general, such as *"Today, we are taking a crucial step, to turn off the tap for the Russians information manipulation, in Europe, by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union"* and *"to be honest, I do not believe in the outcome of this meeting, but let them try, so that not a single citizen of Ukraine has any doubts that I, as President, did not try to stop the war, when there was at least a small chance, but a chance nonetheless"*, respectively. The programme also included statements from Jens Stoltenberg, Ursula von der Leyen and Liz Truss that were included in previous news bulletins. However, we considered that all of these statements related to the conflict in general or to Western sanctions. They did not represent, in any form, the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region. For example, their response to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct in this region, or challenges to the viewpoint of the Russian armed forces the DPM and the LPM, were not included in any form in this programme.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements from Western leaders were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following captions relating to the conflict in the Donbas: *"MOSCOW SAYS THAT DONBASS FORCES ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY"*; *"VIDEO SHOWS UKRAINIAN FORCES USING RESIDENTIAL AREAS FOR FIRING COVER"*; *"UKRAINIAN MILITARY INTENSIFIES ITS ARTILLERY FIRE AT RESIDENTIAL AREAS"*; *"EXPLOSION AT FUEL DEPOT IN LUGANSK REPUBLIC, SEVERAL REPORTED INJURED"*; *"DONBASS MILITIA FIGHTERS ADVANCE POSITIONS AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY"*; *"DONETSK RESIDENTIAL AREA REPORTEDLY HIT BY UKRAINIAN MILITARY SHELLING"*; and *"U.S. JOURNALIST TO RT: 'U.S. IGNORED DONBASS PAIN FOR EIGHT YEARS'"*. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcast news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under *Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin*
18 July 2022

the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

Conclusion

The 15 programmes under investigation were news programmes and therefore Rule 5.1 applied. In addition, the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to these programmes. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region, in and of itself, was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in the Donbas region at the time of the broadcasts.

Therefore, the broadcaster was required to preserve due impartiality by including an appropriately wide range of significant views with due weight, in order to comply with Section Five of the Code.

In Ofcom's view, each of the 15 programmes contained similar claims about the actions of the Ukrainian state or military in the Donbas region of Ukraine that were highly contentious. These included that the Ukrainian military was using terrorist tactics, deliberately attacking civilians, and had been doing so since 2014. There were no significant alternative viewpoints, for example the viewpoint of the Ukrainian state or military on the events that were taking place in the Donbas, included in any of the 15 programmes.

Therefore, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in each of these 15 news programmes in relation to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Our Decision in respect of these 15 programmes is to record 15 breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code against TV Novosti.

Ofcom considers that these breaches were serious and repeated, and we are minded to consider them for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

RT News

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	RT
Date & time	01 March 2022 at 05:00; 06:00; 07:00; 08:00; 09:00; 12:00; 15:00; 16:00; 17:00; 18:00, 19:00 and 20:00.
Category	Due impartiality in news
Summary	RT failed to ensure due impartiality in its news coverage of a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, in 12 news programmes. Each of the 12 programmes was in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 & 5.12.

Introduction

This document sets out Ofcom's Decisions in relation to 12 investigations into the above news programmes, each around 30 minutes long, which were broadcast on RT on Tuesday 1 March 2022, on the hour between 05:00-09:00, at 12:00 and between 15:00-20:00 inclusive, during the sixth day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022. The licence for the RT service was held at the time by Autonomous Non-profit Organisation TV-Novosti ("TV Novosti").

In this document, we have set out some general considerations that we have applied to each of the 12 investigations in relation to:

- the background to our investigations;
- the conflict in Ukraine;
- the background to Ofcom's due impartiality regime;
- Ofcom's [Guidance to Section Five](#) ("the Guidance") of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code ("the Code"); and
- the application of [Section Five](#) of the Code in these investigations.

Given the 12 programmes contained similar content broadcast on the same channel and on the same day, these general considerations apply to all the investigations. However, despite containing some similar content, each programme was a standalone news bulletin reporting events which evolved throughout the day. Therefore we have considered each programme individually and reached a Decision in relation to each individual news bulletin.

In response to Ofcom's formal request for comments, TV Novosti, who held the licence for RT, provided representations on the content of each programme as well as general representations which applied to all 12 investigations, which we have summarised below in the 'TV Novosti's general representations' section.

In response to Ofcom's Preliminary Views finding all 12 programmes in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12, TV Novosti provided general representations, which are also set out below under 'TV Novosti's general representations'.

In addition, we have set out below Ofcom's response to some of the points TV Novosti made in its general representations, where these are applicable across all 12 investigations.

We have set out the description of the content and Ofcom's Decision for each investigation, as well as any reasoning specific to a particular programme, individually. We considered TV Novosti's specific representations each time we reached a Decision.

Ofcom was alerted to these 12 programmes by a combination of complaints from viewers and Ofcom's own monitoring. The complaints we received included that the bulletins contained "propaganda" and "biased" news coverage that was "in no way reflective of the current conflict". Ofcom considered that the programmes raised issues warranting investigation under the due impartiality rules set out in Section Five of the Code in accordance with our published [procedures](#). Due to the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, and the high public interest, we informed TV Novosti that it was necessary for us to expedite these investigations at the outset.

Background:

Background to our investigations

RT is a global news and current affairs channel largely produced in Russia and funded by the Russian Federation.

On 2 March 2022, following the imposition of sanctions by the EU which affected the ability of third parties to provide services to TV Novosti, RT ceased to broadcast on regulated platforms in the UK.

On 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the two broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service, as well as the licence held by TV Novosti for the RT Europe service¹.

The RT broadcast channel, licensed by Ofcom, was made for UK audiences, providing a Russian perspective on UK and global news and current affairs related programming. It broadcast in English. In the UK, the channel was broadcast on satellite and terrestrial platforms.

RT News is a traditional news programme, with bulletin style news reports from both presenters in the studio and reporters outside the studio, as well as interviews with other reporters and guests in Russia, the UK and around the world. All the episodes of *RT News* broadcast on 1 March 2022 under consideration related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. A number of packaged news reports and/or interviews were repeated across the bulletins under investigation.

¹ See [Decision to revoke licence – ANO TV Novosti](#), 18 March 2022

A full transcript of all 12 news programmes is contained in the Annex, which accompanies these Decisions. Where a packaged news report or interview was repeated throughout several programmes under investigation, for ease we have given that report a title and then used that title throughout these Decisions. The titles are indicated in each individual Decision and in the Annex.

In these Decisions, we have used the Ukrainian spelling for Ukrainian cities, except where we have transcribed or quoted contributors speaking from a Russian perspective in the programmes, where we have used the Russian spelling. Direct quotes from TV Novosti's representations or captions reflect the same spelling as the original.

The conflict in Ukraine

On Thursday 24 February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, which has been internationally condemned. On 2 March 2022², the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations there³ and condemned the 24 February 2022 declaration by the Russian Federation of a "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Ofcom understands the Donbas (Russian spelling "Donbass") to be a disputed region in south-eastern Ukraine, which contains the cities Donetsk and Luhansk (Russian spelling "Lugansk"). Since 2014, this area has been the site of an ongoing conflict between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian state or military.

Ofcom's due impartiality rules

Reflecting our duties under section 319 of the Communications Act 2003 ("the Act"), Section Five of the Code requires that news in television and radio services is presented with due impartiality and that the special impartiality requirements set out in section 320 of the Act are met.

The special impartiality requirements include the preservation, in the case of every television service, of due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy. Section 320 of the Act requires Ofcom, for the purposes of setting the due impartiality rules in the Code, to take account, in particular, of the need to ensure the preservation of due impartiality in relation to: matters of major political or industrial controversy; and major matters relating to current public policy.

In addition to being news programmes, and for the reasons given below, Ofcom considered all the programmes from 1 March 2022 that we investigated were dealing with matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to current public policy, specifically the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Therefore, the following Code rules applied:

Rule 5.1: "News, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality".

Rule 5.11: "...due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public

² This was after the broadcasts covered in these Decisions.

³ See [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Demanding Russian Federation Immediately End Illegal Use of Force in Ukraine, Withdraw All Troops](#), United Nations, 2 March 2022.

policy by the person providing a service...in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes”.

Rule 5.12: “In dealing with matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes. Views and facts must not be misrepresented”.

We requested comments from the broadcaster as to how the content of all 12 programmes complied with these rules, in particular in relation to the coverage of the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Rule 5.1 places requirements on broadcasters both to report the news with due accuracy and to present it with due impartiality. Ofcom acknowledges that during times of war, the facts about what is happening in regions of conflict, for example determining from which side a missile originated, can be difficult to verify. However, broadcasters are still required to report the news with due accuracy. In the case of these 12 *RT News* programmes, we were concerned with TV Novosti’s coverage of the situation in the Donbas, which in all 12 programmes was highly critical of the policies and actions of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the area and appeared to lack an appropriately wide range of alternative viewpoints. Therefore, in our letter to TV Novosti of 3 March launching 12 investigations into *RT News*, 1 March 2022, 05:00-09:00, 12:00, 15:00-20:00, we specified that the investigations were concerned with the aspect of Rule 5.1 that deals with due impartiality only.

The Code makes clear that “due” means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. “Due impartiality” does not therefore mean an equal division of time must be given to every view, or that every argument must be represented. Due impartiality can be preserved in a number of ways, and it is an editorial decision for the broadcaster as to how it ensures this.

The Code also makes clear that the approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to the content and the extent to which the content and approach are signalled to the audience. In addition, context, as set out in [Section Two \(Harm and Offence\) of the Code](#) is important in preserving due impartiality. Context includes a number of factors such as: the editorial content of the programme; the service on which the material is broadcast; the likely size, composition and expectation of the audience; and the effect on viewers who may come across the programme unawares.

Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code

Ofcom has published Guidance to assist broadcasters in complying with the due impartiality rules in Section Five of the Code, including the heightened requirements contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Among other things, Ofcom’s Guidance makes clear that: it is an editorial matter for the broadcaster

as to how due impartiality is preserved, as long as the Code is complied with⁴; and there are a range of editorial techniques for maintaining due impartiality⁵.

In relation to Rules 5.11 and 5.12, the Guidance explains these additional rules are necessary because of the nature of the subject matter concerned: a matter of major political and industrial controversy or major matter relating to current public policy is of a significant level of importance and is likely to be of the moment.

Our Guidance also states that the broadcasting of comments either criticising or supporting the policies and actions of any political organisation or government state will not be, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. Any broadcaster may do this provided it complies with the Code. However, depending on the specific circumstances of any particular case, it may be necessary to reflect alternative viewpoints or provide context in an appropriate way to ensure that Section Five of the Code is complied with.

Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations

The 12 programmes under investigation were news programmes and therefore Rule 5.1 applied.

In addition, Ofcom considered that, given the events in Ukraine, the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to these programmes. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we also considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region in and of itself was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in this region at the time of the broadcasts. Russia had referred to historical and ongoing events in the Donbas as a justification for its invasion of Ukraine⁶. Relevant historical events include Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, following which, pro-Russian separatists in the eastern region of Donbas declared independence from Ukraine in self-proclaimed "people's republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk. These events sparked a long-running conflict between Russian-backed separatists, local militia groups and Ukrainian Government forces. A significant amount of the military confrontation between Russian and Ukrainian forces at the time of the news programmes covered in these Decisions was taking place in the Donbas region. We recognised that given the centrality of the Donbas region to the rationale for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, TV Novosti would want to broadcast a Russian perspective on this issue. However, in doing so it had to comply with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

In our letter of 3 March 2022 to TV Novosti, we asked it to explain how the programmes complied with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 specifically in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine,

⁴ See paragraph 1.6, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/99177/broadcast-code-guidance-section-5-march-2017.pdf.

⁵ Ibid, paragraph 1.17.

⁶ See [Russia's Putin authorises 'special military operation' against Ukraine | Reuters](#).

in order to help us reach Preliminary Views in these investigations⁷. As outlined in the Introduction, TV Novosti made general representations on the Preliminary Views, and having taken these into account, Ofcom then reached these Decisions.

The importance of the due impartiality regime

The due impartiality standards required under sections 319 and 320 of the Act form part of a tripartite series of measures (the others being a prohibition on paid political advertising⁸ and the provision of free party political and party election broadcasts according to defined rules⁹) designed to safeguard the integrity of democratic debate on matters of public concern by preventing influential broadcast media platforms from being hijacked by wealthy or well-placed interests promoting a partial agenda¹⁰.

As explained in the Government White Paper which led to the Act:

“[Due impartiality] obligations have played a major part in ensuring wide public access to impartial and accurate information about our society and the opportunity to encounter a diverse array of voices and perspectives. They ensure that the broadcast media provide a counterweight to other, often partial, sources of news. They therefore contribute significantly to properly informed democratic debate.”

The Courts have recently confirmed the ongoing importance of the due impartiality regime:

“There is nothing to suggest that the need for accuracy or impartiality in the broadcasting media, or the contribution that an adherence to those standards in broadcasting makes to a properly informed democratic debate, has diminished or is any less important to safeguarding the interests of citizens now than it was at the time of the White Paper or the enactment of the 2003 Act. Indeed, there is reason to consider that the need is at least as great, if not greater than ever before, given

⁷ Ofcom has previously made clear our approach to enforcing the special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Broadcasting Code. For example, in 2018, Ofcom found RT in breach of these requirements in relation to the broadcast of seven programmes, six of which dealt with major matters regarding Russian foreign policy. See [Issue 369 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018. RT applied for judicial review of Ofcom’s decisions. RT’s claim was dismissed in full in the Administrative Court and Court of Appeal. RT has applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

⁸ See s.319(2)(g) and 321(2) of the Act.

⁹ S.333 of the Act provides that licences for certain broadcasters must require the inclusion of free broadcasts and the observance of the Ofcom Rules on Party Political and Referendum Broadcasts. Those Rules regulate party political broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties outside election periods); party election broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties during election periods); and referendum campaign broadcasts (offered to each designated referendum organisation before each referendum).

¹⁰ R (Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation TV-Novosti) v The Office of Communications, [2020] EWHC 689 (Admin), paragraph 21.

current concerns about the effect on the democratic process of news manipulation and of fake news”¹¹.

Ofcom considers the due impartiality requirements in broadcasting to be particularly important in situations where events are changing quickly, and potentially harmful disinformation is available online. In addition, the Courts have recently confirmed that the importance of due impartiality is heightened in circumstances where it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of content which has been broadcast¹².

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and freedom. It constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and is one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every person.

As a public authority, it is unlawful for Ofcom to act in a way that is incompatible with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (“Article 10”)¹³. This right encompasses the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression as well as the audience’s right to receive information and ideas without interference¹⁴. Ofcom’s Code and Guidance are drafted, and given effect to, in accordance with Article 10. In particular, in carrying out its duties, Ofcom must have regard to the broadcaster’s freedom to discuss any controversial subject or point of view in its programming, as well as the requirement in the Code to preserve due impartiality on matters relating to major political or industrial controversy or major matters relating to current public policy.

It is well established that the freedom of expression of licensed broadcasters may legitimately be restricted where such measures are necessary to achieve the positive objective of maintaining fair and equal democratic discourse on influential media platforms to the benefit of society generally¹⁵. In order to establish that a limitation is “necessary”, relevant and sufficient reasons must be provided to justify the restriction, the restriction must correspond to a pressing social need, and it must be proportionate to the aim pursued. The legitimate aim pursued by the Act and the Code is to protect the rights of others, i.e. to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news by ensuring that other viewpoints are received by viewers who may then participate on an informed basis in the democratic processes.

By section 3(3) of the Act, Ofcom must, in performing its duties under subsection (1), have regard, in all cases, to (a) the principles under which regulatory activities should be transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed; and (b) any other principles appearing to Ofcom to represent the best regulatory practice.

¹¹ Ibid, paragraph 23.

¹² Ibid, paragraph 68.

¹³ Section 6 Human Rights Act 1998.

¹⁴ *Lingens v Austria* (1986) 8 EHRR 407.

¹⁵ *Animal Defenders v United Kingdom* [2013] EMLR 28 and *R (On The Application of Animal Defenders International) v Secretary of State For Culture, Media and Sport* [2008] 1 AC 1312.

Each and every time Ofcom applies the Code to broadcast content, Ofcom gives careful consideration to the broadcaster's and the audience's Article 10 rights. In order to reach a Decision on whether due impartiality was maintained in these programmes, Ofcom has had careful regard to the Article 10 rights and all the relevant contextual factors for each programme.

TV Novosti's general representations on Ofcom's Preliminary Views

Ofcom reached Preliminary Views finding all 12 programmes in breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 and invited TV Novosti to make representations on these. In response, TV Novosti provided general representations. It did not comment on any specific programme subject to investigation.

TV Novosti stated that Ofcom's procedures "were established 'for the handling and resolution of complaints...about broadcasters' with 'broadcasters' being defined as 'any broadcaster licensed and/or regulated by Ofcom'". It submitted that "Ofcom has already revoked RT's licences" and "the procedures for the investigations surely have no merit now and as such the request for representations on the Preliminary Views is redundant".

Ofcom's response to TV Novosti's general representations on our Preliminary Views

We acknowledged that due to third party actions, by the time TV Novosti submitted its representations to Ofcom about the programmes broadcast on 27 February 2022, RT channels were no longer being broadcast within the UK; and that on 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service. However, the content subject to investigation was broadcast while TV Novosti held Ofcom licences. At that time, TV Novosti was responsible for compliance with the Code on its Ofcom licenced services. We previously confirmed to TV Novosti that, as set out above, we considered the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, as well as the high public interest and the need to maintain public confidence in the broadcast standards regime in the UK, meant that it was necessary for Ofcom to carry out these investigations in accordance with Ofcom's [Procedures](#) on an expedited basis at the outset. Therefore Ofcom's Procedures were still applicable to these investigations and the request for representations on our Preliminary Views was not redundant.

Ofcom's Investigations

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 05:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content in this 30-minute programme through our own monitoring.

The Content

Ofcom watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 05:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

- During this programme, RT presenter Nikki Aaron ("NA") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:
- a live introduction from Nikki Aaron ("NA");
- a report from RT reporter Caleb Maupin ("CM") in New York about the expulsion of Russian UN diplomats from the US ("the Maupin Report");
- a live report with RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov ("KR") on peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus ("the Rozhkov Report");
- a live report with RT reporter Peter Oliver ("PO") on EU support for Ukraine ("the Oliver Report");
- a live update from Nikki Aaron on the status of the conflict in Ukraine in general ("the Aaron Update"), featuring a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IK"), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, giving a statement;
- a report from RT reporter Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("the Gazdiev Report"); and,
- a report on the Western media's coverage of the conflict, which included interviews with Daniel Lazare, political analyst and journalist, and Albrecht Muller, German economist and former politician ("the Lazare/Muller Interview").

Nikki Aaron began the programme with an introduction outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident ("Civilian 1") as follows:

NA: *"Towns in the Donetsk Republic are caught between front lines, and residents lose their homes as battles rage on. An RT correspondent talked with some of the residents".*

Civilian 1: [Voiceover in English] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced the Maupin Report which included clips of the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN, Sergiy Kyslytsya ("SK"), and the Russian Ambassador, Vasily Nebenzya ("VN"), speaking at the UN General Assembly Hall about a resolution put forward by the US to condemn Russia:

CM: *"...the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power".*

VN: *“He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine”.*

CM: *“He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, etc. This is what we heard from the UN Representative of Ukraine when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall”.*

SK: *“Deadly air strikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbas and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn't it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945”.*

CM: *“Now it's also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall”.*

VN: [Voiceover in English] *“First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there's been yet more confirmation by the country's leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further”.*

CM: *“Now, the UN General Assembly includes all member states. It's not simply the members represented on the Security Council, and it's worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the Donetsk People's Republic [“DPR”] and the Lugansk People's Republic [“LPR”]. Nicaragua has recognised the People's Republics in Donbass. There's also been recognition*

from Venezuela, from Cuba, from Iran, and other forces around the world have granted recognition. Belarus has recognised the People's Republic, so it is not simply Russia that is standing alone here. Russia has allies around the world who recognise these Republics. Now, at this point, when looking over that meeting of the UN General Assembly, it was very clear there were stark differences. The allies of the United States hurled allegations at Russia, a lot of them very unfounded, based on internet rumours, based on debunked claims that have been circulating around Western media. But Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the peoples of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years. And it appears that, while there was a lot of podium pounding from the United States and its allies, this meeting of the General Assembly did not really accomplish anything. This was a lot of smoke and mirrors and theatrics by allies of the United States in their efforts to demonise Russia and obscure the real roots of the conflict”.

The programme then moved on to discuss the potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. The Rozhkov Report included the following:

KR: *“As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas in cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia’s Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas...”.*

The Oliver Report was then broadcast, which discussed EU support for Ukraine and included the following statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry, shown as a slate with English narration:

Narration: *“Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population”.*

This was followed by the Aaron Update in which she provided an update on the conflict in Ukrainian cities and played a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov (“IK”), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. This update included:

NA: *“...The Russian Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 62 kilometres beyond the front, previous front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced some 37 kilometres. Well, Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Now, in the capital Kiev, these are unverified images showing air defence systems actively operating. Kiev authorities said the city was surrounded, but then backed down from that claim and now says groups of Russian saboteurs are trying to bring chaos to the streets, although that's denied by Russia's military”.*

IK: *“Kiev is flooded with armed gangs of looters, robbers and radical nationalists. They were given guns in an unlawful decision by the authorities to hand out lethal weapons to anyone without checking. I'm addressing all residents of Kiev. Everyone can leave the capital freely by a designated*

road. This road is open and safe. I want to emphasise once again, the Russian Army is attacking only military targets. The civilian population is not under threat”.

Nikki Aaron then introduced the Gazdiev Report as follows:

NA: *“Residents are trying to survive in the war-torn Donbass, as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Locals are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

The Gazdiev Report included the following:

MG: *“The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help”.*

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *“The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter”.*

MG: [English subtitles] *“So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?”*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *“Yes”.*

MG: *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”.*

Civilian 1: [Voiceover in English] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: [Voiceover in English] *"They are still shelling. Of course, it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: [Voiceover in English] *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: [Voiceover in English] *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"DONETSK REPUBLIC RESIDENTS CAUGHT BETWEEN FRONT LINES, LOSING HOMES";* and
- *"EMERCOM¹⁶: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA".*

The programme finished with the Lazare/Muller Interview in which the contributors discussed *"mainstream media coverage"* of the conflict in Ukraine in general.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"EU arming Ukraine";*
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *"EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia";*
- Topic: *"Persona non-grata";*
- Topic: *"12 Russian UN diplomats expelled from U.S. over Ukraine conflict";*
- Statement from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN: *"Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians' heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russian, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbas and Crimea."*

¹⁶ EMERCOM is the abbreviation for the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters.

Does it remind you of something, doesn't it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the Second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945";

- Topic: *"Peace talks";*
- Topic: *"Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks";*
- Statement from Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine: *"While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war";*
- Topic: *"Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need defensive-purpose arms";*
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *"In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states";*
- The Oliver Report in which RT's reporter in Berlin *"speaks on different European countries planning to send weapons to Ukraine";*
- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine";*
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back";* and
- Quote from Nikki Aaron: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed".*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 05:00 broadcast:

- *"UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES LEFT FOR CONSULTATIONS IN CAPITALS";*
- *"EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY";*
- *"EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS";*
- *"BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT";*
- *"EU TO PUT RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS";*
- *"KIEV: AIM OF TALKS WITH MOSCOW IS CEASEFIRE, WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN TROOPS";* and,
- *"U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY".*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations", we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, this programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. These are discussed under the individual report headings below.

Nikki Aaron's introduction

During the presenter's introduction to the programme the following statements were made about the conflict in the Donbas:

- *"Towns in the Donetsk Republic are caught between front lines, and residents lose their homes as battles rage on";* and
- Civilian 1: [Voiceover in English] *"They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals".*

The Maupin Report

The report from Caleb Maupin included the following claims about the conflict in the Donbas:

- *"Deadly air strikes dropped on civilians' heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbass and Crimea";*
- *"this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk";*
- *"First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there's been yet more confirmation by the country's leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further";*
- *"It's worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the [DPR] and the [LPR]. Nicaragua has recognised the People's Republics in Donbass";* and
- *"Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years".*

The Aaron Update

The Aaron Update included the following about the conflict in the Donbas:

"The Russian Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 62 kilometres beyond the front, previous front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced some 37 kilometres. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military".

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"RUSSIA: OUR FORCES ARE ADVANCING AGAINST UKRAINIAN ARMY TROOPS";* and
- *"KIEV ACCUSES RUSSIA OF AGGRESSION AND INSISTS IT IS FIGHTING BACK".*

The Gazdiev Report

When introducing the Gazdiev Report, Nikki Aaron said the following:

“Residents are trying to survive in the war-torn Donbass, as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Locals are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.

The Gazdiev Report included the following claims about the conflict in the Donbas:

- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT”;*
- *“DONETSK REPUBLIC RESIDENTS CAUGHT BETWEEN FRONT LINES, LOSING HOMES”;* and
- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”.*

In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme about the Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region were highly critical. They amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

We considered that all the factors under the “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” section above applied in this case.

As explained above, the broadcasting of highly critical comments concerning the actions of any government or state is not, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. It is essential that news programmes are able to report on controversial issues and take a position on those issues, even if that position is highly critical, particularly during times of conflict. However, a broadcaster must maintain an adequate and appropriate level of impartiality in its presentation of matters (and major matters) of political controversy. It may be necessary, in order to comply with the due impartiality requirements, that alternative viewpoints are broadcast.

In our consideration of the content in this programme, we noted that the Gazdiev Report – which was entirely focused on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region – included particularly contentious and highly critical statements about the alleged actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. By way of example, Ofcom considered the following statements to be particularly relevant to its consideration of the programme:

- *“Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled”;*
- *“When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village”;*
- *“...terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end”;* and
- *“The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The Gazdiev Report did not include any statements which provided challenge, or an alternative perspective, to the above claims.

Ofcom took into account that in the Maupin Report a clip was included of the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN Sergiy Kyslytsya, in which he said:

SK: *“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbas and Crimea”.*

We considered that the inclusion of this view provided an alternative perspective on the ongoing wider conflict in the Ukraine and, to a limited extent, the ongoing conflict in the Donbas in that it indicated Russian troops were responsible for attacks against civilians and residential areas across Ukraine. However, it did not constitute a challenge or an alternative viewpoint on the specific strong criticisms about the alleged actions of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the Donbas included elsewhere in the programme, in particular, and as mentioned above, in the Gazdiev Report.

In considering the Maupin Report, we also took into account the inclusion of the view of the Russian Ambassador to the UN, in which he said exclusion of Russia from the UN *“does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk”*. We considered this amounted to a further highly critical statement about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. Caleb Maupin also concluded the report by praising Russia’s position, stating: *“Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they’ve been through for the past eight years”*. We considered the categorisation of the Russian UN representative’s input as *“the truth”* in comparison to alternative views as *“allegations”*,

“based on debunked claims” and *“unfounded”*, resulted in a report that failed to give due weight to the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region, specifically that Ukrainian forces were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas *“across the Donbass”*.

In Ofcom’s view this programme as a whole lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military about activity in the Donbas region was not included.

Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti’s representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *“aggression”*; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US’s expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the President of Ukraine; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine.

However, we considered that while the whole of this programme was devoted to the conflict in Ukraine, there was a notable difference in how alternative viewpoints were reflected in those elements of the programme which reported on the Ukrainian conflict in general, as opposed to the situation in the Donbas specifically. In relation to the former, in Ofcom’s view, the viewpoints of the Ukrainian authorities and Western governments were reflected to some extent. However, these viewpoints did not represent the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region, specifically the allegation that Ukrainian forces were deliberately attacking residential areas *“across the Donbass”*.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. We considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom’s attention to captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Ofcom recognises that graphics or captions are editorial techniques which can contribute to the preservation of due impartiality. However, as we made clear in our December 2016 *Crosstalk*¹⁷ Decision involving TV Novosti, whether graphics or captions do in fact maintain due impartiality in any specific programme will depend on all the relevant circumstances, such as the duration and nature of the programme and its subject matter, and the presence of any other factors in the programme which may contribute to helping to maintain due impartiality. We caution broadcasters against relying solely or largely on graphics and captions to preserve due impartiality. This is because, depending on the circumstances, captions or graphics may not enable sufficient weight to be given to an alternative view. Further, when ensuring that matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy are treated with due weight, we consider that the relative size and prominence and limited content within

¹⁷ See [Issue 369 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018.

captions and graphics will make it significantly more difficult for broadcasters to ensure compliance with Rule 5.12. In this case, Ofcom's view was that the captions relating to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality.

Ofcom took into account relevant contextual factors in this case. We recognised that RT viewers would have expected to see news on the channel relating to the conflict in Ukraine from a predominantly Russian perspective. Also, as stated above, in line with the right to freedom of expression, it was legitimate for RT to broadcast news on the conflict in Ukraine from a Russian perspective and also to report on the allegations that were being made by Russian officials and spokespersons about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. However, it was still incumbent on TV Novosti to maintain due impartiality on this matter of major political controversy by including a wide range of significant alternative viewpoints and giving them due weight in this programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes, including, for example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas and statements related to Ukrainian attacks in the region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 06:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The content

Ofcom watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 06:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Nikki Aaron (“NA”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Nikki Aaron (“NA”);
- a live update from Nikki Aaron on a range of news items (“Aaron Update 2”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a live update from Nikki Aaron in which she discussed a range of news topics, including the conflict in the Ukraine in general and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia (“Aaron Update 3”);
- a live report from Konstantin Rozhkov (“KR”) which contained no substantive differences from the Roshkov Report in the 05:00 programme (“Roshkov Report 2”);
- a live report from Peter Oliver (“PO”) which contained no substantive differences from the Oliver Report in the 05:00 programme (“Oliver Report 2”);
- the Maupin Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- the Lazare/Muller Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Nikki Aaron began the programme with an introduction outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included the following:

NA: *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

Civilian 1: [Voiceover in English] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

This was followed by Aaron Update 2, which included the following:

NA: *“The Russian Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 62 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced some 37 kilometres. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict, RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

During this update, the following captions were shown at the bottom of the screen:

- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”;*
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKES 62KM OF TERRITORY”;* and
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM”.*

This was followed by a repeat of the Gazdiev Report from the 05:00 programme, which included additional captions shown at the bottom of the screen from those included in the 05:00 programme as follows:

- *“DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT”*;
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKES 62KM OF TERRITORY”*; and,
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM”*.

After this report, Aaron Update 3 was broadcast, including the following statement:

NA: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military”*.

During Aaron Update 3, the following captions were shown at the bottom of the screen:

- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”*;
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKES 62KM OF TERRITORY”*; and,
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM”*.

This was followed by Roshkov Report 2 and Oliver Report 2, neither of which contained substantive differences from the 05:00 programme. The programme then moved onto the Maupin Report and the Lazare/Muller Interview.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“EU arming Ukraine”*;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *“EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia”*;
- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”*;
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”*;
- Quote from Nikki Aaron: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“Peace talks”*;
- Topic: *“Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks”*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”*;
- Konstantin Rozhkov, RT reporter spoke on different European countries planning to send weapons to Ukraine;
- Peter Oliver, RT reporter in Berlin spoke on the EU's support for Ukraine;
- Topic: *“Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need defensive-purpose arms”*;

- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *“In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states”*;
- Topic: *“12 Russian UN diplomats expelled from U.S. over Ukraine conflict”*; and
- Statement from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN: *“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russian, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn’t it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the Second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 6am broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES LEFT FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”*;
- *“EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES”*;
- *“EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”*;
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”*;
- *“EU TO PUT RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”¹⁸*;
- *“KIEV: AIM OF TALKS WITH MOSCOW IS CEASEFIRE, WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN TROOPS”*;
- *“U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY”*;
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINES AND WEAPONS”*;
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”*;
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED”*; and
- *“KIEV: 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, this programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

¹⁸ The caption in the broadcast was *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”*.

The programme included the repeated Gazdiev Report, with the addition of the following captions:

- *“DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT”;*
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKES 62KM OF TERRITORY”;* and
- *“RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM”.*

The programme also included the repeated Maupin Report from the 05:00 programme, which related to conflict in the Donbas region.

In summary, in relation to the programme’s reports of the actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, the Gazdiev Report repeated the claims that:

- *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The Maupin report also included the following statement which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Government and Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, as follows:

“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbas and Crimea”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region was not included in this programme.

Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti's representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of "aggression"; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US's expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the President of Ukraine; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine.

However, as detailed in the above section, the 06:00 broadcast did not include any additional alternative viewpoints to the content contained in the 05:00 programme in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to the alternative perspectives on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine applied here, in that we considered the programme failed to give due weight to the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 06:00 broadcast were the same as those in the 05:00 broadcast, except for the following: "DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT"; "RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKES 62KM OF TERRITORY"; "RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY: DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM" and "EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA". Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the

special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 07:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 07:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Nikki Aaron (“NA”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Nikki Aaron;
- a live update from Nikki Aaron on a range of news items (“Aaron Update 4”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- a report from Peter Oliver re-broadcast from an earlier point in the day with no substantive differences from Oliver Report 2 in the 06:00 programme (“Oliver Report 3”);
- a re-broadcast of a report recorded at an earlier point in the day from RT reporter Igor Zhdanov (“IZ”) on Western sanctions on Russia (“the Zhdanov report”);
- a report from Nikki Aaron on the repercussions of sanctions on EU markets, featuring pre-recorded interviews with former Austrian Diplomat Karin Kneissl and economist Eike Hamer (“the Kneissl/Hamer Interview”);
- the Maupin Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- the Lazare/Muller Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Nikki Aaron began the programme with an introduction outlining the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing English translation:

NA: *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

This was followed by Aaron Update 4, which provided an update on conflict in Ukrainian cities. This included the following:

NA: *“Well, this map shows what's been happening. The red dots highlighting these cities where Russian forces are currently fighting against the Ukrainian Army. Russia's defence ministry says the Lugansk militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres. People from various parts of Ukraine are fleeing the ongoing conflict. Almost 400,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Poland. These images show Ukrainians at a railway station in the western city of Lvov, hoping to get a train across the border. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making*

major advances against the Ukrainian military. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. RT Correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".

Aaron Update 4 included an additional caption shown at the bottom of the screen from the updates from Nikki Aaron in the 06:00 programme, which were as follows:

- *"DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT".*

This was followed by the Gazdiev Report, Rozhkov Report 2, Oliver Report 3, the Zhdanov Report, which included discussion about European energy companies, their prices and the wider repercussions of sanctions from the EU on Russia, the Maupin Report, and the Lazare/Muller Interview.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"EU arming Ukraine"*¹⁹;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *"EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia"*;
- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back"*²⁰;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed"*;
- Topic: *"Peace talks"*;
- Topic: *"Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks"*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war"*;
- Konstantin Rozhkov, RT reporter spoke on different European countries planning to send weapons to Ukraine;
- Topic: *"EU member countries send weapons and medical supplies to Ukraine"*;
- Peter Oliver, RT reporter in Berlin spoke on EU's support for Ukraine;
- Topic: *"Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need defensive-purpose arms"*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *"In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states"*;
- Topic: *"Persona non-grata"*;
- Topic: *"12 Russian UN diplomats expelled from U.S. over Ukraine conflict"*; and

¹⁹ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

²⁰ This caption did not feature in the 07:00 broadcast.

- Statement from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN: *“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russian, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn’t it?”.*

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 07:00 broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES LEFT FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”;*
- *“EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;*
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”;*
- *“EU TO PUT RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”²¹;*
- *“KIEV: AIM OF TALKS WITH MOSCOW IS CEASEFIRE, WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN TROOPS”;*
- *“U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY”;*
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINES AND WEAPONS”;*
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”;*
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”;* and
- *“KIEV SAYS IT DIDN’T ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, this programme repeated the claims that:

- *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist*

²¹ The caption in the broadcast was: *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”.*

battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;

- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We’ve heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don’t dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

It also included the following statement from the Maupin Report which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russian, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbas and Crimea”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme. Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti’s representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of “aggression”; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US’s expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the Ukrainian president; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. However, the 07:00 broadcast did not include any additional alternative viewpoints to the content contained in the 05:00 programme in this regard. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to the alternative perspectives on the ongoing conflict in

Ukraine applied here, in that we considered the programme failed to give due weight to the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the 07:00 programme included the following caption that had not been in the 06:00 broadcast: "KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED". We did not consider that this caption provided any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and the contentious criticisms made about the Ukrainian military and therefore our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast also applied in this case.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We considered our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 08:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 08:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Nikki Aaron (“NA”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Nikki Aaron;
- a live update from Nikki Aaron on a range of news items (“Aaron Update 5”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- Oliver Report 3 (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Kneissl/Hamer Interview (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Maupin Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- the Lazare/Muller Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Nikki Aaron began the programme with an introduction outlining the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

NA: *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

This was followed by Aaron Update 5 which included the following:

NA: *“This map shows what's been happening, the red dots highlight the cities where the Russian forces are currently fighting against the Ukrainian Army. Russian's defence ministry says that Lugansk militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. While Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres... Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict, RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

This was followed by the Gazdiev Report, which included an additional caption shown at the bottom of the screen from the 05:00, 06:00 and 07:00 programmes as follows:

- *“UKRAINE CLAIMS DONBASS REPUBLICS AS PART OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY”.*

This was followed by: Rozhkov Report 2, Oliver Report 3, the Zhdanov Report, the Kneissl/Hamer Interview, the Maupin Report and the Lazare/Muller Interview.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“EU arming Ukraine”*²²;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *“EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia”*;
- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”*;
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”*;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“Peace talks”*;
- Topic: *“Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks”*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”*;
- Konstantin Rozhkov, RT reporter spoke on different European countries planning to send weapons to Ukraine;
- Topic: *“EU member countries send weapons and medical supplies to Ukraine”*;
- Peter Oliver, RT reporter in Berlin spoke on EU’s support for Ukraine;
- Topic: *“Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need defensive-purpose arms”*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief: *“In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states”*;
- Topic: *“Persona non-grata”*;
- Topic: *“12 Russian UN diplomats expelled from U.S. over Ukraine conflict”*; and
- Statement from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN: *“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn’t it?”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 08:00 broadcast:

²² TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES LEFT FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”;*
- *“EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;*
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”;*
- *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”;*
- *“U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY”;*
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINES AND WEAPONS”;*
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”;*
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”;*
- *“KIEV SAYS IT DIDN’T ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”;* and
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas region, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

The programme included a repeat of the Maupin Report and the Gazdiev Report. The following caption was included in the Maupin Report:

- *“UKRAINE CLAIMS DONBASS REPUBLICS AS PART OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY”.*

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these reports repeated the claims that:

- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance,*

wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;

- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We’ve heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don’t dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and,
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

They also included the following statement which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Government and Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

“Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians’ heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbas and Crimea”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme. Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti’s representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of “aggression”; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US’s expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the Ukrainian president; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. However, with the exception of additional captions discussed further below, the 08:00 broadcast did not include any additional alternative viewpoints to the content contained in the 05:00 programme in this regard. We considered our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to the alternative perspectives on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine applied here, in that, in our view, the programme failed to give due weight to the significant viewpoint of the Ukrainian state

and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the following caption relating to the conflict in Donbas: *"UKRAINE CLAIMS DONBASS REPUBLICS AS PART OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY"*. Ofcom also took into account that this programme included another additional caption about the wider conflict in Ukraine: *"ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS"*. However, we did not consider that these captions provided any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and the contentious criticisms made about the Ukrainian military and therefore our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast also applied in this case.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that the TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 09:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through a complaint, which alleged the news coverage contained incorrect information.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 09:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Nikki Aaron (“NA”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Nikki Aaron;
- a live update from Nikki Aaron on a range of news items which did not contain substantive differences from Aaron Update 5 in the 08:00 programme (“Aaron Update 6”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- Oliver Report 3 (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Zhdanov Report (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Kneissl/Hamer Interview (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- the Maupin Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme); and
- the Lazare/Muller Interview (repeated from the 05:00 programme).

Nikki Aaron’s introduction to the programme outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included clips of civilians as follows, with subtitles providing the English translation:

NA: *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself, I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Aaron Update 6 followed this, with no substantive differences from Aaron Update 5 in the 08:00 programme.

Nikki Aaron then introduced Gazdiev Report. This was followed by Rozhkov Report 2, Oliver Report 3, the Zhdanov Report, the Kneissl/Hamer Interview, the Maupin Report, and the Lazare/Muller Interview.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"EU arming Ukraine"*²³;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *"EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia"*;
- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back"*;
- Quote from presenter Nikki Aaron: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed"*;
- Topic: *"Peace talks"*;
- Topic: *"Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks"*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war"*;
- Konstantin Rozhkov, RT reporter spoke on different European countries planning to send weapons to Ukraine;
- Topic: *"EU member countries send weapons and medical supplies to Ukraine"*;
- Peter Oliver, RT reporter in Berlin spoke on EU's support for Ukraine;
- Topic: *"Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need defensive-purpose arms"*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief: *"In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states"*;
- Topic: *"Persona non-grata"*;
- Topic: *"12 Russian UN diplomats expelled from U.S. over Ukraine conflict"*; and
- Statement from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN: *"Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians' heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russian, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn't it?"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 09:00 broadcast:

- *"UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS"*;
- *"EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY"*;
- *"EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS"*;
- *"BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT"*;
- *"EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS"*;
- *"U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY"*;
- *"EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINES AND WEAPONS"*;
- *"TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA"*;
- *"KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED"*;

²³ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

- “KIEV SAYS IT DIDN’T ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”; and
- “ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

The programme included an introduction from Nikki Aaron, the Gazdiev Report and the Maupin Report.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, this programme included the claims that:

- *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We’ve heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement*

underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already"; and

- *"Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

They also included the following statement which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Government and Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows :

"Deadly airstrikes dropped on civilians' heads across the entire country and the Russian troops crossed Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbas and Crimea".

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti's representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of "*aggression*"; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US's expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the Ukrainian president; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. However, the 09:00 broadcast did not include any additional alternative viewpoints to the context contained in the 05:00 and the additional caption contained in the 08:00 programme in this regard. We considered our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and the 08:00 broadcast in relation to the alternative perspectives on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine applied here, in that, in our view, the programme failed to give due weight to the significant viewpoint of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast.

However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 09:00 programme were the same as those included in the 08:00 programme. Our

reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian military.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 12:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 12:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, RT presenter Donald Courter (“DC”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Donald Courter;
- a live report with RT reporter Ilya Petrenko (“IP”) on statements made by Sergey Lavrov (“SV”), the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights, with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine (“the Petrenko Report”);
- a report about a joint news conference held by Jens Stoltenberg (“JS”), NATO’s general secretary, and Andrzej Duda, the Polish president, about Poland’s support of Ukrainian refugees, containing a reference to condemnation of Russia’s actions (“the Stoltenberg Conference”);
- Oliver Report 3 (repeated from the 07:00 programme);
- Rozhkov Report 2 (repeated from the 06:00 programme);
- a live report from Donald Courter on fighting across Ukraine, including in the Donbas region (“the Courter Report”)
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a report on social media outlets’ restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU, including an interview with political analyst Nikola Mirkovic (“the Mirkovic Interview”); and
- a live update from Donald Courter about reports of an explosion in Taganrog.

Donald Courter’s introduction to the programme outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included clips of civilians as follows, with subtitles providing the English translation:

DC: *“Day six of the violence in Ukraine. Civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I’m not crying for myself, I’m crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn’t come back”.*

Civilian 2: *“There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

This was followed by the Petrenko Report, which included the following discussion:

IP: *“Well, I guess it’s fair to say that Mr. Lavrov’s second statement was mostly a response to the Western media, to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now, Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists, the officials, how after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian-speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country*

were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so called, in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region”.

IP: *“...we also heard from the Kremlin's Press Secretary that the accusations against Russia that Russia could be using cluster bombs or vacuum bombs is also complete lies”.*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

Donald Courter then introduced the Stoltenberg Conference, which included the following statement from Jens Stoltenberg:

JS: *“President Putin has shattered peace in Europe. Allies condemn the unjustified and brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Russian assault is totally unacceptable, unacceptable. NATO is a defensive alliance. We do not seek conflict with Russia. Russia must immediately stop the war, pull out all its forces from Ukraine and engage in good faith in diplomatic efforts. The world stands with Ukraine in calling for peace”.*

This was followed by Oliver Report 3, Rozhkov Report 2 and the Courter Report, which included the following:

DC: *“Russia's defence ministry says the Lugansk People's Militia (“LPM”) has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres”.*

DC: *“Now Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and has said it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. All members of the OSCE²⁴ special monitoring mission in the [DPR] are on their way out. The mission used to monitor and report violations of a ceasefire agreement between Kiev and militia forces. The mission said on Sunday that it would relocate staff due to deteriorating security conditions. Now we've here got the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the two front lines, with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified and people's lives and homes are being lost every day amid this conflict. RT's correspondent Murad Gazdiev has more”.*

²⁴ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“OSCE PULLING OUT ALL ITS MONITORING PERSONNEL FROM DONETSK REPUBLIC”.*

The Gazdiev Report then followed in this programme. It included the following captions, shown at the bottom of the screen, as follows:

- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”;* and,
- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

Donald Courter then introduced the Mirkovic Interview. The programme finished with an update from Donald Courter as follows:

DC: *“Now, this is news just in. The sound of an explosion has rung out in the Russian city of Taganrog, near the border with the Donetsk Republic. Our crew was there, heard it themselves. And of course, we'll bring you any updates as we get them”.*

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“EU arming Ukraine”*²⁵;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *“the European Union pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weapons. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia”;*
- Topic: *“NATO: We condemn Russian invasion, we don't seek conflict with Russia”;*
- Statement from Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General: *“President Putin has shuttered [sic] peace in Europe. Allies condemn the unjustified and brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Russian assault is totally unacceptable. NATO is a defensive alliance, we do not seek conflict with Russia. Russia must immediately stop the war, pull out all its forces from Ukraine and engage in good faith in diplomatic efforts. The world stands with Ukraine in calling for peace”;*
- Peter Oliver, RT reporter in Berlin spoke on EU's support for Ukraine;
- Topic: *“Borrell: Our support is crucial, they need weapons for defence”;*
- Statement from Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief: *“In this situation our support for the Ukrainian air-forces is crucial. Crucial. They need ammunitions, the new health-care material, they need defensive-purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together with the member states”;*
- Topic: *“Peace talks”;*
- Topic: *“Positions stated as Russia, Ukraine conclude first round of peace talks”;*
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”;*

²⁵ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”*;
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“OSCE pulling out all its monitoring personnel from Donetsk republic”*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *“All members of the OSCE special monitoring mission in the Donetsk Peoples’ Republic are on their way out. The mission used to monitor and report violations of the cease-fire agreement between Kiev and militia forces. The mission said on Sunday that it would relocate staff due to deteriorating security conditions”*;
- Topic: *“Banned in the EU”*;
- Topic: *“Social media giants announce ban on RT and Sputnik in European Union”*;
- Statement from Nick Clegg, Meta VP Global Affairs: *“We have received requests from a number of Governments and the EU to take further steps in relation to Russian state controlled media. Given the exceptional nature of the current situation, we will be restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU at this time”*;
- Topic: *“EU Chief: RT and Sputnik to be banned from broadcasting in EU”*; and
- Statement from Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief: *“We are taking a crucial step to turn off the tap for the Russian’s information manipulation in Europe by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 12:00 broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”*;
- *“EU PROPOSES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”*;
- *“EU CLOSES ENTIRE AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”*;
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”*;
- *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”*;
- *“U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY”*;
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINES AND WEAPONS”*;
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”*;
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”*;
- *“KIEV SAYS IT DIDN’T ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”*; and
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, this programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom's view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under "Ofcom's Guidance to Section Five of the Code" applied in this case.

The programme included the Petrenko Report, the repeated Oliver Report 3 and Rozhkov Report 2 the Donald Courter Report and the repeated Gazdiev Report. In relation to the alleged actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, the reports in this programme included the following statements:

- *"Day six of the violence in Ukraine. Civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day";*
- *"Mr. Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists, the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian-speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so-called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region";*
- *"the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage";*
- *"This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation";*
- *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already"; and*

- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The following caption was shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted the Petrenko Report contained in this programme included criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities’ actions in the Donbas since 2014. Given the Russian Government has been widely reported as justifying its invasion of Ukraine in part due to the alleged actions of the Ukrainian Government against the population in the Donbas in the period of 2014 to 2022, we considered that these criticisms of the historic actions of the Ukrainian authorities were relevant to our consideration of whether due impartiality in this case in relation to the coverage of the ongoing conflict in the Donbas. We considered that Ilya Petrenko’s statement that *“the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region”* was highly critical of the Ukrainian state and military and that it attributed 13,000 civilian deaths in the Donbas region to an operation by *“Kiev forces”*. We also took into account that the Petrenko Report included the statement that Mr Lavrov was responding *“to the Western media, to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unproved”*. We considered that this did reflect, to some extent, the Western perspective on the conflict, but we did not consider that this statement provided an alternative view to the specific, highly critical statements made about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. There was no reference to, for example, the perspective of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to this matter.

We took into account TV Novosti’s representations that it included alternative viewpoints in the programme. Ofcom acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in the Ukraine and the EU’s support of Ukraine, in the form of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *“aggression”*; EU support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia; the US’s expulsion of 12 Russian UN diplomats over the conflict in the Ukraine; potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, including a statement from the Ukrainian president; and Western mainstream media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. However, we considered that all of these references related to the conflict in general. They did not represent the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the conflict within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that

significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes from Western leaders, were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti included in its representations reference to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. However, we were mindful that that the only captions related to the Donbas in the programme were the following:

- *“OSCE PULLING OUT ALL ITS MONITORING PERSONNEL FROM DONETSK REPUBLIC”*; and,
- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”*.

Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. Further, we considered that the caption outlining the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s view reinforced the criticisms of Ukraine forces by attributing *“criminal actions”* in Eastern Ukraine to the *“Kiev government”*.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news items about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom’s Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 15:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 15:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, presenter Donald Courter (“DC”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Donald Courter;
- a live update from Donald Courter, which included a statement from the Russian Defence Ministry regarding “*information attacks*” against Russia from Ukraine and Russia’s plans to hit Ukrainian security services and “*information and psychological operations centre*” facilities in Kiev with high precision weapons. This update also included information about residents fleeing Kyiv (“the Russian Defence Ministry Statement”);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 12:00 programme);
- a live report from Donald Courter on fighting taking place across Ukraine (“Courter Report 2”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a further live report from Donald Courter which included a range of clips of various political leaders giving statements about a range of topics related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine in general. This report also discussed a monitoring operation in Donetsk and restriction of RT and Sputnik across the EU, including a statement from META VP Global Affairs, Nick Clegg (“Courter Report 3”);
- a live update from Donald Courter about reports of an attack on a TV tower in Kyiv; and
- a live report from Oksana Boyko (“OB”) about attacks on Ukraine’s information services, specifically a TV tower in Kyiv, in which she and Donald Courter discussed “*fake videos and fake information going on in the mainstream media*” (“the Boyko Report”).

Donald Courter’s introduction to the programme outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing English translation:

DC: *“Day six of the special operation in Ukraine. Civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost every day, eight years since Ukraine began shelling”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals”.*

This was followed by the Russian Defence Ministry Statement and then the Petrenko Report. Courter Report 2 was then broadcast, which included the following in addition to the content outlined in the 12:00 programme:

DC: *“Now across Ukraine fighting continues on day six of the Russian military operation. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk as shelling continues there. The number of victims is not yet known. However, the city mayor has warned that there may be victims*

under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the liberated settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammunition intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out weapons to civilians and released prisoners”.

DC: *“Russia's defence ministry says the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they've reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. Now here you can see footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are desperately trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles continuing to rage on. Local residents are simply terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the war erupted. RT's correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBAS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”;*
- *“RUSSIA: LUGANSK MILITIA TAKE 62KM OF TERRITORY, DONETSK FORCES ADVANCE ABOUT 30KM”;*
- *“LAVROV: RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PROHIBITED IN UKRAINE’S SCHOOLS AND IN OFFICIAL DISCOURSE”;*
- *“LAVROV: THERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN UKRAINE”;* and
- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

This was followed by the Gazdiev Report and Courter Report 3, which included a range of clips of various political leaders, including President Zelenskyy; Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK; Alice Weidel, German MP; and, Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief, giving statements on a range of topics related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine in general. Courter Report 3 also referenced Donetsk in discussing the removal of the *“OSCE special monitoring mission”* used to *“monitor and report violations of a ceasefire agreement between Kiev and militia forces”*. Following this, Donald Courter discussed plans to restrict access to RT and Sputnik across the EU and included a statement from Nick Clegg, Meta VP Global Affairs. Courter Report 3 also included the following:

DC: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes these claims. While not disclosing concrete figures, it says it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military”.*

Donald Courter then provided a live update about reports of an attack on a TV tower in Kyiv, before the programme ended with the Boyko Report which included the following:

OB: *"We have a huge operation to infiltrate Russian airwaves, to affect the public opinion in this country through the use of, you know, various platforms through the use of various media, which don't even bother to verify the information. I don't know if you or if our viewers have seen that, but, for example, BBC the other day they ran the footage shot in Donetsk. You know, uh, sustained because of the Ukrainian artillery. And they present, they presented it as, uh, as a damage to the houses in Kharkov uh, supposedly done by the Russian Special Forces. And there are many, many, many, many, many, many examples of that".*

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"Ukraine's road to EU"*²⁶;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *"Ukraine's President makes an impassionate plea to EU but Brussel's [sic] officials have held back on any assurances"*;
- Topic: *"EU arming Ukraine"*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *"...the EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weapons with even traditionally neutral Switzerland joining European sanctions against Russia"*;
- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back"*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed"*;
- Topic: *"President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances"*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"We are fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we all are showing that the Union with us will be stronger and without you Ukraine will be alone. We've proven our strength, proven we're at least same as you. Prove you are letting us go"*²⁷. *Prove you are really Europeans. And then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness"*²⁸;
- Topic: *"No-fly plea blocked"*;
- Topic: *"Ukrainian journalist to Johnson: NATO unwilling to defend civilians"*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *"Well, thank you, thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone I've said to [President Zelenskyy] I think a couple of times. Unfortunately the implication of that is that the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something we can do or we've envisaged"*;
- Topic: *"Peace talks"*;
- Topic: *"German MP: It was a mistake to give unfeasible promises on joining NATO"*;

²⁶ RT also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

²⁷ The audio in the broadcast was *"prove you aren't letting us go"*.

²⁸ RT also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop, it cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years"*;
- Topic: *"OSCE pulling out all its monitoring personnel from Donetsk republic"*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *"All members of the OSCE special monitoring mission in the Donetsk Peoples' Republic are on their way out. The mission used to monitor and report violations of the cease-fire agreement between Kiev and militia forces. The mission said on Sunday that it would relocate staff due to deteriorating security conditions"*;
- Topic: *"RT restricted"*;
- Topic: *"Social media giants announce ban on RT and Sputnik in European Union"*;
- Statement from Nick Clegg, Meta VP Global Affairs: *"We have received requests from a number of Governments and the EU to take further steps in relation to Russian state controlled media. Given the exceptional nature of the current situation, we will be restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU at this time"*;
- Topic: *"EU Chief: RT and Sputnik to be banned from broadcasting in EU"*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief: *"We are taking a crucial step to turn off the tap for the Russian's information manipulation in Europe by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union"*; and
- Statement from Correctiv²⁹, Official Facebook fact checker: *"You are not independent media. You are a state agency of the Russian Government under the jurisdiction of Putin, responsible for war crimes. You do not publish independent reports about the statements of Putin's politicians. You are a state-integrated power propaganda tool that is published in the West with the intention of broadcasting the will of the Putin government in our country. You are permanently opposed to the foundations of the German Press Code. You can't have any claims against us"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 15:00 broadcast:

- *"UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS"*;
- *"BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT"*;
- *"EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS"*;
- *"U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY"*;
- *"EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS"*;
- *"TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA"*;
- *"KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED"*;
- *"KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA"*;

²⁹ Correctiv are non-profit news organisation based in Berlin that have provided an independent fact checking services for Facebook in Germany since 2017.

- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;* and
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

The programme included the repeated Petrenko Report, Courter Report 2, the repeated Gazdiev Report, clips of various political leaders discussing a range of topics related to the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine in general, and the Boyko Report.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these reports included the claims that:

- *“We report from the war-torn Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost every day, eight years since Ukraine began shelling”;*
- *“Mr. Lavrov’s second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian-speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region”;*
- *“Russia’s defence ministry says the Lugansk People’s Militia (“LPM”) has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday’s front line. As for Donetsk forces, they’ve reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. Now here you can see footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are desperately trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles*

continuing to rage on. Local residents are simply terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the war erupted”;

- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We’ve heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The following caption was shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered the above claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that in the introduction to the programme, Donald Courter made highly critical allegations about the actions of Ukrainian authorities in the Donbas. This included the statement that: *“We report from the war-torn Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost every day, eight years since Ukraine began shelling”.* We considered this statement was highly critical of Ukrainian state/military and included references similar to the criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities related to its actions in the Donbas included in the Petrenko Report. We considered this programme did not include any alternative view on this matter, for example there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas.

Ofcom was mindful of TV Novosti's representations that alternative viewpoints were reflected in the programme (see above). We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of "*aggression*"; EU support for Ukraine; the inclusion, in particular in Courter Report 3, of clips of various political leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian president; and the restriction of RT and Sputnik across the EU as a result of their coverage of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. However, we considered that these related to the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine in general and did not provide any alternative viewpoints to the highly critical claims made specifically about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcasts in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and, in the case of the captions regarding Sergey Lavrov's view of Kyiv's actions in Eastern Ukraine, reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 16:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 16:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Donald Courter (“DC”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. This included the following:

- a live introduction from Donald Courter;
- a live report from RT reporter Maria Finoshina about an explosion at a TV tower in Kyiv (“the Finoshina Report”);
- a live report from Donald Courter on fighting taking place across Ukraine (“Courter Report 4”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 12:00 programme);
- a live update from Donald Courter on Ukraine’s and Russia’s claims in relation to Russian casualties;
- a live report from RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij (“CD”) about Ukraine’s proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders (“the Dubenskij Report”); and
- a live report with Gregory Copley, President of the International Strategic Studies Association, about the EU sanctions and their impact, and restrictions against RT and Sputnik (“the Copley Report”).

Donald Courter’s introduction to the programme outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

DC: *“On day six of Russia’s special operation, the Ukrainian Army’s indiscriminate bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between front lines. We report from the Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of Ukrainian bombings”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals”.*

Donald Courter then introduced the Finoshina Report during which the following captions were shown at the bottom of the screen:

- *“LAVROV: RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PROHIBITED IN UKRAINE’S SCHOOLS AND IN OFFICIAL DISCOURSE”;*
- *“LAVROV: THERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN UKRAINE”;* and,
- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”.*

This was followed by Courter Report 4 which included the following:

DC: *"Russia's defence ministry says the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line and as for the [DPM], they've reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. This is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region amid shelling by the Ukrainian Army. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the liberated settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all of its equipment and ammunition intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital is nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city, as the government is said to be handing out weapons to civilians and released prisoners alike. Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest. Now here's some footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of some shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles continuing to rage on. Local residents are absolutely terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost, eight years after Ukraine invaded and began indiscriminately bombing Donbass. RT's correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports"*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"DONETSK RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM SHELLING AMID CONFLICT";* and
- *"UKRAINE CLAIMS DONBASS REPUBLICS AS PART OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY"*.

This was followed by the Gazdiev Report, the Petrenko Report, and the following update from Donald Courter:

DC: *"Now, Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow, however, refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and says it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military"*.

This was followed by the Dubenskij Report, which included a range of clips of various political leaders, including President Zelenskyy; Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK; Alice Weidel, German MP; and, a reference to Charles Michel's, the EU's Council President, views on a range of topics related to the conflict in Ukraine in general and Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine. These included the following:

CD: *"Now, there have been even more reports today coming out of Ukraine of civilians being killed in air strikes that are reportedly coming from the Russian side. And earlier today, Ukraine's president, as you mentioned there, had called once again for Ukraine to have this emergency ascension to the European Union. Ukraine has been asking for many years to become part of the European Union, and earlier on Tuesday, President Zelenskyy once again said let's make this happen essentially. Now the EU's council president has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international, the democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack and he said this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple and he also accused Russia of violating international law with this invasion in Ukraine. However, despite that being*

the majority view at least here in Europe there are some dissenting voices who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war”.

The programme then ended with the Copley Report, in which EU sanctions against Russia and the impact these might have, were discussed, in addition to restrictions put in place globally against RT and Sputnik.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“Ukraine’s road to EU”³⁰*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *“Ukraine’s President makes an impassionate plea to EU but Brussel’s [sic] officials have held back on any assurances”*;
- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”*;
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”*;
- Quote from presenter Donald Courter: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances”*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“We are fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we all are showing that the Union with us will be stronger and without you Ukraine will be alone. We’ve proven our strength, proven we’re at least same as you. Prove you are letting us go³¹. Prove you are really Europeans. And then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness”³²*;
- Topic: *“EU council holds extraordinary plenary session on Ukraine’s crisis”*;
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President: *“I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless”*;
- Topic: *“Ukrainian journalist to Johnson: NATO unwilling to defend civilians”*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *“Well, thank you, thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone... Unfortunately the implication of that is that the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That’s not something we can do or we’ve envisaged”*;

³⁰ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

³¹ The audio in the broadcast was *“prove you aren’t letting us go”*.

³² TV Novosti also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- Topic: *“EU: Sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression”*; and
- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *“It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop, it cannot be anyone’s outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 16:00 broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”*;
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”*;
- *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”*;
- *“U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY”*;
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS”*;
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”*;
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”*;
- *“KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”*;
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”*;
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”*; and,
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

The programme included the Finoshina Report, Courter Report 3, the repeated Gazdiev report, the repeated Petrenko Report and the Dubenskij Report.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these reports included the claims that:

- *“Now here's some footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of some shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles continuing to rage on. Local residents are absolutely terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost, eight years after Ukraine invaded and began indiscriminately bombing Donbass”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;*
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”;* and
- *“Mr. Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian-speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region”.*

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“BREAKING NEWS LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”;* and
- *“RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE’S MILITARY”.*

The Dubenskij Report also included the following statements which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Government on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

- *“there have been even more reports today coming out of Ukraine of civilians being killed in air strikes that are reportedly coming from the Russian side”*; and,
- *“Now the EU's council president has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international, the democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack and he said this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple and he also accused Russia of violating international law with this invasion in Ukraine”*.

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“BREAKING NEWS LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”*; and
- *“KIEV ACCUSES RUSSIA OF AGGRESSION AND INSISTS IT IS FIGHTING BACK”*.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered the above claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy as discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that in Courter Report 3, Courter's introduction to the Gazdiev Report included a reference that the ongoing conflict in the Donbas was occurring *“eight years after Ukraine invaded and began indiscriminately bombing Donbass”*. We considered this statement was highly critical of Ukrainian state/military and included references similar to the criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities related to its actions in the Donbas since 2014 included in the Petrenko Report. We considered this programme did not include any alternative view on this matter, for example there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to conflict in the Donbas, including the specific claim made in Courter Report 3 that Ukraine had been *“indiscriminately bombing Donbass”* for eight years.

We took into account TV Novosti's representations that it had included alternative viewpoints. We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine. For example, the Dubenskij Report included a statement that there had been *“even more reports today coming out of Ukraine of civilians being killed in air strikes that are reportedly coming from the Russian side”*. We also noted that the report included clips of various political leaders, including a reference to a statement from the Chair of the European Council, Michel Charles, in which he *“accused Russia of violating international law with this invasion in Ukraine”*. We considered that the Dubenskij Report provided alternative views on the conflict in the Ukraine in general, in particular in its reference to attacks being reportedly perpetrated by Russian forces. We also took into account that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *“aggression”*; EU support for Ukraine and reference to sanctions against Russia; and, the inclusion of clips of various political

leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian President. However, we considered that these views did not provide any alternative viewpoints in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about Ukrainian state and/or military conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that no new relevant captions relating to the Donbas were included in the 16:00 broadcast. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcasts in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and, in the case of the captions regarding Sergey Lavrov's view of Kyiv's actions in Eastern Ukraine, reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 17:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 17:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, presenter Peter Scott ("PS") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. This included the following:

- a live introduction from Peter Scott;
- a live report from Peter Scott ("the Scott Report") on headline news about the wider conflict in Ukraine;
- a live report from Maria Finoshina ("MF") which contained no substantive differences from the Finoshina Report in the 16:00 programme ("Finoshina Report 2");
- a live report from Peter Scott on fighting across Ukraine, including the Donbas region ("the Scott Report 2");
- an interview with Vladimir Chizhov ("VC"), permanent Russian representative to the EU ("the Chizhov Interview") about EU sanctions against Russia;
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from 05:00 programme);
- a live report from Peter Scott which included a clip of President Zelenskyy's address to the European Parliament ("Scott Report 3"); and,
- a report from Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") which contained no substantive differences from the Dubenskij Report in the 16:00 programme ("Dubenskij Report 2").

Peter Scott began the programme with an introduction outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

PS: *"On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost eight years after the conflict started".*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They buried them by the front door. Like animals".*

This was followed by the Finoshina Report 2 which contained no substantive differences from the Finoshina Report in the 16:00 programme.

This was followed by Scott Report 2, which included the following:

PS: *"Russia's Defence Ministry says [LPM] has advanced against Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond the previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned there may be still victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This*

footage from the Donbas shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its ammunition and equipment intact”.

During this update, the following caption was shown at the bottom of the screen:

- “RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE’S MILITARY”.

This was followed by the Chizhov Interview in which they discussed a range of topics including the proportionality of the EU’s response to Russia and the banning of RT in the EU.

Peter Scott went on to introduce the Gazdiev Report with the following:

PS: *“Well, here’s footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified with people’s lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

This was followed by Scott Report 3, which included a clip of President Zelenskyy addressing the European Parliament:

PS: *“Well, Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and says it’s been making major advances against Ukrainian military. Ukraine’s President has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union. At a special session of the EU Parliament, Vladimir Zelensky stressed Kiev’s willingness to accede in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc”.*

VZ: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we’re all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven where at least the same as you. Prove you aren’t letting us go, prove you’re really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness”.*

The programme finished with the Dubenskij Report 2, which included a range of clips of various political leaders, including President Zelenskyy; Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK; Alice Weidel, German MP; and a reference to Charles Michel’s, the EU’s Council President, views on a range of topics related to the conflict in Ukraine in general and Ukraine’s proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“Ukraine’s road to EU”*³³;
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Ukraine’s President makes an impassionate plea to EU but Brussel’s [sic] officials have held back on any assurances”;*

³³ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back"*;
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed"*;
- Topic: *"President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances"*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *"We are fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we all are showing that the Union with us will be stronger and without you Ukraine will be alone. We've proven our strength, proven we're at least same as you. Prove you are letting us go"³⁴. Prove you are really Europeans. And then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness"³⁵;*
- Topic: *"EU council holds extraordinary plenary session on Ukraine's crisis"*;
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless"*;
- Topic: *"Ukrainian journalist to Johnson: NATO unwilling to defend civilians"*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *"Well, thank you, thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone... Unfortunately the implication of that is that the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something we can do or we've envisaged"*;
- Topic: *"EU: Sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression"*; and,
- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop, it cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 17:00 broadcast:

- *"UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDED, PARTIES TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS"*;
- *"BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT"*;
- *"EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS"*;
- *"U.S. DECLARED 12 RUSSIAN UN DIPLOMATS PERSONA NON GRATA – RUSSIAN UN ENVOY"*;
- *"EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS"*;

³⁴ The audio in the broadcast was *"prove you aren't letting us go"*.

³⁵ TV Novosti also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”;*
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 RUSSIAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”;*
- *“KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”;*
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;* and,
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

This programme included Finoshina Report 2, the Scott Report, the repeated Gazdiev Report and the Dubenskij Report 2.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these reports included the claims that:

- *“On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost eight years after the conflict started”;*
- *“Russia's Defence Ministry says [LPM] has advanced against Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond the previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned there may be still victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue”;*
- *“here's footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging*

on. Local residents are terrified with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began”;

- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”;* and
- *“RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE'S MILITARY”.*

The Dubenskij Report 2 also included the following statement which reflected the perspective of the EU on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

“EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rules-based international order, democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack. And he said, this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered the above claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For

example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that in both the introduction to the programme and the Scott Report, Peter Scott made highly critical allegations about the actions of Ukrainian authorities in the Donbas. This included statements that: *“the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines”*, and *“amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk”*. These statements alleged that the Ukrainian military was responsible for bombing which caused civilian deaths in the Donbas region. We considered there was no alternative view on this matter, for example there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to conflict in the Donbas.

We took into account TV Novosti's representations that it had included alternative viewpoints. We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine. For example, the Dubenskij Report 2 included clips of various political leaders, including a reference to a statement from the Chair of the European Council, Michel Charles, in which he *“accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism”*. We therefore considered that the Dubenskij Report 2 provided alternative views on the conflict in the Ukraine in general. We also took into account that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *“aggression”*; EU support for Ukraine and reference to sanctions against Russia; and, the inclusion of clips of various political leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian President. However, we considered that these views did not provide any alternative viewpoints in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about Ukrainian state and/or military conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above quotes on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that no new relevant captions relating to the Donbas were included in the 17:00 broadcast. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 18:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme through its own monitoring.

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 18:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Peter Scott ("PS") was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Peter Scott;
- a live report from Peter Scott ("Scott Report 4") on headline news about the wider conflict in Ukraine;
- Finoshina Report 2 (repeated from 17:00) ;
- a live report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 2 in the 17:00 programme ("Scott Report 5") ;
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a live report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 3 in the 17:00 programme ("Scott Report 6");
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 17:00 programme);
- an interview with Martin Summers ("MS"), a journalist, about EU support of Ukraine ("the Summers Interview");
- a live report from Peter Scott on anti-war rallies in Russia ("Scott Report 7"); and
- the Petrenko Report (repeated from the 12:00 programme).

Peter Scott began the programme with an introduction outlining the latest news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

PS: *"On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict".*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They buried them by the front door. Like animals".*

Scott Report 4 was followed by Finoshina Report 2, repeated from the 17:00 programme, and Scott Report 5 which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 2 in the 17:00 programme. Scott Report 5 included the following:

PS: *"Russia's Defence Ministry claims the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbas region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble. That's as the rescue operation continues. This footage from the Donbas shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas.*

It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city, as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest. And here is footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of an apparent shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after Ukraine invaded and beginning indiscriminately bombing the Donbas. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.

This was followed by the Dubenskij Report 2 which included a range of clips of various political leaders, including President Zelenskyy; Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK; Alice Weidel, German MP; and a reference to Charles Michel's, the EU's Council President, views on a range of topics related to the conflict in Ukraine in general and Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine.

This was followed by the Summers Interview where Peter Scott interviewed Martin Summers, a journalist, about a range of topics including: the EU supplying military support to Ukraine, the possibility of Ukraine joining the EU, calls to ban RT in the UK and the peace talks between Ukraine and Russia. The Summers Interview included discussion about EU support of Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Martin Summers said the following in relation to the Donbas region:

MS: *“...I think the only reason that Zelensky is talking to Russia and talking to the Donbass separatists is because of the violence that's been going on. They've had eight years to settle this, and they've been put, they've been put under no pressure, particularly by the French and the Germans, who are the guarantors of the Minsk agreement, they have been put under no pressure to negotiate”.*

This was followed by Scott Report 7 on anti-war rallies in Russia which included the following:

PS: *“And now to Russia's northern capital, where people have gathered for a sixth day of anti-war rallies. Local media report that some 150 people took to the central streets of St Petersburg. At least 50 have been taken into custody, with some being knocked over during the detentions. People have been heard chanting ‘no war’, demanding an end to Russia's special operation in Ukraine. That's what President Putin calls it”.*

The programme finished with the Petrenko Report, repeated from the 12:00 programme which included statements made by Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“Ukraine's road to EU”*³⁶;

³⁶ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Ukraine’s president makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on the new assurances”*³⁷;
- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”*;
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”*;
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression. It says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down, and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances”*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we’re all showing that the Union with us will be stronger, without you Ukraine will be alone. We’ve proven our strength, proven we’re at least the same as you, prove you’re one letting us go, prove we’re really Europeans”*³⁸. And the life will defeat death, and light will defeat darkness”³⁹;
- Topic: *“EU council holds extraordinary plenary session on Ukraine’s crisis”*;
- Topic: *“EU: sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression”*;
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President: *“I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless”*;
- Topic: *“Ukrainian journalist to Johnson: NATO unwilling to defend civilians”*;
- Topic: *“British PM: UK doesn’t want to be engaged in combat with Russia”*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *“when you talk about the no-fly zone, unfortunately the implication of that is the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, it would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That’s not something that we can do or that we’ve envisaged”*;
- Topic: *“German MP: it was a mistake to give unfeasible promises on joining NATO”*; and
- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *“it was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so that Ukraine could develop and cannot be anyone’s outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about for 20 years”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 18:00 broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDE, PARTIES LEAVE TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”*;

³⁷ The audio in the broadcast was *“on any assurances”*.

³⁸ The audio in the broadcast was *“prove you aren’t letting us go, prove you are really Europeans”*.

³⁹ TV Novosti also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- *“REPORT: GERMAN ENERGY FIRM E.ON REFUSES TO SHUT DOWN NORD STREAM 1 PIPELINE”;*
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”;*
- *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”;*
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS”;*
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”;*
- *“FIERCE FIGHTING TAKES PLACE IN UKRAINE’S SECOND LARGEST CITY KHARKOV”;*
- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”;*
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”;*
- *“KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”;*
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;*
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”;*
- *“REPORTS: SHELL HITS KIEV TV TOWER, BROADCASTS KNOCKED OUT”;* and
- *“UKRAINIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY: TV CHANNELS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR SOME TIME”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

This programme included a live introduction from Peter Scott and Scott Report 4, which included headline news updates, Finoshina Report 2, Scott Report 5, the repeated Gazdiev Report, Scott Report 6, Dubenskij Report 2, the Summers Interview about the EU’s military support to Ukraine, Scott Report 7 on anti-war rallies in Russia, and the repeated Petrenko Report.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, these reports included the claims that:

- *“On day six of Russia’s military intervention, the Ukrainian Army’s alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost eight years after the conflict started”;*

- *“Russia's Defence Ministry claims the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbas region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble. That's as the rescue operation continues. This footage from the Donbas shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact”;*
- *“Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after Ukraine invaded and beginning indiscriminately bombing the Donbas. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;*
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”;* and
- *“Mr. Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian-speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this anti-terrorist operation, so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region”.*

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”*; and
- *“RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE’S MILITARY”*.

The Dubenskij Report 2 and Scott Report 7 also included the following statements which reflected the perspective of the Ukrainian Government and other alternative views on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

- *“...the EU's council president has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism”*; and
- *“now to Russia's northern capital, where people have gathered for a sixth day of anti-war rallies. Local media report that some 150 people took to the central streets of St Petersburg. At least 50 have been taken into custody, with some being knocked over during the detentions. People have been heard chanting ‘no war’, demanding an end to Russia’s special operation in Ukraine. That’s what President Putin calls it”*.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered the above claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that in both the introduction to the programme and Scott Report 5, Peter Scott made highly critical allegations about the actions of Ukrainian authorities in the Donbas. This included statements that: *“the Ukrainian Army’s alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines”*, and *“amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk”*. These alleged that the Ukrainian military was responsible for bombing which caused civilian deaths in the Donbas. We considered there was no alternative view on this matter, for example there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to conflict in the Donbas.

We took into account TV Novosti’s representations that it had included alternative viewpoints as outlined above. We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine. For example, the Dubenskij Report 2 included clips of various political leaders, including a reference to the Chair of the European Council, Michel Charles, in which he *“accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism”*. We considered that the Dubenskij Report 2 provided alternative views of the conflict in the Ukraine in general. We also took into account that the Scott Report 7 reported on anti-war rallies in Russia and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *“aggression”*; EU support for Ukraine and reference to sanctions against Russia; and, the inclusion of clips of various political leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian President. However, we considered that these views did not provide any alternative viewpoints in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about Ukrainian state and/or military conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00, 12:00 and 17:00 broadcasts, we considered that the above statements on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that no new relevant captions relating to the Donbas were included in the 17:00 broadcast. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcasts in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 19:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme following a complaint which alleged that the news coverage was “biased”.

The Content

Ofcom watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 19:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Peter Scott (“PS”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Peter Scott;
- Finoshina Report 2 (repeated from 17:00);
- a live report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 5 in the 18:00 programme (“Scott Report 8”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 6 in the 18:00 programme (“Scott Report 9”);
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 17:00 programme);
- an interview with Alfred de Zayas (“AdZ”), a former UN expert (“the de Zayas Interview”);
- a report from Peter Scott related to a Donbas resort, a recent change in Facebook’s policy to posts about Ukraine’s Azov Battalion (“Scott Report 10”); and,
- a live interview with journalist Benjamin Norton (“BN”) on a recent change in Facebook policy to allow praise of the Azov Battalion in their role as part of the Ukrainian National Guard (“the Norton Interview”).

Peter Scott’s introduction to the programme outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

PS: *“On day six of Russia's military incursion the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

This was followed by the repeated Finoshina Report 2, Scott Report 8, the repeated Gazdiev report , the Scott Report 9, the Dubenskij Report 2 and the de Zayas Interview which discussed NATO’s role in ongoing conflict in Ukraine in general and historical NATO conflicts with Russia and included the following:

PS: *“Good evening. Now, do you think this conflict was inevitable? And what do you think could have been done to avoid it?”*

AdZ: *“Well, it was certainly not inevitable, and there were plenty of opportunities to reach a sensible compromise. I mean, the Russian government has made implementable pragmatic proposals which, unfortunately, my secretary, uh of State Antony Blinken has simply dismissed. As also, the leadership of NATO has dismissed. We remember about 10 days ago, Jen Stoltenberg in Munich, saying that if Russia doesn’t want to have NATO at its doorstep, well, it’s going to get more NATO, not less. Now this is stoking the tension. This is throwing fuel on the fire. This is provoking. Now the United Nations Charter, which is the world constitution, obviously prohibits the use of force. So, the aggression on Ukraine is illegal. On the other hand, it also prohibits the threat of the use of force”.*

This was followed by Scott Report 10 which included the following:

PS: *“We’ve received exclusive video from what used to be a Donbass resort on the Sea of Azov, which appears to show its complete destruction by Ukrainian militants. It used to be a base for Ukraine’s far right Azov battalion, before being reclaimed on Monday by [DPR] Forces. Now, in a disturbing U-turn, Facebook will now let users praise a neo-Nazi military unit previously banned along with Islamic State and the Ku Klux Klan. Facebook is banning RT in the EU but is promoting the far-right Azov battalion, which we’ve just mentioned, in a bid to improve coverage of the Ukrainian Army”.*

During the above, the following caption was shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“FOOTAGE REVEALS DAMAGE MADE BY AZOV BATTALION”.*

The programme finished with the Norton Interview which continued discussing Facebook’s policy to allow praise of the Azov Battalion in their role as part of the Ukrainian national guard; the censorship of Norton’s article regarding the Azov Battalion on Meta platforms and the blocking of RT on YouTube and in Europe.

TV Novosti’s Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *“Ukraine’s road to EU”⁴⁰;*
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Ukraine’s president makes an impassionate plea to EU, but Brussels officials have held back on the new assurances”⁴¹;*
- Topic: *“Conflict in Ukraine”;*
- Topic: *“Kiev accuses Russian of aggression and insists it is fighting back”;*
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression. It says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down, and about 200 tanks destroyed”;*
- Topic: *“President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances”;*
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we’re all showing that the Union with us will be stronger, without you Ukraine will be alone. We’ve proven our strength, proven we’re at least same as you, prove you’re one letting*

⁴⁰ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

⁴¹The audio in the broadcast was *“on any assurances”*.

*us go, prove we're really Europeans*⁴². *And the life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness*⁴³;

- Topic: *"EU: sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression"*;
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless"*;
- Topic: *"British PM: UK doesn't want to be engaged in combat with Russia"*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *"when you talk about the no-fly zone, unfortunately the implication of that is that the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, it would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something we can do or that we've envisaged"*;
- Topic: *"German MP: it was a mistake to give unfeasible promises on joining NATO"*;
- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so that Ukraine could develop and cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years"*;
- Topic: *"Disturbing U-turn"*;
- Topic: *"Facebook 'exemption' for neo-nazi unit previously banned with ISIL"*; and,
- Statement from Meta spokesperson: *"for the time being, we are making a narrow exception for praise of the Azov Battalion strictly in the context of defending Ukraine, or in their role as part of the Ukraine National Guard"*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom's attention to the following captions during the 19:00 broadcast:

- *"UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDE, PARTIES LEAVE TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS"*;
- *"REPORT: GERMAN ENERGY FIRM E.ON REFUSES TO SHUT DOWN NORD STREAM 1 PIPELINE"*;
- *"BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT"*;
- *"EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS"*;
- *"EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS"*;
- *"TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA"*;
- *"FIERCE FIGHTING TAKES PLACE IN UKRAINE'S SECOND LARGEST CITY KHARKOV"*;
- *"EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA"*;
- *"KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED"*;

⁴² The audio in the broadcast was *"prove you aren't letting us go, prove you are really Europeans"*.

⁴³ TV Novosti also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- *“KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”;*
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”;*
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”;*
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”;*
- *“REPORTS: SHELL HITS KIEV TV TOWER, BROADCASTS KNOCKED OUT”; and*
- *“UKRAINIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY: TV CHANNELS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR SOME TIME”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

This programme included a live introduction from Peter Scott, the repeated Finoshina Report 2, Scott Report 8, the repeated Gazdiev Report, Scott Report 9, the Dubenskij Report 2, the de Zayas Interview, Scott Report 10 and the Norton Interview.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, the reports in this programme included the claims that:

- *“On day six of Russia's military incursion the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict”;*
- *“Russia's Defence Ministry claims the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbas region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble. That's as the rescue operation continues. This footage from the Donbas shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact”;*
- *“here's footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging*

on. Local residents are terrified with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began”;

- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;*
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”;* and
- *“We've received exclusive video from what used to be a Donbass resort on the Sea of Azov, which appears to show its complete destruction by Ukrainian militants. It used to be a base for Ukraine's far right Azov battalion, before being reclaimed on Monday by [DPR] Forces”.*

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- *“FOOTAGE REVEALS DAMAGE MADE BY AZOV BATTALION”.*
- *“LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”;*
- *“RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE'S MILITARY”;* and
- *“UKRAINIAN TROOPS 'ABANDON' TANK WITH AMMUNITION, EQUIPMENT INTACT”.*

Dubenskij Report 2 also included the following statement which reflected alternative views on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

“EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel are also under attack. And he said, this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom's view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that Peter Scott's introduction and the Scott Report 10 included additional criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities' actions in the Donbas region. This included statements that: *"the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines"*, and its reporting of a video of *"what used to be a Donbass resort on the Sea of Azov, which appears to show its complete destruction by Ukrainian militants"*. We considered that these statements constituted further contentious and highly critical claims about the Ukrainian military and forces within the Donbas region. There was no alternative view on this matter, for example, there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to the conflict in the Donbas.

We acknowledged that the Norton Interview included references to the Azov Battalion and a recent change in Meta's policy. We considered that while the Azov Battalion was reported to have been fighting in the Donbas region in this report, and the view of Meta on this matter was reflected to an extent, this did not amount to representing an appropriately wide range of significant views on the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region, especially given the criticisms and claims made against the Ukrainian military and forces.

We took into account TV Novosti's representations that it had included alternative viewpoints as outlined above. We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine. We noted that the Dubenskij Report 2 included clips of various political leaders, including a reference to the Chair of the European Council, Michel Charles, in which he *"accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism"*. We considered that the Dubenskij Report 2 provided alternative views of the conflict in the Ukraine in general. We also took into account that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government accusing Moscow of *"aggression"*; EU support for Ukraine and reference to sanctions against Russia; the inclusion of clips of various political leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian President; and NATO's position. However, we considered that these views did not provide any alternative viewpoints in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about Ukrainian state and/or military conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted the relevant captions as listed

above relating to the Donbas in the programme. We did not consider, however, that any of the captions included in the programme provided an appropriately wide range of significant views on the major matter in this case. Therefore, our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 and 12:00 broadcasts in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 20:00

Ofcom was alerted to the content of this 30-minute programme following a complaint that said the news coverage contained “misinformation” and was “propaganda”.

The Content

Ofcom watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 20:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, Peter Scott (“PS”) was in the studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. This included the following:

- a live introduction from Peter Scott;
- Finoshina Report 2 (repeated from 17:00);
- a live report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 8 in the 18:00 programme (“Scott Report 11”);
- the Gazdiev Report (repeated from the 05:00 programme);
- a live report from Peter Scott which contained no substantive differences from Scott Report 6 in the 18:00 programme (“Scott Report 12”);
- Dubenskij Report 2 (repeated from the 17:00 programme);
- a live report with RT reporter Caleb Maupin (“CM”) about a UN General Assembly meeting (“the Maupin Report 2”);
- a live report from Peter Scott on the global impact of US sanctions on Russia and Brazil’s decision not to impose sanctions on Russia (“Scott Report 13”); and
- a live report with a Brazilian news Editor Breno Altman (“BA”) about Brazil’s stance on the conflict in Ukraine (“Altman Interview”).

Peter Scott’s introduction outlined the news headlines and a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme. This included a clip of a female Donetsk resident with subtitles providing the English translation:

PS: *“On day six of Russia's military incursion the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict”.*

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals”.*

This was followed by the repeated Finoshina Report 2 and the Scott Report 11 which included the following:

PS: *“Russia's defence ministry claims the [LPM] has advanced against Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be still victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that*

Ukrainian forces simply left the vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest. And here's footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".

This was followed by the repeated Gazdiev Report and Scott Report 12. In Scott Report 12, the following was included:

PS: *"Kiev says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and claims it's been making major advances against Ukrainian military".*

This was followed by the Dubenskij Report 2 and the Maupin Report 2 which included the following:

CM: *"The UN General Assembly meeting will continue tomorrow, and different countries that are critical of the United States and are sympathetic to Donetsk and Lugansk will be taking the floor. We should be hearing tomorrow morning at the UN General Assembly from Venezuela, as well as Nicaragua and other countries that have hailed Russia's move of recognising the Donetsk People's Republic. So, while we're facing this barrage of social media deception, US media is whipping up hysteria, there is another side of the story, and there are many people around the world that hear it".*

Scott Report 13 included a statement from Juan Gonzalez, Special Assistant to President Biden on the knock-on impact of US sanctions to Governments that are closely affiliated to Russia and a statement from Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro stating that Brazil will continue to be neutral in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine. This was followed by the Scott Report 13 and the programme ended with the Altman Interview which discussed Brazil's neutrality in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine and the consequent impact of sanctions against Russia on Brazilian trade.

TV Novosti's Response

TV Novosti provided in its representations to Ofcom a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality. These included:

- Topic: *"Ukraine's road to EU"*⁴⁴;
- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *"Ukraine's president makes an impassionate plea to EU but Brussels officials have held back on the new assurances"*⁴⁵;
- Topic: *"Conflict in Ukraine"*;
- Topic: *"Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back"*;

⁴⁴ TV Novosti also referred to this topic as featuring again later in the programme.

⁴⁵ The audio in the broadcast was *"on any assurances"*.

- Quote from presenter Peter Scott: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression. It says around 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down, and about 200 tanks destroyed”*;
- Topic: *“President Zelensky asks to join EU, met with applause but no assurances”*;
- Statement from President Zelenskyy: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we’re all showing that the Union with us will be stronger, without you Ukraine will be alone. We’ve proven our strength, proven we’re at least same as you, prove you’re one letting us go, prove we’re really Europeans⁴⁶. And the life will defeat death, and light will defeat darkness”⁴⁷*;
- Topic: *“EU: sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression”*;
- Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President: *“I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless”*;
- Topic: *“British PM: UK doesn’t want to be engaged in combat with Russia”*;
- Quote from Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister: *“when you talk about the no-fly zone, unfortunately the implication of that is that the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, it would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That’s not something we can do or that we’ve envisaged”*;
- Topic: *“German MP: it was a mistake to give unfeasible promises on joining NATO”*;
- Statement from Alice Weidel, Alternative for Germany Party MP: *“It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so that Ukraine could develop and cannot be anyone’s outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years”*;
- Topic: *“Coming round”*;
- Topic: *“UN General assembly holds an emergency meeting on Ukraine”*;
- Caleb Maupin’s report on the UN General assembly meeting;
- Topic: *“Cuba at UN: NATO expansion towards Russia led to the current scenario”*;
- Quote from Douglas McGregor, retired US Army colonel: *“Vladimir Putin is caring [sic] through on something that is been warning us about he will not tolerate U.S. forces or their vessels on his borders, and we ignored him, and he finally acted”*;
- Topic: *“Scattergun diplomacy”*;
- Topic: *“Russian sanctions to hurt Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua – Biden’s adviser”*;

⁴⁶ The audio in the broadcast was *“prove you aren’t letting us go, prove you are really Europeans”*.

⁴⁷ TV Novosti also referred to a shorter version of this statement being shown during the live introduction of the programme.

- Statement from Juan Gonzalez, special assistant to the US President: *“The sanctions against Russia are so robust that they will have an impact on those governments that have economic affiliations with Russia, and that is by design”*; and
- Statement from Jair Bolsonaro, Brazilian President: *“We will not take sides, we will continue being neutral, and help with whatever is possible”*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the 20:00 broadcast:

- *“UKRAINIAN DELEGATION: RUSSIA TALKS CONCLUDE, PARTIES LEAVE TO CONSULT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS”*;
- *“REPORT: GERMAN ENERGY FIRM E.ON REFUSES TO SHUT DOWN NORD STREAM 1 PIPELINE”*;
- *“BRUSSELS SAYS IT WILL DISCONNECT SOME RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT”*;
- *“EU TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”*;
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS”*;
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”*;
- *“FIERCE FIGHTING TAKES PLACE IN UKRAINE’S SECOND LARGEST CITY KHARKOV”*;
- *“EMERCOM: 127,000 DONBASS REFUGEES CROSS BORDER INTO RUSSIA”*;
- *“KIEV: 5,000 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 30 PLANES AND HELICOPTERS SHOT DOWN, 200 TANKS DESTROYED”*;
- *“KIEV: WE DID NOT ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS AT FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA”*;
- *“ZELENSKY: NO ONE IN WORLD WILL FORGIVE RUSSIA FOR MURDER OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS”*;
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”*;
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”*;
- *“REPORTS: SHELL HITS KIEV TV TOWER, BROADCASTS KNOCKED OUT”*; and
- *“UKRAINIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY: TV CHANNELS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR SOME TIME”*.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, the programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. In Ofcom’s view, comments in the programme were highly critical and, taken together, they amounted to accusations that Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region. We considered that all the factors set out under “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

This programme included a live introduction from Peter Scott, the repeated Finoshina Report 2, Scott Report 11, the repeated Gazdiev Report, Scott Report 12, the Dubenskij Report 2 and the Maupin Report 2, Scott Report 13 and the Altman Interview.

In summary, in relation to critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region, the reports in this programme included the claims that:

- *“On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict”;*
- *“Russia's Defence Ministry claims the [LPM] has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres, that's beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbas region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned there could still be victims under the rubble as the rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbas shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the vehicle with all its equipment and ammunition intact”;*
- *“here is footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of an apparent shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began”;*
- *“the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage”;*
- *“This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the [DPR] began moving into here they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation”;*
- *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here, in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”;* and
- *“Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

The following captions were also shown across the bottom of the screen:

- “LAVROV: KIEV GOVERNMENT COMMITTED CRIMINAL ACTIONS IN EASTERN UKRAINE”; and
- “RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE’S MILITARY”.

The Dubenskij Report also included the following statement which reflected alternative views on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine as follows:

“EU’s Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel are also under attack. And he said, this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

As above, we considered these claims about the Ukrainian military and forces in the Donbas to be contentious and highly controversial, which required the inclusion of alternative perspectives with due weight in order to comply with Section Five of the Code. In Ofcom’s view the programme lacked an appropriately wide range of significant views on the matter of political controversy and current public policy that was discussed in relation to the specific and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. For example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military which contested the highly critical claims about Ukrainian forces in the region was not included in this programme.

We noted that Peter Scott’s introduction and the Scott Report 11 included additional criticisms of the Ukrainian authorities’ actions in the Donbas region. This included statements that: *“the Ukrainian Army’s alleged bombing of Donbas continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines”*, and *“amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk”*. We considered that these statements constituted further contentious and highly critical claims about the Ukrainian military and forces within the Donbas region. There was no alternative view on this matter, for example, there was no reference to the view of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to the conflict in the Donbas.

We took into account TV Novosti’s representations that it had included alternative viewpoints as outlined above. We acknowledged that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine. We were mindful that the Dubenskij Report 2 included clips of various political leaders, including a reference to the Chair of the European Council, Michel Charles, in which he *“accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism”*. We considered that the Dubenskij Report 2 provided alternative views of the conflict in the Ukraine in general. We also took into account that the programme contained different perspectives on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine, and included coverage of: the Ukrainian Government’s view that Moscow was responsible for the deaths of civilians; EU support for Ukraine and reference to sanctions against Russia; the inclusion of clips of various political leaders, including a statement from the Ukrainian President; and, a UN General Assembly meeting. However, we considered that these views did not provide any alternative viewpoints in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about Ukrainian state and/or military conduct within the Donbas region.

Given the coverage about this issue related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative views were included and given due weight within the broadcast.

However, for all the reasons set out in our Decision relating to the 05:00 broadcast, we considered that the above statements on the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. We noted that all the captions relating to the Donbas in the 20:00 broadcast were the same as those included in programmes broadcast earlier in the day and set out in our Decision above. Our reasoning in our Decision for the 05:00 broadcast in relation to captions also applied here, in that we consider the captions did not provide any relevant alternative viewpoints on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region and reinforced the criticism of Ukrainian forces.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, including that RT broadcasts news from a Russian perspective, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news item as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our finding is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

Conclusion

The 12 programmes under investigation were news programmes and therefore Rule 5.1 applied. In addition, the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to these programmes. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region in and of itself was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in the Donbas region at the time of the broadcasts.

Therefore the broadcaster was required to preserve due impartiality by including an appropriately wide range of significant views with due weight, in order to comply with Section Five of the Code.

In Ofcom's view, each of the 12 programmes contained similar claims about the actions of the Ukrainian state or military in the Donbas region of Ukraine that were highly contentious. These included that the Ukrainian military were deliberately and continuously attacking civilians and

residential areas in the Donbas region. An appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were not adequately represented or given due weight within these programmes.

Therefore, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in each of these 12 news programmes in relation to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Our Decision in respect of these 12 programmes is to record 12 breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code against TV Novosti.

Ofcom considers that these breaches were serious and repeated, and we are minded to consider them for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

RT News

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	RT
Date & time	2 March 2022, 09:00
Category	Due impartiality in news
Summary	RT failed to ensure due impartiality in its news coverage of a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. In breach of Rules 5.1, 5.11 & 5.12.

Introduction

The above news programme was around 30 minutes long and was broadcast on the RT service at 09:00 on Wednesday 2 March 2022, during the seventh day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022. The licence for the RT service was held at the time by Autonomous Non-profit Organisation TV-Novosti (“TV Novosti”).

Ofcom was alerted to this programme by complaints from viewers, which included that it contained “propaganda” and “misinformation”. Ofcom considered that the programme raised issues warranting investigation under the due impartiality rules set out in [Section Five of the Code](#) in accordance with our published [procedures](#). Due to the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, and the high public interest, we informed TV Novosti that it was necessary for us to expedite this investigation at the outset.

Background:

Background to our investigation

RT is a global news and current affairs channel largely produced in Russia and funded by the Russian Federation.

On 2 March 2022, following the imposition of sanctions by the EU which affected the ability of third parties to provide services to TV Novosti, RT ceased to broadcast on regulated platforms in the UK.

On 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the two broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service, as well as the licence held by TV Novosti for the RT Europe service¹.

The RT broadcast channel, licensed by Ofcom, was made for UK audiences, providing a Russian perspective on UK and global news and current affairs related programming. It broadcast in English. In the UK, the channel was broadcast on satellite and terrestrial platforms.

RT News is a traditional news programme, with bulletin style news reports from both presenters in the studio and reporters outside the studio, as well as interviews with other correspondents and guests in Russia, the UK and around the world. All news items contained in the programme broadcast at 09:00 on 2 March 2022 related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

A full transcript of the programme is contained in the Annex which accompanies this Decision.

In this Decision, we have used the Ukrainian spelling for Ukrainian cities, except where we have transcribed or quoted contributors speaking from a Russian perspective in the programme, where we have used the Russian spelling. Direct quotes from TV Novosti's representations or captions reflect the same spelling as the original.

The conflict in Ukraine

On Thursday 24 February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, which has been internationally condemned. On 2 March 2022², the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations there³ and condemned the 24 February 2022 declaration by the Russian Federation of a "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Ofcom understands the Donbas (Russian spelling "Donbass") to be a disputed region in south-eastern Ukraine, which contains the cities Donetsk and Luhansk (Russian spelling "Lugansk"). Since 2014, this area has been the site of an ongoing conflict between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian state or military.

Ofcom's due impartiality rules

Reflecting our duties under section 319 of the Communications Act 2003 ("the Act"), Section Five of the Code requires that news in television and radio services is presented with due impartiality and that the special impartiality requirements set out in section 320 of the Act are met.

The special impartiality requirements include the preservation, in the case of every television service, of due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy. Section 320 of the Act requires Ofcom, for the purposes of setting the due impartiality rules in the Code, to take account, in particular, of the need to ensure the preservation of due impartiality in relation to: matters of major political or industrial controversy; and major matters relating to current public policy.

¹ See [Decision to revoke licence – ANO TV Novosti](#), 18 March 2022.

² This was after the broadcast covered in this Decision.

³ See [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Demanding Russian Federation Immediately End Illegal Use of Force in Ukraine, Withdraw All Troops](#), United Nations, 2 March 2022.

In addition to being a news programme, and for the reasons given below, Ofcom considered the programme from 09:00 on 2 March 2022 was dealing with matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to current public policy, namely the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Therefore, the following Code rules applied:

- Rule 5.1: “News, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality”.
- Rule 5.11: “...due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy by the person providing a service...in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes”.
- Rule 5.12: “In dealing with matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes. Views and facts must not be misrepresented”.

We requested comments from the broadcaster as to how the content complied with these rules, in particular in relation to the coverage of the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Rule 5.1 places requirements on broadcasters both to report the news with due accuracy and to present it with due impartiality. Ofcom acknowledges that during times of war, the facts about what is happening in regions of conflict, for example determining from which side a missile originated, can be difficult to verify. However, broadcasters are still required to report the news with due accuracy. In the case of this *RT News* programme, we were concerned with TV Novosti’s coverage of the situation in the Donbas, which was highly critical of the policies and actions of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the area and appeared to lack any alternative viewpoints. Therefore, in our letter to TV Novosti launching an investigation into *RT News*, 2 March 2022, 09:00, we specified that the investigation was concerned with the aspect of Rule 5.1 that deals with due impartiality only.

The Code makes clear that “due” means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. “Due impartiality” does not therefore mean an equal division of time must be given to every view, or that every argument must be represented. Due impartiality can be preserved in a number of ways and it is an editorial decision for the broadcaster as to how it ensures this.

The Code also makes clear that the approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to the content and the extent to which the content and approach are signalled to the audience. In addition, context, as set out in [Section Two \(Harm and Offence\) of the Code](#) is important in preserving due impartiality. Context includes a number of factors such as: the editorial content of the programme; the service on which the material is broadcast; the likely size, composition and expectation of the audience; and the effect on viewers who may come across the programme unawares.

Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code

Ofcom has published Guidance to assist broadcasters in complying with the due impartiality rules in Section Five of the Code, including the heightened requirements contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12.

Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin
18 July 2022

Amongst other things, Ofcom's Guidance makes clear that: it is an editorial matter for the broadcaster as to how due impartiality is preserved, as long as the Code is complied with⁴; and there are a range of editorial techniques for maintaining due impartiality⁵.

In relation to Rules 5.11 and 5.12, the Guidance explains these additional rules are necessary because of the nature of the subject matter concerned: a matter of major political and industrial controversy or major matter relating to current public policy is of a significant level of importance and is likely to be of the moment.

Our Guidance also states that the broadcasting of comments either criticising or supporting the policies and actions of any political organisation or government state will not be, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. Any broadcaster may do this provided it complies with the Code. However, depending on the specific circumstances of any particular case, it may be necessary to reflect alternative viewpoints or provide context in an appropriate way to ensure that Section Five of the Code is complied with.

Application of Section Five of the Code in this investigation

The programme under investigation was a news programme and therefore Rule 5.1 applied.

In addition, Ofcom considered that the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to this programme. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we also considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region in and of itself was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in this region at the time of the broadcast. Russia had referred to historical and ongoing events in the Donbas as a justification for its invasion of Ukraine⁶. Relevant historical events include Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, following which pro-Russian separatists in the eastern region of Donbas declared independence from Ukraine in self-proclaimed "people's republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk. These events sparked a long-running conflict between Russian-backed separatists, local militia groups and Ukrainian Government forces. A significant amount of the military confrontation between Russian and Ukrainian forces at the time of the news programme covered in this Decision was taking place in the Donbas region. We recognised that given the centrality of the Donbas region to the rationale for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, TV Novosti would want to broadcast a Russian perspective on this issue. However, in doing so it had to comply with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

⁴ See paragraph 1.6, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/99177/broadcast-code-guidance-section-5-march-2017.pdf.

⁵ Ibid, paragraph 1.17.

⁶ See [Russia's Putin authorises 'special military operation' against Ukraine | Reuters](#).

In our letter of 8 March 2022 to TV Novosti, we asked it to explain how the programme complied with Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 specifically in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, in order to help us reach a Preliminary View in this investigation⁷.

The importance of the due impartiality regime

The due impartiality standards required under sections 319 and 320 of the Act form part of a tripartite series of measures (the others being a prohibition on paid political advertising⁸ and the provision of free party political and party election broadcasts according to defined rules⁹) designed to safeguard the integrity of democratic debate on matters of public concern by preventing influential broadcast media platforms from being hijacked by wealthy or well-placed interests promoting a partial agenda¹⁰.

As explained in the Government White Paper which led to the Act:

“[Due impartiality] obligations have played a major part in ensuring wide public access to impartial and accurate information about our society and the opportunity to encounter a diverse array of voices and perspectives. They ensure that the broadcast media provide a counterweight to other, often partial, sources of news. They therefore contribute significantly to properly informed democratic debate”.

The Courts have recently confirmed the ongoing importance of the due impartiality regime:

“There is nothing to suggest that the need for accuracy or impartiality in the broadcasting media, or the contribution that an adherence to those standards in broadcasting makes to a properly informed democratic debate, has diminished or is any less important to safeguarding the interests of citizens now than it was at the time of the White Paper or the enactment of the 2003 Act. Indeed, there is reason to consider that the need is at least as great, if not greater than ever before, given

⁷ Ofcom has previously made clear our approach to enforcing the special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Broadcasting Code. For example, in 2018, Ofcom found RT in breach of these requirements in relation to the broadcast of seven programmes, six of which dealt with major matters regarding Russian foreign policy. See [Issue 369 of Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018. RT applied for judicial review of Ofcom's decisions. RT's claim was dismissed in full in the Administrative Court and Court of Appeal. RT has applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

⁸ See s.319(2)(g) and 321(2) of the Act.

⁹ S.333 of the Act provides that licences for certain broadcasters must require the inclusion of free broadcasts and the observance of the Ofcom Rules on Party Political and Referendum Broadcasts. Those Rules regulate party political broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties outside election periods); party election broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties during election periods); and referendum campaign broadcasts (offered to each designated referendum organisation before each referendum).

¹⁰ R (Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation TV-Novosti) v The Office of Communications, [2020] EWHC 689 (Admin), paragraph 21.

current concerns about the effect on the democratic process of news manipulation and of fake news”¹¹.

Ofcom considers the due impartiality requirements in broadcasting to be particularly important in situations where events are changing quickly and potentially harmful disinformation is available online. In addition, the Courts have recently confirmed that the importance of due impartiality is heightened in circumstances where it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of content which has been broadcast¹².

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and freedom. It constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and is one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every person.

As a public authority, it is unlawful for Ofcom to act in a way that is incompatible with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (“Article 10”)¹³. This right encompasses the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression as well as the audience’s right to receive information and ideas without interference¹⁴. Ofcom’s Code and Guidance are drafted, and given effect to, in accordance with Article 10. In particular, in carrying out its duties, Ofcom must have regard to the broadcaster’s freedom to discuss any controversial subject or point of view in its programming, as well as the requirement in the Code to preserve due impartiality on matters relating to major political or industrial controversy or major matters relating to current public policy.

It is well established that the freedom of expression of licensed broadcasters may legitimately be restricted where such measures are necessary to achieve the positive objective of maintaining fair and equal democratic discourse on influential media platforms to the benefit of society generally¹⁵. In order to establish that a limitation is “necessary”, relevant and sufficient reasons must be provided to justify the restriction, the restriction must correspond to a pressing social need, and it must be proportionate to the aim pursued. The legitimate aim pursued by the Act and the Code is to protect the rights of others, i.e. to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news by ensuring that other viewpoints are received by viewers who may then participate on an informed basis in the democratic processes.

By section 3(3) of the Act, Ofcom must, in performing its duties under subsection (1), have regard, in all cases, to (a) the principles under which regulatory activities should be transparent, accountable,

¹¹ Ibid, paragraph 23.

¹² Ibid, paragraph 68.

¹³ Section 6 Human Rights Act 1998.

¹⁴ *Lingens v Austria* (1986) 8 EHRR 407.

¹⁵ *Animal Defenders v United Kingdom* [2013] EMLR 28 and *R (On The Application of Animal Defenders International) v Secretary of State For Culture, Media and Sport* [2008] 1 AC 1312.

proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed; and (b) any other principles appearing to Ofcom to represent the best regulatory practice.

Each and every time Ofcom applies the Code to broadcast content, Ofcom gives careful consideration to the broadcaster's and the audience's Article 10 rights. In order to reach a Decision on whether due impartiality was maintained in this programme, Ofcom has had careful regard to the Article 10 rights and all the relevant contextual factors.

Ofcom's Investigation

The Content

We watched and considered the whole programme. A full transcript of the 09:00 bulletin is contained in the Annex.

During the programme, RT presenter Sean Thomas ("ST") was in the Moscow studio and presented a range of stories related to the conflict in Ukraine. These included the following:

- a live introduction from Sean Thomas;
- a live report from RT reporter Maria Finoshina ("MF") in Luhansk featuring a clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IK"), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, giving a statement ("the Finoshina Report");
- a report from Sean Thomas about the Donbas region ("the Donbas Report");
- a report from Sean Thomas about a recent change in Facebook's policy on posts about Ukraine's Azov Battalion. This included an extract from a pre-recorded interview with journalist Benjamin Norton ("BN") ("the Azov Report");
- an interview with military journalist Viktor Baranets ("VB") about an attack on an administrative building in Kharkiv ("the Baranets Interview");
- a report from Sean Thomas about President of the United States Joe Biden ("JB") giving his first State of the Union address, in which he focused on the conflict in Ukraine ("the Biden Report");
- a report from RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Western sanctions against Russia ("the Dubenskij Report");
- an interview with Vladimir Chizhov ("VC"), permanent Russian representative to the EU ("the Chizhov Interview") about EU sanctions against Russia;
- a report from Sean Thomas about Western technology companies restricting access to RT, including an extract from a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Oksana Boyko ("OB") ("the Boyko Report"); and
- a report from RT reporter Paula Slier ("PS") about the discrimination faced by Russian citizens in Western countries due to their nationality ("the Slier Report").

Sean Thomas introduced the programme by outlining the latest news headlines and giving a summary of the reports to be covered in the programme as follows:

ST: *"The military operation in Ukraine enters its seventh day. Explosions have been reported at a Kiev TV tower and in the Kharkov region amid heavy fighting. On the other side of the conflict, horrific destruction of homes in the aftermath of a battle in the Donbass region, where a village has come under the control of the Lugansk militia. And*

EU politicians demand even harsher sanctions against Russia after the bloc decides to ban RT and cut some Russian banks out of the international transaction system, SWIFT. But there are voices in the bloc opposing the establishment's approach to the Ukraine crisis”.

Sean Thomas then reported on events in the Kharkiv region, including in the cities of Kharkiv and Chuhuiv, and on a strike on a TV tower in Kyiv. This was followed by the Finoshina Report which included the following summary of part of Igor Konashenkov’s statement:

MF: *“... he added that the armies of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics advanced 60 and 75 kilometres accordingly since the beginning of the special military operation here, with several towns and villages taken now under their control. And he also said that a total of 1,500 [of] Ukraine's military infrastructure objects have been damaged and that they will continue striking military targets uniquely...”.*

The Finoshina Report was followed by the Donbas Report:

ST: *“And in the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics, residents are enduring intense battles between the Ukrainian army and local militia forces. If you take a look at this map, it shows what has been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's defence ministry claims that the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. Now, these are the latest images of a village that claimed to have come under the control of Lugansk military forces with residents showing the aftermath of the fighting. You can see that homes and infrastructure have been destroyed. More footage from the area showing the Donbass region amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian army. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the Donetsk Republic's capital city there. The number of casualties is not yet known, but the city of Donetsk's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescue operations are continuing. This footage shows an abandoned T-64 tank near the settlement of Bugas after Ukrainian troops apparently left the vehicle with all of its equipment and ammunition intact. The Lugansk People's Militia has liberated the town of Schastye in an offensive as Ukrainian forces left the area on Monday morning. The battle had been ongoing for almost four days. Residents there had to take shelter in basements during the fighting while infrastructure was severely damaged. The Lugansk militia alleges that Ukrainian forces unleashed most of the damage and destruction during their retreat. Locals have been sharing their feelings about the situation with us”.*

This was followed by clips of male and female Shchastia residents (“MSR” and “FSR”):

MSR: [English voiceover] *“We have been waiting for our saviours. They have helped us a lot. The Ukrainian army were monsters. They wanted us to die. They wanted to shoot me in my legs. I was sitting on a bench and they approached me and told me that they had seen me in Lugansk. I said I hadn't been there for a long time”.*

FSR: [English voiceover] *"It is really scary going through this all. We are glad that it's over. We're locals and we know who was shelling where. When Ukraine shells our kindergartens, schools, houses, what love can there be? Thank God they got out of here. It should have happened a long time ago. How long were we supposed to bear this?"*

During the Donbas report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE'S MILITARY";*
- *"RESIDENTS SHOW DESTROYED BUILDINGS, FACILITIES AFTER BATTLE FOR VILLAGE";*
- *"RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS SHELLED IN CAPITAL OF DONETSK REPUBLIC;"*
- *"UKRAINIAN TROOPS APPARENTLY ABANDON TANK, LEAVING AMMUNITION, EQUIPMENT";*
- and
- *"LUGANSK MILITIA LIBERATES TOWN OF SCHASTYE IN OFFENSIVE OPERATION".*

This was followed by: the Azov Report; the Baranets Interview; the Biden Report; the Dubenskij Report; the Chizhov Interview; the Boyko Report; and the Slier Report. The Slier Report focused on the discrimination faced by Russian citizens in Western countries due to their nationality. It included an interview with Kirill Vyshinsky ("KV"), Chairman of Russia's Human Rights Commission, who said:

KV: *"There's only one way to counter this barrage of Russophobia, by drawing attention to the double standards that are employed in the West when viewing Russia. This is currently the only way to at least cool their collective sentiment in regard to Russian citizens. In my opinion, the term double standards is widely used. Now we see how they replied en masse when Russian-speaking Ukrainians were discriminated against in Ukraine, when the main right, the right to life for Russians in the Donbass, was violated. Nobody paid attention to that. They thought it had nothing to do with human rights and that it was a domestic affair within Ukraine. This reaction has led to what Ukraine has been doing for a long time. Today they've forgotten what's been happening in the Donbass for over seven years. They've forgotten what's been happening in Ukraine lately. Now they just talk about Russians as the main violators of human rights. This issue requires attention. In terms of our athletes, I hope those are just emotional steps that international organisations are taking. I hope that soon people will realise that athletes have nothing to do with politics and with the current situation. I hope that international organisations will act considerably in regard to our athletes".*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *"RUSSIANS FACE HOSTILITY IN WESTERN COUNTRIES OVER SITUATION IN UKRAINE";* and
- *"HRC COMMISSION CHAIRMAN TO RT: 'RUSSIANS ARE SEEN AS MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS'".*

TV Novosti's Response

In its representations to Ofcom, TV Novosti provided a list of items featured within the programme which it said demonstrated how it had maintained due impartiality:

- *Headline: “EU politicians demand even harsher sanctions against Russia after the block decides to ban RT and cut some Russian banks of the international transaction system SWIFT but there are voices in the block opposing the establishment’s approach to the Ukrainian crisis”;*
- *Statement from Alice Weidel, Leader of Alternative for Germany in the Bundestag: “Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop and cannot be anyone’s outpost”;*
- *Topic: “Kiev accuses Russia of aggression and insists it is fighting back”;*
- *Statement from Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine (with voiceover): “You have to speak first of all. Everybody has to stop fighting and to go [back] to that point from where it began five, six days ago”;*
- *Topic: “Facebook exemption for previously banned neo-nazi group in Ukraine”;*
- *Statement from a spokesperson for Meta (with voiceover): “For the time being, we are making a narrow exception for praise of the Azov Battalion strictly in the context of defending Ukraine, or in their role as part of the Ukraine National Guard”;*
- *Topic: “Biden: U.S. closing its airspace to Russian flights due to conflict”;*
- *Statement from Joe Biden, President of the United States: “We are inflicting pain on Russia and supporting the people of Ukraine. Putin is now isolated from the world more than he has ever been. I am announcing that we will join our allies in closing off American air space to all Russian flights, further isolating Russia, and adding an additional squeeze on their economy. Let me be clear, our forces are not engaged and will not engage in conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine. Our forces are not going to Europe to fight in Ukraine, but to defend our NATO Allies – in the event that Putin decides to keep moving west”;*
- *Topic: “EU: sanctions to cost our economy, but we stand against aggression”;*
- *Statement from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression”;*
- *Statement from Charles Michel, President of the European Council: “It’s not only Ukraine that’s under attack. International law, rules-based international order, democracy, human dignity are also under attack. This is geo-political terrorism, pure and simple”;*
- *Statement from Robert Habeck, Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and Vice Chancellor of Germany (with voiceover): “As for Germany, we have to admit that in the past we relied far too one-sidedly on energy imports from Russia. Germany is more independent than other European countries in this regard. This means there is an obligation to get rid of this quickly”¹⁶;*
- *Topic: “German MP: It was a mistake to give unfeasible promises on joining NATO”;*
- *Statement from Alice Weidel, Leader of Alternative for Germany in the Bundestag: “It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so that Ukraine could develop and cannot be anyone’s outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about [it] for 20 years”;*

¹⁶ The quote broadcast was: “As for Germany, we have to admit that in the past we relied far too one-sidedly on energy imports from Russia. Germany is more **dependent** than other European countries in this regard. This means there is an obligation to get rid of this quickly” [emphasis added].

- Statement from Correctiv, “official Facebook factchecker” (with voiceover): *“You are not independent media. You are a state agency of the Russian government under the jurisdiction of Putin, responsible for war crimes. You do not publish independent reports about the statements of Putin’s politicians. You are a state-integrated power propaganda tool that is published in the West with the intention of broadcasting the will of the Putin government in our country. You are permanently opposed to the foundations of the German Press Code. You can’t have any claims against us”*;
- Topic: *“Russians face hostility in Western countries over situation in Ukraine”*;
- Statement from Dieter Reiter, Mayor of Munich (with voiceover): *“With immediate effect, there will be no further concerts by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra under his [conductor Valery Gergiev’s] direction”*;
- Statement from FIFA (with voiceover): *“FIFA and UEFA have today decided together that all Russian teams, whether national representative teams or club teams, shall be suspended from participation in both FIFA and UEFA competitions until further notice”*;
- Statement from the International Olympic Committee (with voiceover): *“The IOC EB strongly urges International Sports Federations and organisers of sports events worldwide to do everything in their power to ensure that no athlete or sports official from Russia or Belarus be allowed to take part under the name of Russia or Belarus. Russian or Belarusian nationals, be it as individuals or teams, should be accepted only as neutral athletes or neutral teams. No national symbols, colours, flags or anthems should be displayed”*;
- Statement from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *“I want to stress that we are not targeting Russian people. Many of them spoke against this senseless war and I want to salute their courage”*; and
- Statement from an unnamed UK-based Russian (with voiceover): *“I’m not ashamed to say I’m Russian because I don’t support this. I’m just a little bit afraid, I’m worried that society will have this perception that all Russians are bad”¹⁷*.

TV Novosti also drew Ofcom’s attention to the following captions during the broadcast:

- *“BRUSSELS SAYS SOME RUSSIAN BANKS BEING DISCONNECTED FROM SWIFT”*;
- *“EU IMPOSING RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS”*;
- *“EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS”*;
- *“TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL SWITZERLAND JOINS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA”*;
- *“UKRAINIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY: TV CHANNELS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR SOME TIME”*;
- *“ZELENSKY’S PLEA FOR UKRAINE TO JOIN EU MET WITH APPLAUSE BUT NO ASSURANCES”*;
- *“EU CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN PLANES, INCLUDING PRIVATE JETS”*;
- *“EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON RT, SPUTNIK AND SUBSIDIARIES ON ITS TERRITORY”*;
- *“CUBA AT UN: NATO’S EASTWARD EXPANSION LED TO CONFLICT IN UKRAINE”*;
- *“BIDEN: U.S. WILL NOT ENGAGE IN CONFLICT WITH RUSSIAN FORCES IN UKRAINE”*;
- *“BIDEN: U.S. SEIZES ASSETS OF WEALTHY RUSSIANS AND CLOSES ITS AIRSPACE TO RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT”*;
- *“APPLE SUSPENDS ONLINE SALES IN RUSSIA AND REMOVES RT NEWS FROM APP STORE”*;

¹⁷ This is the text which appeared on screen. The wording of the accompanying voiceover was: *“I’m not ashamed to say I’m Russian, but I’m a bit afraid, I’m worried society will have this perception that all Russians are bad”*.

- *“BOEING SUSPENDS PARTS SUPPLIES AND MAINTENANCE FOR RUSSIAN AIRLINES”;*
- *“KIEV: RUSSIA CONDUCTS BARRAGE OF MISSILE ATTACKS ON UKRAINE TARGETING CIVILIANS”;*
- and
- *“KIEV CALLS FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA AND MILITARY AID FOR COMBAT”.*

Decision

For the reasons set out above under “Application of Section Five of the Code in these investigations”, we considered this news programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

In particular, this programme featured content relating to the conflict in Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military. These are set out under the individual report headings below.

Presenter’s Introduction

During Sean Thomas’ introduction to the programme, he said that there had been *“horrific destruction of homes in the aftermath of a battle in the Donbass region, where a village has come under the control of the Lugansk militia”*.

Finoshina Report

This report featured a summary of part of a statement given by Major General Igor Konashenkov (“IK”), the Russian Defence Ministry Spokesperson, as follows:

“... he added that the armies of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics advanced 60 and 75 kilometres accordingly since the beginning of the special military operation here, with several towns and villages taken now under their control. And he also said that a total of 1500 [of] Ukraine's military infrastructure objects have been damaged and that they will continue striking military targets uniquely...”

Donbas Report

During the Donbas Report, the following statements were made about the conflict in the Donbas:

- *“More footage from the area showing the Donbass region amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian army. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the Donetsk Republic's capital city there. The number of casualties is not yet known, but the city of Donetsk’s mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescuing operations are continuing”;*
- *“This footage shows an abandoned T-64 tank near the settlement of Bugas after Ukrainian troops apparently left the vehicle with all of its equipment and ammunition intact”;*
- *“The Lugansk People's Militia has liberated the town of Schastye in an offensive as Ukrainian forces left the area on Monday morning. The battle had been ongoing for almost four days. Residents there had to take shelter in basements during the fighting while infrastructure was*

severely damaged. The Lugansk militia alleges that Ukrainian forces unleashed most of the damage and destruction during their retreat”;

- A male resident of Shchastia said [voiceover in English] *“We have been waiting for our saviours. They have helped us a lot. The Ukrainian army were monsters. They wanted us to die. They wanted to shoot me in my legs. I was sitting on a bench and they approached me and told me that they had seen me in Lugansk. I said I hadn't been there for a long time”;* and
- A female resident of Shchastia said [voiceover in English] *“... We're locals and we know who was shelling where. When Ukraine shells our kindergartens, schools, houses, what love can there be? Thank God they got out of here. It should have happened a long time ago. How long were we supposed to bear this?”*

During this report, a number of captions were shown at the bottom of the screen, including the following:

- *“RUSSIA SAYS DONBASS FORCES MAKING ADVANCES AGAINST UKRAINE’S MILITARY”;*
- *“RESIDENTS SHOW DESTROYED BUILDINGS, FACILITIES AFTER BATTLE FOR VILLAGE”;*
- *“RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS SHELLLED IN CAPITAL OF DONETSK REPUBLIC”;*
- *“UKRAINIAN TROOPS APPARENTLY ABANDON TANK, LEAVING AMMUNITION, EQUIPMENT”;*
- and
- *“LUGANSK MILITIA LIBERATES TOWN OF SCHASTYE IN OFFENSIVE OPERATION”.*

Sliver Report

This included an interview with Kirill Vyshinsky, Chairman of Russia’s Human Rights Commission, who made the following claim about the Donbas:

“Now we see how they [the West] replied en masse when Russian-speaking Ukrainians were discriminated against in Ukraine, when the main right, the right to life for Russians in the Donbass, was violated. Nobody paid attention to that. They thought it had nothing to do with human rights and that it was a domestic affair within Ukraine. This reaction has led to what Ukraine has been doing for a long time. Today they've forgotten what's been happening in the Donbass for over seven years. They've forgotten what's been happening in Ukraine lately. Now they just talk about Russians as the main violators of human rights. This issue requires attention”.

In Ofcom’s view, the above comments about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region were highly critical. They amounted to accusations that: the Ukrainians were deliberately shelling, threatening and attacking civilians and residential areas, including kindergartens, schools and houses in the Donbas region; that the Ukrainian forces were responsible for most of the damage in Shchastia; that they wanted to kill civilians; and that Ukraine had violated the human rights, including the right to life, of Russian-speaking people in the Donbas for “over seven years”.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

We considered that all the factors set out under the “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” section above applied in this case.

As explained above, the broadcasting of highly critical comments concerning the actions of any government or state is not, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. It is essential that news programmes are able to report on controversial issues and take a position on those issues, even if that position is highly critical, particularly during times of conflict. However, a broadcaster must maintain an adequate and appropriate level of impartiality in its presentation of matters (and major matters) of political controversy. It may be necessary, in order to comply with the due impartiality requirements, that alternative viewpoints are broadcast.

In our consideration of the content in this programme, we found that particularly contentious and highly critical statements about the alleged actions of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas were broadcast. For example, there were allegations in the Donbas Report that: *“Ukrainian forces unleashed most of the damage and destruction during their retreat”*; *“the Ukrainian army were monsters. They wanted us to die. They wanted to shoot me in my legs”*; and *“When Ukraine shells our kindergartens, schools, houses, what love can there be?...How long were we supposed to bear this?”*

We took into account the representations made by TV Novosti, outlined above, in considering whether due impartiality had been maintained.

Ofcom also took into account that the Slier Report included an interview with Kirill Vyshinsky, Chairman of Russia’s Human Rights Commission, who said:

KV: *“... Now we see how they replied en masse when Russian-speaking Ukrainians were discriminated against in Ukraine, when the main right, the right to life for Russians in the Donbass, was violated. Nobody paid attention to that. They thought it had nothing to do with human rights and that it was a domestic affair within Ukraine. This reaction has led to what Ukraine has been doing for a long time. Today they've forgotten what's been happening in the Donbass for over seven years. They've forgotten what's been happening in Ukraine lately. Now they just talk about Russians as the main violators of human rights. This issue requires attention”*.

We also acknowledged the inclusion of a caption at the bottom of the screen during the Slier Report, stating: *“RUSSIANS ARE SEEN AS THE MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS”*.

We considered that the inclusion of the reference *“Now they [the West] just talk about Russians as the main violators of human rights”* in this context provided, to an extent, an alternative perspective on the ongoing wider conflict in the Ukraine. However, neither this, nor the caption constituted a challenge or an alternative viewpoint to the specific, strong criticisms of the alleged actions of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the Donbas included elsewhere in the programme, in particular the allegations in the Donbas Report (see above).

We noted that some criticism of the Ukrainian authorities referred to its actions in the Donbas *“for over seven years”*. Given the Russian Government has been widely reported as justifying its invasion of Ukraine in part as a result of the Ukrainian Government’s alleged actions against the population in the Donbas in the period 2014 to 2022, we considered that this criticism of the historic actions of the Ukrainian authorities was relevant to our consideration of whether due impartiality was preserved in this case.

Ofcom considered TV Novosti’s representations and acknowledged that this programme did include alternative perspectives on the conflict in Ukraine in general terms, by including, and giving due

weight to, the condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine by world leaders and the significant economic and other sanctions that were being placed on Russia. This was done through the inclusion of: the Dubenskij Report, which detailed Western sanctions against Russia; the Boyko Report, about Western technology companies restricting access to RT; and the Slier Report, about the discrimination faced by Russian citizens in Western countries due to their nationality. These reports included statements from Western leaders Joe Biden, Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel, as well as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. A caption shown several times during the programme also stated "EU PLEDGES TO SUPPLY UKRAINE WITH AMMUNITION, MEDICINE AND WEAPONS".

However, we considered that while the whole of this programme was devoted to the conflict in the Ukraine, there was a notable difference between how alternative viewpoints were reflected in those elements of the programme which reported on the Ukrainian conflict in general, as opposed to the situation in the Donbas specifically. In relation to the former, in Ofcom's view, the viewpoints of the Ukrainian authorities and Western Government were reflected to some extent. However, the alternative viewpoints did not specifically challenge the allegations made about the conflict in the Donbas region, nor represent an appropriately wide range of significant views in relation to this matter. For example they did not include the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the highly critical allegations that were made about their conduct within the Donbas region, specifically that Ukrainian forces: were deliberately threatening and attacking civilians and residential areas; were responsible for most of the damage in Shchastia; wanted to kill civilians; and had been violating the human rights and right to life of residents of the Donbas for the last seven years.

Given the coverage about this issue (i.e. the conflict within the Donbas region of Ukraine) related to a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that an appropriately wide range of significant views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. As set out in detail above, we considered that the alternative viewpoints included in the broadcast regarding the ongoing wider conflict in Ukraine were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality in this particular case.

We acknowledged that TV Novosti had also drawn Ofcom's attention to a variety of captions which, in its view, reflected alternative viewpoints within the programme. Ofcom recognises that graphics or captions are editorial techniques which can contribute to the preservation of due impartiality. However, as we made clear in our December 2016 *Crosstalk*¹⁸ Decision involving TV Novosti, whether graphics or captions do in fact maintain due impartiality in any specific programme will depend on all the relevant circumstances, such as the duration and nature of the programme and its subject matter, and the presence of any other factors in the programme which may contribute to helping to maintain due impartiality. We caution broadcasters against assuming that they can preserve due impartiality where required by solely or largely including graphics and captions. This is because, depending on the circumstances, captions or graphics may not enable sufficient weight to be given to an alternative view. Further, when ensuring that matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy are treated with due weight, we consider that the relative size

¹⁸ See [Issue 369 of Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018.

and prominence and limited content within captions and graphics will make it significantly more difficult for broadcasters to ensure compliance with Rule 5.12.

In this case, Ofcom's view was that the captions relating to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas were not sufficient to preserve due impartiality and in fact, in our view, in some cases served to reinforce the highly critical allegations contained within this broadcast. For example, captions were included such as: *"RESIDENTS SHOW DESTROYED BUILDINGS, FACILITIES AFTER BATTLE FOR VILLAGE"*; and *"RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS SHELLED IN CAPITAL OF DONETSK REPUBLIC"*. While the caption *"KIEV: RUSSIA CONDUCTS BARRAGE OF MISSILE ATTACKS ON UKRAINE TARGETING CIVILIANS"* (immediately followed by *"RUSSIA DENIES ALL ACCUSATIONS OF MISSILE ATTACKS TARGETING CIVILIANS IN UKRAINE"*) was included during the Donbas Report, it did not directly refer to conflict in the Donbas but rather the conflict in Ukraine in general. The caption *"UKRAINE ACCUSES RUSSIA OF SHELLING, MOSCOW DENIES ATTACKING CIVILIANS"* also appeared to refer to the conflict in Ukraine in general rather than challenging the specific accusations made against the Ukrainian military in the Donbas. The caption shown during the Slier Report, *"RUSSIANS ARE SEEN AS THE MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS"*, appeared in the context of guest Kirill Vyshinsky discussing *"what's been happening in the Donbas for over seven years"* but appeared to refer to the current conflict in general and did not provide sufficient challenge to the accusations made against the Ukrainian authorities within the programme as a whole.

Ofcom recognised that RT viewers would have expected to see news on the channel relating to the conflict in Ukraine from a predominantly Russian perspective and that, as stated above, in line with freedom of expression, it was legitimate for RT to broadcast news on the conflict in Ukraine from a Russian perspective and also to report on the allegations that were being made by Russian officials and spokespersons about Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. However, it was still incumbent on TV Novosti to maintain due impartiality on this matter of major political controversy by including an appropriately wide range of significant views and giving them due weight in this programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes, including, for example, the perspective of the Ukrainian state and/or military on the ongoing conflict in the Donbas. As set out above, where alternative views were represented within the programme as a whole, these did not amount to representing an appropriately wide range of significant views given due weight in relation to the specific strong allegations as to the conduct of the Ukrainian state and/or military in the Donbas region.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political and controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Furthermore, taken overall, due impartiality was not preserved during the news reports about the Donbas region, as required under Rule 5.1.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our decision is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12

Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin
18 July 2022

Conclusion

The programme under investigation was a news programme and therefore Rule 5.1 applied. In addition, the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to this programme. This was because we considered that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. Further, we considered that the conflict specifically taking place in the Donbas region, in and of itself, was a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy. This reflects the significance and relevance of developments in the Donbas region at the time of the broadcast.

Therefore the broadcaster was required to preserve due impartiality by including an appropriately wide range of significant views with due weight, in order to comply with Section Five of the Code.

In Ofcom's view, this programme contained claims about the actions of the Ukrainian state or military in the Donbas region of Ukraine that were highly contentious. These included that the Ukrainian military were deliberately shelling, threatening and attacking civilians and residential areas in the Donbas region and had violated the human rights, including the right to life, of Russian-speaking people in the Donbas for "*over seven years*". An appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were not adequately represented or given due weight within this programme.

Therefore, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this news programme in relation to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Our Decision is to record breaches of Rules 5.1, 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code against TV Novosti.

Ofcom considers that these breaches were serious, and we are minded to consider them for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

Donbass Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	RT
Date & time	1 and 2 March 2022, various times
Category	Due impartiality
Summary	RT failed to ensure due impartiality in a documentary programme which covered a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. In breach of Rules 5.11 & 5.12.

Introduction

This document sets out Ofcom’s Decision in relation to our investigation into the above programme, broadcast on RT on 1 March 2022, during the sixth day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022. The programme was around 54 minutes long in total and was broadcast in two parts, the first at 05:30 and the second at 06:30. The two parts of the programme were also repeated a further four times throughout the day on 1 March 2022¹ and a further two times on 2 March 2022². The licence for the RT service was held at the time by Autonomous Non-profit Organisation TV-Novosti (“TV Novosti”).

Ofcom was alerted to this programme through monitoring and by complaints from viewers. Ofcom considered that the programme raised issues warranting investigation under the due impartiality rules set out in [Section Five of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code](#) (“the Code”). Due to the severity and urgency of the situation in Ukraine, and the high public interest, we informed TV Novosti that it was necessary for us to expedite this investigation at the outset.

Background:

Background to our investigation

RT is a global news and current affairs channel largely produced in Russia and funded by the Russian Federation.

¹ At: 08:30 and 11:30; 13:30 and 14:30; 16:30 and 17:30; and 19:30 and 20:30.

² At: 05:30 and 06:30; and 10:30 and 11:30. A further repeat began at 15:30 but the service went off air approximately 15 minutes later.

On 2 March 2022, following the imposition of sanctions by the EU which affected the ability of third parties to provide services to TV Novosti, RT ceased to broadcast on regulated platforms in the UK. On 18 March 2022, Ofcom revoked the two broadcasting licences held by TV Novosti for the RT service, as well as the licence held by TV Novosti for the RT Europe service³.

The RT broadcast channel, licensed by Ofcom, was made for UK audiences, providing a Russian perspective on UK and global news and current affairs related programming. It broadcasts in English. In the UK, the channel was broadcast on satellite and terrestrial platforms. *Donbass Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (“the programme”) was a documentary which focused on the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine since 2014, prior to the ongoing war which began on 24 February 2022⁴. Throughout the broadcast, rolling news headlines were displayed along the bottom of the screen, all of which related to the current conflict in Ukraine⁵. As mentioned above, the two parts of the programme were repeated several times on 1 March 2022, and each time they were broadcast they were preceded by and, in most cases, followed by, news bulletins covering the current conflict in Ukraine.

In this Decision, we have used the Ukrainian spelling for Ukrainian place names, except where we have transcribed or quoted contributors speaking from a Russian perspective in the programme, where we have used the Russian spelling. Direct quotes from TV Novosti’s representations or captions reflect the same spelling as the original.

The conflict in Ukraine

On Thursday 24 February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, which has been internationally condemned. On 2 March 2022⁶, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations there⁷ and condemned the 24 February 2022 declaration by the Russian Federation of a “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Ofcom understands the Donbas (Russian spelling “Donbass”) to be a disputed region in south-eastern Ukraine, which contains the cities Donetsk and Luhansk (Russian spelling “Lugansk”). This area has been the site of an ongoing conflict between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian state or military since 2014.

Background to the conflict in the Donbas

Between November 2013 and February 2014, mass protests took place in Kyiv’s Maidan (Independence Square) which resulted in violent and, in some cases, fatal clashes between protestors

³ See [Decision to revoke licence – ANO TV Novosti](#), 18 March 2022.

⁴ Ofcom understands that the documentary covered the time period 2014-2021 and was completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

⁵ A list of these rolling news headlines is set out under “Programme Summary”.

⁶ This was after the broadcast covered in this Decision.

⁷ See [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Demanding Russian Federation Immediately End Illegal Use of Force in Ukraine, Withdraw All Troops](#), United Nations, 2 March 2022.

and police.⁸ In April 2014, pro-Russian separatist activity spread to other eastern Ukrainian cities, and the self-declared “Donetsk People’s Republic” and the self-declared “Lugansk People’s Republic” were created in Donetsk and Luhansk, respectively, in the Donbas Region. In response, the Ukrainian Government established the Anti-Terrorist Operation. This was followed by an escalation of hostilities between the Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian military, with violence carried out by and against all sides of the conflict. On 11 May 2014, the self-declared republics held referendums on self-rule in Donetsk and Luhansk. The results of these referendums were reported as showing 89% support for self-rule in Donetsk⁹ and 96.2% support for self-rule in Luhansk¹⁰. These referendums were not recognised by the Government of Ukraine, and were condemned by countries in the West¹¹. In 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that: “(t)he active conflict in eastern Ukraine continues disrupting civilian life and causing deaths, injuries and destruction”¹².

Ofcom’s due impartiality rules

Reflecting our duties under section 319 of the Communications Act 2003 (“the Act”), Section Five of the Code requires that news in television and radio services is presented with due impartiality and that the special impartiality requirements set out in section 320 of the Act are met.

The special impartiality requirements include the preservation, in the case of every television service, of due impartiality on matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy. Section 320 of the Act requires Ofcom, for the purposes of setting the due impartiality rules in the Code, to take account, in particular, of the need to ensure the preservation of due impartiality in relation to: matters of major political or industrial controversy; and major matters relating to current public policy.

This programme focused on the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine since 2014¹³ and included rolling news headlines displayed along the bottom of the screen, all of which related to the current conflict in Ukraine. It contained allegations regarding the policies and actions of the Ukrainian authorities in and in relation to that region during this period, which the Russian Government has widely been reported as using to justify its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022¹⁴. We considered that these issues are matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to current public policy, and therefore that it was incumbent upon the broadcaster to ensure that significant alternative

⁸ See [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 15 June 2014](#), United Nations, 18 June 2014.

⁹ See [Ukraine rebels hold referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk](#), BBC, 11 May 2014.

¹⁰ See [Results show 96.2 percent support for self-rule in east Ukraine region](#), Reuters, 12 May 2014.

¹¹ See [Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on "elections" in eastern Ukraine](#), Council of the European Union, 5 November 2014.

¹² See [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 16 May to 15 August 2018, United Nations](#).

¹³ Ofcom understands that the documentary covers the time period 2014-2021 and was completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

¹⁴ See [Russia's Putin authorises 'special military operation' against Ukraine, Reuters, 24 February 2022](#).

views were included and given due weight within the broadcast. Therefore, the following Code rules applied:

Rule 5.11: “...due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy by the person providing a service...in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes”.

Rule 5.12: “In dealing with matters of major political and industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes. Views and facts must not be misrepresented”.

We requested comments from the broadcaster as to how the content complied with these rules, in particular in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

The Code makes clear that “due” means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. “Due impartiality” does not therefore mean an equal division of time must be given to every view, or that every argument must be represented. Due impartiality can be preserved in a number of ways and it is an editorial decision for the broadcaster as to how it ensures this.

The Code also makes clear that the approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to content and the extent to which the content and approach are signalled to the audience. In addition, context, as set out in [Section Two \(Harm and Offence\) of the Code](#) is important in preserving due impartiality. Context includes a number of factors such as: the editorial content of the programme; the service on which the material is broadcast; the likely size, composition and expectation of the audience; and the effect on viewers who may come across the programme unawares.

Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code

Ofcom has published Guidance to assist broadcasters in complying with the due impartiality rules in Section Five of the Code, including the heightened requirements contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12. Amongst other things, Ofcom’s Guidance makes clear that: it is an editorial matter for the broadcaster as to how due impartiality is preserved, as long as the Code is complied with¹⁵; and there are a range of editorial techniques for maintaining due impartiality¹⁶.

In relation to Rules 5.11 and 5.12, the Guidance explains these additional rules are necessary because of the nature of the subject matter concerned: a matter of major political and industrial controversy or major matter relating to current public policy is of a significant level of importance and is likely to be of the moment.

¹⁵ See paragraph 1.6, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/99177/broadcast-code-guidance-section-5-march-2017.pdf.

¹⁶ Ibid, paragraph 1.17.

Our Guidance also states that the broadcasting of comments either criticising or supporting the policies and actions of any political organisation or government state will not be, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. In Ofcom's view, it is in the public interest for programmes to be able to tackle controversial issues and take a clear position on those issues, even if that position is highly critical, particularly during times of conflict. Any broadcaster may do this provided it complies with the Code. However, depending on the specific circumstances of any particular case, it may be necessary to reflect alternative viewpoints or provide context in an appropriate way to ensure that Section Five of the Code is complied with.

Application of Section Five of the Code in this investigation

As discussed above, Ofcom considered that the heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to this programme. This was because we considered that the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine (including the background to the conflict from 2014 onwards) was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy. In particular, we considered that although the documentary concerned matters taking place before February 2022, many of the allegations made in the programme against the Ukrainian Government regarding its actions in the Donbas region since 2014 had been widely reported as relied upon by the Russian Government to justify its current invasion of Ukraine¹⁷; and a significant amount of the military confrontation between Russian forces and Ukrainian forces since the invasion in February 2022 was taking place in the Donbas region at the time this documentary was broadcast.

In our letter of 8 March 2022 to TV Novosti, we asked it to explain how the programme complied with Rules 5.11 and 5.12 specifically in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, in order to help us reach a Preliminary View in this investigation¹⁸.

The importance of the due impartiality regime

The due impartiality standards required under sections 319 and 320 of the Act form part of a tripartite series of measures (the others being a prohibition on paid political advertising¹⁹ and the provision of free party political and party election broadcasts according to defined rules²⁰) designed to safeguard

¹⁷ See footnote 13.

¹⁸ Ofcom has previously made clear our approach to enforcing the special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Broadcasting Code. For example, in 2018, Ofcom found TV Novosti in breach of these requirements in relation to the broadcast of seven programmes, six of which dealt with major matters regarding Russian foreign policy. See [Issue 369 of Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), 20 December 2018. TV Novosti applied for judicial review of Ofcom's decisions. TV Novosti's claim was dismissed in full in the Administrative Court and Court of Appeal. RT has applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

¹⁹ See s.319(2)(g) and 321(2) of the Act.

²⁰ S.333 of the Act provides that licences for certain broadcasters must require the inclusion of free broadcasts and the observance of the Ofcom Rules on Party Political and Referendum Broadcasts. Those Rules regulate party political broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties outside election periods); party election broadcasts (offered to qualifying parties during election periods); and referendum campaign broadcasts (offered to each designated referendum organisation before each referendum).

the integrity of democratic debate on matters of public concern by preventing influential broadcast media platforms from being hijacked by wealthy or well-placed interests promoting a partial agenda²¹.

As explained in the Government White Paper which led to the Act:

“[Due impartiality] obligations have played a major part in ensuring wide public access to impartial and accurate information about our society and the opportunity to encounter a diverse array of voices and perspectives. They ensure that the broadcast media provide a counterweight to other, often partial, sources of news. They therefore contribute significantly to properly informed democratic debate”.

The Courts have recently confirmed the ongoing importance of the due impartiality regime:

“There is nothing to suggest that the need for accuracy or impartiality in the broadcasting media, or the contribution that an adherence to those standards in broadcasting makes to a properly informed democratic debate, has diminished or is any less important to safeguarding the interests of citizens now than it was at the time of the White Paper or the enactment of the 2003 Act. Indeed, there is reason to consider that the need is at least as great, if not greater than ever before, given current concerns about the effect on the democratic process of news manipulation and of fake news”²².

In addition, the Courts have recently confirmed that the importance of due impartiality is heightened in circumstances where it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of content which has been broadcast²³. Ofcom considers the due impartiality requirements in broadcasting to be particularly important in situations where events are changing quickly and potentially harmful disinformation is available online.

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and freedom. It constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and is one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every person.

As a public authority, it is unlawful for Ofcom to act in a way that is incompatible with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (“Article 10”)²⁴. This right encompasses the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression as well as the audience’s right to receive information and ideas without

²¹ R (Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation TV-Novosti) v The Office of Communications, [2020] EWHC 689 (Admin), paragraph 21.

²² Ibid, paragraph 23.

²³ Ibid, paragraph 68.

²⁴ Section 6 Human Rights Act 1998.

interference²⁵. Ofcom's Code and Guidance are drafted, and given effect to, in accordance with Article 10. In particular, in carrying out its duties, Ofcom must have regard to the broadcaster's freedom to discuss any controversial subject or point of view in its programming, as well as the requirement in the Code to preserve due impartiality on matters relating to major political or industrial controversy or major matters relating to current public policy.

It is well established that the freedom of expression of licensed broadcasters may legitimately be restricted where such measures are necessary to achieve the positive objective of maintaining fair and equal democratic discourse on influential media platforms to the benefit of society generally²⁶. In order to establish that a limitation is "necessary", relevant and sufficient reasons must be provided to justify the restriction, the restriction must correspond to a pressing social need, and it must be proportionate to the aim pursued. The legitimate aim pursued by the Act and the Code is to protect the rights of others, i.e. to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast news by ensuring that other viewpoints are received by viewers who may then participate on an informed basis in the democratic processes.

By section 3(3) of the Act, Ofcom must, in performing its duties under subsection (1), have regard, in all cases, to (a) the principles under which regulatory activities should be transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed; and (b) any other principles appearing to Ofcom to represent the best regulatory practice.

Each and every time Ofcom applies the Code to broadcast content, Ofcom gives careful consideration to the broadcaster's and the audience's Article 10 rights. In order to reach a Decision on whether due impartiality was maintained in this programme, Ofcom has had careful regard to the Article 10 rights and all the relevant contextual factors in this programme.

²⁵ *Lingens v Austria* (1986) 8 EHRR 407.

²⁶ *Animal Defenders v United Kingdom* [2013] EMLR 28 and *R (On The Application of Animal Defenders International) v Secretary of State For Culture, Media and Sport* [2008] 1 AC 1312.

Investigation

Programme Summary

Ofcom watched and considered the whole programme. Below we have set out a summary of the programme.

Part 1

Part 1 of the programme began with slates showing the following text (“the disclaimer caption”):

“VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED

Includes graphic and violent content that some viewers may find disturbing”.

and:

“The opinions of the people who appear in this film are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or position of RTD²⁷.

The Ukrainian authorities have been asked to comment on the issues presented in this film but have yet to respond”.

Over an animated map showing the location of the Donbas region, and then some footage of people in military clothing firing machine guns and rocket launchers, the narrator said:

“2014...a coup divides Ukraine and leads to fratricidal war in Donbass. A war that continues to this day”.

The programme then cut to an aerial shot of the countryside and a field, labelled “Lugansk, LPR²⁸, 2021”. A closer shot showed a mass grave and a memorial. The narrator said:

“On the edge of a large field near Lugansk, a mass grave. Locals say that the people buried here are mostly civilians, who were allegedly killed by Ukrainian paramilitary groups in the summer of 2014”.

Anna Soroka, described in a caption as “Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, LPR” walked alongside the mass grave. Her comments included [English subtitles]:

“In this place alone, 300 to 500 civilians are buried who were killed by the military-political leadership of Ukraine. There’s only one word for this – genocide”.

The narrator said that Anna Soroka “leads a special committee for collecting evidence of the Ukrainian Government’s alleged war crimes against the people of Lugansk”.

²⁷ Russia Today Documentary, the channel for which the programme was originally produced.

²⁸ i.e. the self-declared “Lugansk People’s Republic”.

The next scene was captioned *“Village of Verkhneshevyrevka, LPR, 2021”*, where another mass grave was shown. George Eliason, described in a caption as *“Journalist, US”* stood next to several exhumed graves. His comments included:

“I'm here for five minutes and then I'm told the first five people they found, it was five decapitated heads. They were all civilians. Who does this to people? You can't say that there isn't, there wasn't war crimes”.

This was accompanied and followed by footage of individuals dressed in protective clothing exhuming and examining human remains, including a skull. Some detail of the remains was heavily pixelated.

Charles A. Kupchan was introduced in a caption as *“Professor, Georgetown University. Senior Fellow, Council of Foreign Relations, US”*. The narrator said that he *“served as special assistant to U. S. President Barack Obama”* and that this was how he explained *“the situation in Donbass”*. Mr Kupchan then said:

“Unfortunately, in most conflicts that we find around the world, atrocities have been committed. Extrajudicial killings...Unfortunately, when you have conflicts of this sort, those kinds of, of, uh, incidents take place”.

The programme then cut to further footage of George Eliason at an excavated mass grave. He said:

“You can't walk into this and say, well, it was war, it happens and no, it doesn't. People don't cut each other's heads off - and especially not civilians. Armies don't do this. Maybe ISIS does this. And what do you do with groups like ISIS? How was Ukraine different?”

Over footage of a different mass grave being excavated, the narrator said:

“In areas where Ukrainian nationalist battalions reportedly rampaged, burials like this are not uncommon”.

Then George Eliason's comment, *“You can't say that there isn't, there wasn't war crimes”*, was repeated.

In the next section of the programme, the narrator described events in Kyiv in December 2013, accompanied by footage of the then US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, and the then US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, handing out snacks to a large crowd of people in the Maidan²⁹, Kyiv.

Russell Bentley, introduced in a caption as *“Volunteer, Codename ‘Texas,’ US”*, said:

“When I saw Nuland handing out the cookies, I understood that this was also the work of the criminal United States Government”.

Charles A. Kupchan said:

²⁹ Independence Square.

"I don't think that there is anything really untoward about having an American diplomat there handing out cookies".

Bentley continued:

"I'm a patriotic American. I love the American people, but I hate the American Government. It is the Fourth Reich. It is the equivalence of Nazi Germany today".

Over footage of historical images of conflict and destroyed buildings in the various locations he listed, the narrator said that *"Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yugoslavia and now Ukraine is joining the list of countries devastated by the outcome of a colour revolution"*³⁰.

A further clip of Charles A. Kupchan was shown, who said:

"For starters, I wouldn't call it a coup. Uh, I would call it the popular overthrow of a, of an illegitimate regime".

The programme then cut to footage of a large crowd, captioned *"Kiev, Ukraine, 2014"*. The scene cut to a protestor throwing stones, followed by scenes of violent protest.

Janus Putkonen, was introduced in a caption as *"Journalist, Director DONi News Agency, Finland"*. His comments included:

"I was in Maidan in 2014 when the Maidan³¹ started. It was not a plan of Ukraine. This is a civil war situation, fuelled from abroad, not from Russia. But fuelled from [inaudible] fuelled from Washington, from Canada, from Finland even....Directly from Nazi Germany...This is a civil war situation, not war between Ukraine and Russia, but war from the West against [the] Russian world".

The narrator said:

"On February 23rd, 2014, just after Maidan, the Ukrainian Parliament votes to repeal the law on the basics of state language policy...They suggest limiting the use of the Russian language in a country where vast territories are populated by Russian speakers who consider Russian their native tongue".

Lieutenant Andrey Timokhin was introduced in a caption as *"LPR People's Militia, Codename 'Prince'"* and by the narrator as *"Donbass resident Andrey Timokhin, a legislator and teacher with 30 years' experience, [who] felt he had to take up arms to defend his ideals, condemned on Maidan"*.

³⁰ "Colour revolution" is a term used to describe various anti-regime protest movements and accompanying changes of government.

³¹ Also referred to as "Euromaidan" or "the Maidan Uprising", this was a period of civil unrest and demonstrations against the Ukrainian Government, which had their focus in the Maidan (Independence Square) in Kyiv.

Timokhin's comments included [English subtitles]:

"This is a Russian-speaking region, so this was very painful for us. We held protest rallies in our cities, but they were peaceful!... We don't agree with the rewriting of history or that Russia has changed from close brother to an enemy... We don't agree that Ukrainian language is the main one... We sent papers to Kiev saying we did not agree with this... Let's resolve everything legally, in a civilized manner".

The narrator then, accompanied by footage of tanks displaying the Ukrainian flag on the streets in Mariupol in 2014, said:

"On April 13th 2014, military action began in south eastern Ukraine. The authorities in Kiev called it an anti-terrorist operation".

Several pieces of footage from different locations in Ukraine in 2014 showed tanks, injured civilians, gunfire and soldiers.

Roman Omelchenko was introduced in a caption as *"Volunteer, Codename 'Scout', Russia"* and by the narrator as *"Commander Roman Omelchenko [who] has defended cities and villages in Donbass since it all started"*.

Omelchenko's comments included [English subtitles]:

"Slavs are at war with Slavs, this is a civil war".

and:

"They need territory: the USA, England, Canada. Why? They need some place to put their bases, so they can deliver an instantaneous, unanswerable strike on Russian territory".

Colonel Eduard Basurin, was introduced in a caption as *"Deputy Head, DPR People's Militia"*. He said [English subtitles]:

"From a military point of view the closer the base of a foreign state is to the border of another state, I mean Russia, the approach time for any type of weapon is faster, and it becomes more difficult to react".

The narrator then introduced a section of the programme about events in Odesa in 2014. Footage of a demonstration included protestors carrying placards with some written in English, including: *"No Political Repression"*; *"Referendum! Yanukovich³² go home!"*; and *"We want referendum"*. A Russian banner was translated in a caption as *"Remove Fascists from power"*.

During this footage, the narrator said:

³² Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine 2010-2014.

“Odessa supports Donbass. People take to the streets to demand a referendum”.

Igor Polovnev was introduced in a caption as *“Entrepreneur, former Odessa resident”*. His comments included [English subtitles]:

“People wouldn’t accept the coup d’etat and tried to determine what to do next because they weren’t ready to accept the way events had unfolded in Kiev. I think the coup was organised by our oligarchs with the support of US and European intelligence services”.

Mr Polovnev went on to say that there had been *“a major demonstration”* on 1 May 2014 in Odesa, and that the following day there was a *“decision to unleash carnage”*. Footage recorded by Mr Polovnev showed a group of men smashing a large glass display case containing a poster of the then President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko while another man pointed a hand gun at the poster. Further clips included a civilian talking to a police officer, saying [English subtitles], *“Either you put them away now, or we’ll be storming you on Monday”*.

Mr Polovnev said [English subtitles]:

“The teams and leaders were all from Western Ukraine. They seriously differ from all other Ukrainians. Their language is different, everything...I personally saw people on the roofs with pistols”.

The narrator said:

“May the 2nd 2014. People who asked for a peaceful referendum and the chance to speak their native language were burned alive in Odessa’s Trade Union building”.

This was accompanied by footage of: the Trade Union building on fire; protesters standing outside it and throwing objects at the building; a Molotov cocktail thrown at one of the windows and bursting into flames; and a line of riot police standing in front of the burning building.

Mr Polovnev said [English subtitles]:

“The people at the Trade Unions building did nothing, even when the events began. I didn’t leave the building as I saw how the people going downstairs were beaten with sticks, chains, and steel bars. They tried to beat me too but I used to be an athlete, so I blocked the blows”.

Further footage showed:

- the Trade Union building on fire;
- a person hitting another person who was lying on the ground;
- a blurred image of a body lying on the steps at the entrance of the Trade Union building;
- injured protestors being carried away from the scene including focus on the torso and head of a victim whose injuries were coarsely pixelated; and

- another victim being carried on a stretcher, his head covered in blood (image coarsely pixelated).

The narrator said:

“Many were killed by shots to the head”.

The programme next showed footage of an injured man crawling along the floor, surrounded by a crowd of people who were carrying sticks and shouting. An English subtitle read: *“No need for lynching!”*

Igor Polovnev said [English subtitles]:

“Those who survived were led through a corridor of shame. They were beaten with sticks, and forced to crawl, and so on. Officially, 48 people died, but I think it was significantly more because a lot of people suffocated, a lot were killed, and a lot just disappeared. These people will do anything to justify Ukraine’s leadership if it serves their goals. They support nationalists who are nearly outright Nazis”.

As Mr Polovnev spoke, footage showed:

- several victims lying on the floor, faces obscured by blurring, blood visible on their clothing;
- a group of armed men wearing balaclavas and yellow arm bands attacking and kicking a protestor;
- a large pool of blood on the floor, an area of which was blurred;
- the Trade Union building on fire and a Molotov cocktail hitting one of the windows;
- a body hanging out of one of the windows (which was coarsely pixelated); and
- several bodies lying on the stairs inside the building (all coarsely pixelated).

The narrator said:

“The trade union building supposedly simply caught fire, but many reacted differently”.

After an advertising break, the programme resumed with a repeat of the disclaimer caption shown at the beginning of the programme.

There were then interviews with two World War Two veterans, recorded in Israel in 2015. One, Yuly Lyubotsky, said the following, over images of people standing on the ledge of the burning Odesa Trade Union building [English subtitles]:

“The Ukrainian Government encouraged such actions. The people who tried to escape by jumping out of windows were shot at. It’s all being done to harm Russia”.

The second veteran, Israel Gitman, then stated [English subtitles]:

"Donbass is Russian territory, it used to be Russian. Crimea was Russian. This is Russia".

David Zelvensky, described in a caption as *"Director, Energy of Courage Museum, Hadera, Israel"*, stated [English subtitles]:

"Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarussians are, in essence, peoples from one mother, one historical cradle. It's necessary to do everything possible to peacefully reconcile".

Leonid Pasechnik, described in a caption as *"Head of LPR"*, said [English subtitles]:

"I'm sure if armed Ukrainian nationalists and militias had entered our territory at that time, there would have been a repeat of the tragic events that took place at the Trade Unions Building in Odessa...If we hadn't defended ourselves, there would have been a major bloodbath here".

The narrator said that a referendum was held on 11 May 2014 in which *"The Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics declare[d] themselves sovereign states"*.

Andrey Timokhin said [English subtitles]:

"The people came en masse! I've never witnessed the kind of enthusiasm I saw for the referendum. People came out against this atrocity to show they didn't want to live in a Ukraine like this".

Alongside images of soldiers in tanks, the narrator then said that *"the streets of Donbass were already being patrolled by Ukrainian soldiers"* and introduced Dr Aleksandr Torba, *"a respected physician in Lugansk, [who] has operated on thousands of the wounded who have been taken to his hospital since the war began"*.

Torba, shown in an operating theatre at a hospital, said [English subtitles]:

"Military action began immediately after the referendum. The wounded were already arriving...Most of the victims were civilians who went out on a balcony to see what was happening, or were watching from a window, or were hit by stray bullets".

The narrator then spoke about people who had enlisted as volunteers to fight in the Donbas, and said many of them had been killed. Two mothers of young volunteers who had been killed were interviewed, one of whom said [English subtitles], *"I believe that, for some reason, the West promotes its democracy with blood"*.

Roman Omelchenko said [English subtitles]:

"The West blames Russia for everything because they allege that it is Russia that supports and finances all these separatist movements. But the fact is that these movements began after Odessa. I made the

decision to volunteer after Odessa, and I know that most of the militia guys were inspired to do the same when Odessa burned”.

The narrator said:

“The events unfolding in Ukraine are a cause for concern among anti-fascists around the world. People of different nationalities and from various countries have gone to Donbass”.

Russell Bentley, an American previously introduced as a “Volunteer”, said that he “served with...volunteers from all over the world that came here to defend the idea of Russian people that were being attacked by the Ukrainian army...”.

The programme then included an interview with Alexis Castillo, described by the narrator as “a Spanish anti-fascist”, who said [English subtitles]:

“Fascist and nationalist forces came to power, sponsored and promoted by the US and EU...There were events in Odessa when people who had done nothing wrong were burned. They were just trying to speak out against what was happening on the Maidan. It was then, after what happened in Odessa on May 2, that I decided to go”.

Footage captioned “DPR³³, 2014” and “Lugansk, LPR, 2014” showed explosions and shooting.

Leonid Pasechnik said [English subtitles]:

“Ordinary Donbass residents, practically without weapons or organisation...just a militia. We opposed an army armed to the teeth. Our guys were dying, civilians were dying. Both local government and ordinary citizens repeatedly asked the authorities in Kiev at that time to resolve this issue peacefully”.

The narrator said:

“Despite that, the Ukrainian Government decided to designate the self-proclaimed Republics as separatists and terrorist organisations. And you can do anything you want against terrorists. The road to devastating fratricidal war is now open”.

Footage showed a clip of an explosion in what appeared to be a public square, captioned “Lugansk, LPR, 2014”. Russell Bentley then described an airstrike against Luhansk City Hall. He said he had later seen a photo of a woman who had been killed in the attack:

“Both of her legs were blown off. She was sitting there looking up, one moment before she died, looking into the camera going ‘What are you going to do about this?’...It was like she looked into my soul...I said, I’m

³³ i.e. the self-declared “Donetsk People’s Republic”.

going there to fight. I'm going to avenge the murder of these innocent civilians".

As he spoke, the programme showed a series of images (which had been blurred) of people who had lost their limbs and died, with blood visible on the ground and on the bodies. A dead body was covered with a blanket. Unblurred footage showed a motionless person on the ground receiving CPR. A woman on the ground was shown looking to camera, her face was covered in blood and not blurred, possibly the same woman Bentley described.

Arsen Klinchaev, described in a caption as *"President, Donbass Patriots Association NGO"*, was then interviewed next to a monument captioned (in an English subtitle) as *"In memory of victims of the Ukrainian airstrike"*. He said [English subtitles]: *"Why did they send that plane? Why did they hit City Hall with a rocket?"*.

The narrator, alongside footage of shooting and soldiers fighting, said:

"On that day, eight people were killed and 28 wounded...And it's not just military personnel who perish. Civilians do, too. Kievsky district in Donetsk, closest to the airport is almost completely destroyed".

The programme then included an interview with Ronald Van Amerongen, described by the narrator as a *"blogger...from the Kingdom of the Netherlands"* who had been *"covering events in Donbass since the coup in Maidan"*. Van Amerongen said:

"From what I've personally seen, what the Ukrainian army did here in Donbass, the brutal murders they did on the Donbass population, on the infrastructure and private homes...it wasn't a military war so much, until this day. They target civilians, not so much military targets, and that is pure terror".

Images were shown of dead bodies on the ground in pools of blood, which were partially blurred. Dr Aleksandr Torba then said [English subtitles]:

"Water supplies were interrupted. It was delivered in cars and water tankers. Or people came with it, or maybe with bread. As soon as a lot of people gathered, the shelling began. The casualties were especially severe during Grad rocket attacks. A lot of people received wounds they could not recover from".

The programme then included footage from a memorial complex in Savur-Mohyla³⁴. The narrator said the following, interspersed with images of soldiers fighting:

"Saur-Mogila is a sacred place for the people of Donbass. During World War Two, more than 23,000 Soviet soldiers died in battle here, fighting to liberate Donbass from the Nazi invaders...This impressive memorial complex was built in their honour. History repeats itself. From early June to August 2014, Ukrainian army battalions attack the high ground. The

³⁴ A strategically important hill near the Russia-Ukraine border.

hottest, bloodiest days fell to soldiers of the Vostok Battalion. Out of 32 defenders, only five survived. 27 lost their lives, but they held their ground...Soviet soldiers are buried here. Their remains were found while clearing the ground of shells”.

The programme then included images of people crying over coffins draped in the Ukrainian flag, followed by further partially blurred images of injured people on the ground. The narrator said:

“The Ukrainian army death toll is in the hundreds. Two Slavic nations are destroying each other for the benefit of the West. During that terrible summer of 2014, heavy artillery shells Donbass cities and villages. Bombs fall and snipers take aim”.

After part one of the documentary, there was a news bulletin. This was followed at 06:30 (and at other times when the programme was repeated on 1 March) by part two.

Part 2

Part 2 began with a further use of the disclaimer caption.

Then Andrey Timokhin was shown standing in the ruins of a house. His comments included [English subtitles]:

“Our Donbass has been destroyed, you’re looking at it. I’d never give a command to use serious weapons if I knew there were civilians present”.

The narrator then introduced a section about the Ukrainian army:

“The Ukrainian army is diverse. There’s a huge void between nationalist volunteer battalions and the Ukrainian military force, the UAF³⁵”.

Several interviewees spoke on this topic. Roman Omelchenko said [English subtitles]:

“The UAF is citizens: reservists, soldiers who’ve served. Many don’t want to fight but they must because, under Ukrainian law, they can face prison if they refuse to enlist”.

Olga Kobtseva, who “works on a prisoner exchange programme” and “has met several Ukrainian mothers searching for missing sons” said [English subtitles]:

“The guys the government drafted didn’t know where they were being taken. Their mums were told they were going off to training... They were young men, aged 18, 19, 21. They had no idea what was happening. They’d only enlisted for training!...Ukrainian mothers don’t know their children’s real fate. Locals for the village of Stanitsa Luganskaya described the following scenes: pits were dug, an excavator was brought in. Then Kamaz trucks loaded with bodies came and dumped them in holes which were then filled in. Poroshenko authorised mobile

³⁵ The Ukrainian Armed Forces.

crematoria. What for? To hide the number of casualties, the number of people who were killed!"

Leonid Pasechnik said [English subtitles]:

"They send these young men in, marching behind them, preventing them from retreating. We saw this here in Ukraine in 2014. Isn't that fascism? They shouldn't be dying for American interests!"

The narrator then introduced a series of interviewees who spoke about the pro-Ukrainian volunteer battalions, which he said were referred to by locals in the Donbas as "Dobrobats". This was accompanied by footage labelled "Mariupol, Ukraine 2014" including blurred images of bodies lying on the ground. Vasily Prozorov was introduced as "a former Ukraine Security Service Lieutenant Colonel [who] joined the militia men in 2014". Mr Prozorov said [English subtitles]:

"Dobrobats committed war crimes pure and simple: torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, robberies, looting...As to the horrors I witnessed, the Tornado platoon is facing criminal charges. During the search and inspection of the fighters' mobile phones, it was revealed that in the school where they were based they had a torture chamber where people would be hung by the arms or legs from the ceiling. Women, men and children raped, fingers cut off, DPR carved into their backs!"

This was accompanied by fully blurred images which appear to show injury detail. Then Dmitry Kalashnikov, "head of the Health Ministry Medical Examiner's office in the Donetsk People's Republic", spoke about people he had treated who he said were victims of nationalist battalions [English subtitles]:

"People were tortured and abused in various ways. These people were broken, crippled. They're hard to work with, even to look at!"

Pointing to an unblurred photograph of what appeared to be a man's torso with a swastika shape burned onto it, he said [English subtitles]:

"This young man's been in captivity. This is how the so-called national battalions tormented him....Here's the bullet. It causes severe damage, massive internal injuries, organ ruptures, and then it's difficult to find. It's NATO standard! You can't fire it with a Kalashnikov".

As footage labelled "Ukraine, 2015-2018" was shown of uniformed men marching and shouting "Hang the commies!", the narrator said:

"The list of the nationalist battalions' alleged crimes is long and sorrowful".

Then Roman Omelchenko said [English subtitles]:

"It wasn't only the Aidar, Azov, and Donbass paramilitary groups that did it. Where they were deployed, mass graves of civilians were discovered. Even pregnant women!"

This was accompanied by images of body bags being loaded into vehicles. Then Andrey Timokhin said [English subtitles]:

"In Novosvetlovka, Donbass really distinguished themselves when they raped underage girls. Isn't that an atrocity? In Khryashevatoye, they killed half the village! Facts! Recorded facts!"

Janus Putkonen said:

"These Nazi groups, some of them used badges of 'conqueror' and they were promised slaves and land from Donbass".

Denis Pushilin said [English subtitles]:

"We know these war criminals' names. We know the commanders who are giving the orders. We're waiting to try them for using prohibited methods of war, which Ukraine hasn't stopped so far".

The narrator said:

"Western and Ukrainian mass media often keep silent about alleged crimes committed by nationalist battalions, frequently failing to report accurately and blaming the militiamen for the victims".

This statement was supported by the following comments from journalist Janus Putkonen ("JP") and French volunteer Victor Lanta ("VL"). This was accompanied by footage of residents dancing in the street, and children playing, labelled "Donetsk, DPR, 2021".

JP: *"The whole population of Donbass has been shown as terrorists. We witnessed a huge information war waged against the Donbass people and Russia. Everything basically, what was told in the Western mainstream media was just absolute lie. And when I came here first time in the beginning of '15, and I saw this beautiful people, millions of them, and I understood the magnitude of the lie, I was in shock. Even I knew that it's happening. That's why the reason why I came. But when I saw it in my own eyes that they were treated worse than a dog, worse than any animal. So the demonisation against the Russian world in the Western propaganda is a very terrible thing. It's very frightful thing".*

...

VL: [English subtitles] *"The French mass media hide the truth and portray Russia as an aggressor against Ukraine and its people. The real aggressor is obviously the army of Kiev. Every day they bomb civilian facilities, pretending to target pro-Russian troops. But pro-Russian troops have never hidden among civilians".*

The narrator then spoke about fighting in 2014 and the signing of the first Minsk Agreements *“for a peaceful settlement of the military conflict in Donbass”*. He said:

“After the papers were signed, the two sides accused each other of breaking the agreement”.

Denis Pushilin said [English subtitles]:

“Poroshenko’s attitude to the Minsk agreements was the following: we can sign anything right now, and later we’ll see how we can avoid implementing the terms”.

Eduard Basurin said [English subtitles]:

“The first term there says ceasefire. But, on the other hand, due to these agreements, the situation on the frontline stabilised a bit. So the Minsk agreements are still needed”.

The narrator spoke about further fighting breaking out in 2015 and the signing of the Minsk II Agreement³⁶, alongside footage of fighting and shooting labelled *“Debaltsevo, DPR, 2015”*. He said *“but the fighting continues”* and as blurred images were shown of bodies on the ground, several interviewees commented, including Janus Putkonen (“JP”), Charles A. Kupchan (“CK”) and Leonid Pasechnik (“LP”):

JP: *“There are countless of victims never accounted for, and it’s funded by the oligarchs, it’s funded by the globalists, it’s supported by NATO. Ukraine cannot stop this war until this headquarter is demolished. And when it happens, I promise you, civil war in Ukraine will stop next day”.*

...

CK: *“People can have different opinions about the course of events, but to me it looks like an illegal, unabashed open act of Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine”.*

LP: [English subtitles] *“The West will never admit there’s actually a civil war and genocide of the Russian-speaking population on our territory. It suits them to say Russia is to blame for the situation, that Russia is an invader, and so on, but this bears no relation to reality”.*

After an advertising break, the programme resumed by once again showing the disclaimer caption shown at the beginning of the programme.

Then the narrator introduced a section about a mine in the Donbas which he said had been *“completely plundered by Ukrainian soldiers”*. A miner was interviewed about his experiences of being

³⁶ An agreement signed on 12 February 2015 by representatives of the Luhansk People’s Republic, Donetsk People’s Republic, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. It included a package of peacekeeping measures including a ceasefire agreement.

shelled, then the narrator said *“after the shelling, locals described the terrifying results”*. Head of the mine, Aleksandr Pirogov said [English subtitles]:

“We found the bodies of civilians in this pit. We found them due to the foul smell, and when we dug it up, we found the bodies. Ammo casings were scattered around. We know and remember”.

Denis Pushilin, Head of the self-declared DPR, was then interviewed, who said [English subtitles]:

“We have witness testimony about what happened. Forensic examinations and DNA collection are ongoing”.

The narrator said a special lab had been set up in Donetsk (footage of people working in the lab accompanied this). Dmitry Kalashnikov, previously introduced as *“head of the Health Ministry Medical Examiner’s office in the Donetsk People’s Republic”*, then said they had analysed [English subtitles] *“more than 200 corpses and 250 relatives”* since 2017.

This was followed by a section about children who had been killed in the conflict. Sergey Belov, introduced in a caption as *“Board Member, Memorial Society, LPR”*, stood next to a memorial which included photographs of children and said [English subtitles]:

“This is a monument to the lost children of Lugansk. In Ukrainian-occupied territories, nationalist battalions such as Aidar and Tornado killed entire families”.

There was footage of adults crying and men lifting what appeared to be the body of a small child into a coffin. The narrator stated that Donetsk People's Republic also had a monument for the children who have died, and Darya Morozova, introduced as *“a human rights commissioner for the Donetsk People's Republic”* said [English subtitles]:

“We are now on the Alley of Angels. It’s a reminder to the whole of Donbass of the price we’ve paid for the coup that happened in Kiev in 2014. This is our land, we were born here! You can’t dictate to us what language to speak, what schools to attend, and what politics to adopt. We don’t need two fathers or two mothers. We don’t want LGBT propaganda, now happening in Ukraine. And we don’t want the fascism that is being promoted in Ukraine. It’s alien to us”.

The narrator then said that the villages of Donestkoe and Golubovskoe were under fire every day. Residents were interviewed and Alla Kryuchkova, described as the Head of Critical Services in the Village of Golubovskoe said [English subtitles]:

“They shell us in morning or evening, occasionally the whole day. When it stops, we go out to work in our gardens. There was a bombardment just 2 hours ago. It was a big one! They were firing something heavy”.

Two residents then spoke about experiencing shelling on school buses and at schools. One said [English subtitles]:

"Our school has closed. Our children have to take a bus to school in a neighbouring town. But the bus is also shelled, they're firing at kids, not soldiers".

A clip of Charles A. Kupchan was then shown, who said:

"In Ukraine today, there are American troops and European troops and NATO has had a role in the country but much of the effort has been a response to Russian aggression, has been a response to the fact that Russia went in illegally, has violated the sovereignty of its neighbours and the United States and its NATO partners have felt an obligation to help Ukrainians better defend themselves".

The programme then included further clips of residents. One said [English subtitles]:

"I ask Western politicians: What are you doing? Look with your own eyes! Where do you see an occupier to fight? There are only civilians, kids, and old people here. Why are you sponsoring people with weapons and money to kill us? Why? Only the Germans did this during World War II. Now, the Ukrainians are doing the same thing to their own people".

Another said [English subtitles]:

"Try to find one Russian here...You won't! But you've been shouting for seven years that you're at war with Russia. It's us you're killing, for refusing to kneel to you because we didn't want these 'Heil Hitlers'".

The narrator said:

"Locals say the OSCE³⁷ Special monitoring mission to Ukraine performs its duties in Donbass quite selectively. They claim it mostly records details that support the Kiev authorities and their Western masters".

The programme then included two further clips of residents who said [English subtitles] *"the OSCE never comes to these streets"* and *"the OSCE hasn't been around here since 2015"*. Alexis Castillo, the volunteer from Spain, then said [English subtitles]:

"When people see OSCE representatives here, they usually give them the evil eye because they don't tell people what's going on. They don't report that people are being killed, residential areas are being shelled, and snipers are shooting civilians".

The programme then included a clip of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, speaking at the UN General Assembly in New York in 2019. He said [English subtitles]:

"Over 13,000 civilians have been killed, 30,000 have been wounded, and 1.5 million have been forced to leave their homes".

³⁷ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Head of the self-declared DPR, Denis Pushilin, then said [English subtitles]:

“Those strange OSCE reports don’t mention the main thing: that of the 13,000 dead in Donbass, even according to UN estimates, 70% are residents of the DPR and LPR”.

The narrator then said:

“Locals also say the situation has now escalated to the extreme. They claim shelling attacks have increased significantly over the past nine months”.

This was followed by an exchange between residents who said [English subtitles]:

“They hit us every day, especially...with incendiary bombs. They shell us with incendiary bombs, that’s why we have water handy, just in case”.

This was followed by images of a destroyed building including a blurred image of a dead body.

After several comments from other interviewees, the narrator said:

“But despite incessant shelling and international pressure, Donbass keeps living, working and dreaming of a peaceful future – without Ukraine”.

This was accompanied by an aerial image of a mountain with the words *“Peace to Lugansk”* written into it, below three flags, one of which appeared to be the flag of the self-declared Lugansk People’s Republic.

Denis Pushilin then said [English subtitles]:

“The vast majority can no longer imagine themselves as part of Ukraine because of all the blood. Too much blood between us. Too many dead loved ones, relatives, neighbours, and friends. It’s very hard to find a person who’d like to return to Ukraine. Those two to three percent who want to go to Ukraine, they want to return to the old Ukraine, as it was before 2014. And given what we see happening in Ukraine now, no sane person would even look in that direction”.

Other residents were then shown saying it was impossible to return to Ukraine. One said this was *“just because of the war crimes done in Donbass”*. Alexis Castillo said [English subtitles]:

“Donbass residents no longer want to be part of Ukraine. Kiev needs to understand this once and for all”.

Anna Soroka, previously introduced as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, LPR, then said [English subtitles]:

"More than 25,000 civilian sites have been destroyed. Among them, 315 were schools and nursery schools. More than 2,000 women, children and old people have been killed. How is it possible to get over all that?"

A resident then said [English subtitles]:

"We'll drive out these evil fascists who want to come to our land. We won't let them come here. This is our land, we live here".

The programme ended.

Throughout the broadcast, a series of captions scrolled across the bottom of the screen providing current news headlines. These included:

- *"Russian exporters ordered to change 80% of foreign currency income into roubles";*
- *"EU proposes ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiaries on its territory";*
- *"Putin ahead of talks: Russian forces at home on standby";*
- *"Brussels says it will disconnect some Russian banks from SWIFT";*
- *"EU to impose restrictions on Russian Central bank assets";*
- *"Moscow: Kiev talks over Ukraine begin in Belarus";*
- *"Russia's northern pacific fleet's strategic command boosts combat duty";*
- *"Kiev: Aim of talks with Moscow is ceasefire. Withdrawal of Russian troops";*
- *"U.S. declared 12 Russian UN diplomats persona non grata – Russian UN envoy";*
- *"Ukrainian delegation: Russia talks conclude. Parties leave to consult with national leaders";*
- *"Russia: next Ukraine meeting expected in coming days on Belarus-Poland border";*
- *"EU closes airspace to Russian planes including private jets";*
- *"Russia's Northern, Pacific fleets' strategic command boosts combat duty";*
- *"Second round of talks between Russia and Ukraine will begin in coming days";*
- *"EU pledges to supply Ukraine with ammunition, medicines and weapons";*
- *"Traditionally neutral Switzerland joins EU sanctions against Russia";*
- *"Fierce fighting has taken place in Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov";*
- *"Emercom: 127,000 Donbass refugees cross border into Russia";*
- *"Russian defence ministry: Lugansk Militia takes 62 KM of territory";*
- *"Russian defence military: Donetsk forces advance about 30 KM";*
- *"Kiev: 5,000 Russian soldiers killed";* and
- *"Kiev: 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down, 200 tanks destroyed".*

TV Novosti's response

In its representations to Ofcom, TV Novosti said that the programme was shot and produced "before Russia's special operation in Ukraine, aimed at defending peaceful civilians from repeated atrocities performed by [the] Kiev regime, yet officials in the Ukrainian Government refused to participate, ignoring multiple requests". TV Novosti provided a screen grab of the caption which was shown before each part of the documentary ("The Disclaimer Caption"), which read:

"The opinions of the people who appear in this film are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or position of RTD.

The Ukrainian authorities have been asked to comment on the issues presented in this film but have yet to respond”.

TV Novosti said that the repeated inclusion of this caption was, in its view, “sufficient to prove RT had been demonstrating good will and seeking an “alternative view” from the current Kiev government”. It said that Russian media is viewed by Ukraine as an “adversary” and that it had been “denied access to the ‘Ukrainian official position’ since March 2014”, along with other Russian TV channels. TV Novosti also said that it understood from experts who had conducted compliance training sessions at RT that “a necessary balance may be obtained by different means, including visual graphics, CGs [caption generators] etc”. TV Novosti did not draw Ofcom’s attention to any further specific captions.

TV Novosti said that the views of the “collective Western narrative” regarding conflict in the Donbas were reflected in the programme through the use of soundbites from Charles A. Kupchan, a former advisor to US President Barack Obama. It also said that his views “fully coincide[d] with the views and and narratives existing in the current Ukrainian government”. TV Novosti listed all of Mr Kupchan’s contributions in the programme, as follows:

- *“Unfortunately in most conflicts that we find around the world, atrocities have been committed. Extrajudicial killings”;*
- *“Unfortunately when you have conflicts of this sort, those kinds of incidents take place”;*
- *“I don’t think that there is anything really untoward about having an American diplomat there, handing out cookies”* [commenting on US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland’s appearance at Independence Square in Kyiv in 2014 during Maidan events];
- *“For starters, I wouldn’t call it a coup. I would call it the popular overthrow of an illegitimate regime”* [commenting on 2014 regime change in Kyiv];
- *“People can have different opinions about the course of events, but to me it looks like an illegal, unabashed open act of Russian aggression against the South of Ukraine”* [sic³⁸] [commenting on the Minsk Agreement and how the West sees Russia’s role in the conflict]; and
- *“In Ukraine today, there are American troops and European troops, and NATO has had a role in the country. But much of the effort has been in response to Russian aggression, has been in response to the fact that Russia went in illegally, has violated the sovereignty of its neighbours. And [the] United States and its NATO partners have felt an obligation to help Ukrainians better defend themselves”* [commenting on the Western approach to the situation in Ukraine and Western involvement in the Donbas].

TV Novosti concluded its representations with the following statement:

“Since we believe that there’s no need (as our compliance trainers claimed re Ofcom’s “impartiality” rules) to present equal “pro & contra” airtime to every single point of view expressed in a program (documentary), we’d like to maintain a position that in this case there’s no breach of p.5.1 (5.11 & 5.12) of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code”.

³⁸ The quote broadcast was: *“People can have different opinions about the course of events, but to me it looks like an illegal, unabashed open act of Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine”.*

Ofcom's Preliminary View

Ofcom prepared a Preliminary View in this case that there had been breaches of Rules 5.11 and 5.12. TV Novosti was given the opportunity to make representations on the Preliminary View but made no comments.

Decision

For the reasons set out above under "Application of Section Five of the Code in this investigation", we considered this programme dealt with a matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, specifically the policies and actions of the Ukrainian authorities in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore TV Novosti was required to preserve due impartiality pursuant to Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code.

Ofcom considered whether the programme preserved due impartiality on this matter.

This programme featured content related to the Donbas, which Ofcom considered included contentious claims that were highly critical of the Ukrainian authorities, including its military, and the perceived influence of the US and other Western allies on the actions of the Ukrainian authorities. As outlined in the programme summary above, the programme also included visuals and footage throughout of fighting, gunfire, human corpses, and injury detail (though these were partially blurred). Ofcom has grouped the claims, which were made across the programme and are summarised above, into the following themes:

- Allegations of Ukrainian "war crimes" and violence against civilians. For example, Ronald Van Amerongen alleged that the Ukrainian army was responsible for committing "brutal murders" in Donbass, stating "they target civilians"; and George Eliason said "You can't say that...there wasn't war crimes". Similarly Vasily Prozorov alleged that Dobrobats ("volunteer nationalist battalions") "committed war crimes pure and simple: torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, robberies, looting"; and Victor Lanta said "The real aggressor is obviously the army of Kiev. Every day they bomb civilian facilities".
- References to historical events, such as the Maidan protests in February 2014 and the fire at Odesa in May 2014, where details have subsequently been contested. For example, the narrator described the Maidan protests as a "coup" which led to "fratricidal war in Ukraine" and alleged that "People who asked for a peaceful referendum and the chance to speak their native language were burned alive in Odessa's Trade Union building". Yuly Lyubotsky, speaking about the Odessa Trade Union building similarly alleged: "The Ukrainian Government encouraged such actions. The people who tried to escape by jumping out of windows were shot at".
- Repeated allegations that the Ukrainian authorities, including its military, were fascists or Nazis who were attempting to commit genocide against Russian-speaking people in the Donbas. For example, Anna Soroka, said: "300 to 500 civilians are buried, who were killed by the military-political leadership of Ukraine. There's only one word for this – genocide". Clips of residents included statements such as "Only the Germans did this during World War II. Now, the Ukrainians are doing the same thing to their own people"; and "We'll drive out these evil fascists who want to come to our land".
- Allegations that the people in the Donbas had rejected the Ukrainian Government. For example, the narrator said: "Donbass keeps living, working and dreaming of a peaceful future

– *without Ukraine*”. In addition, Denis Pushilin said: *“The vast majority can no longer imagine themselves as part of Ukraine...Those two to three percent who want to go to Ukraine, they want to return to the old Ukraine, as it was before 2014”*; and Alexis Castillo said: *“Donbass residents no longer want to be part of Ukraine”*.

- Allegations that the Ukrainian Government was acting under the influence of the West. For example, Russell Bentley said that when he saw footage of a US diplomat *“handing out the cookies”* at Maidan, Kyiv in 2014 he *“understood that this was also the work of the criminal United States government”*. Janus Putkonen said that the Maidan Uprising *“was not a plan of Ukraine. This is a civil war situation, fuelled from abroad, not from Russia...Fuelled from Washington, from Canada, from Finland even...This is a civil war situation, not war between Ukraine and Russia, but war from the West against [the] Russian world”*. Roman Omelchenko said: *“They need territory: the USA, England, Canada. Why? They need some place to put their bases, so they can deliver an instantaneous, unanswerable strike on Russian territory”*.

Preservation of Due Impartiality

We considered that all the factors set out above under the heading “Ofcom’s Guidance to Section Five of the Code” applied in this case.

As explained above, the broadcasting of highly critical comments concerning the actions of any government or state is not, in itself, a breach of due impartiality rules. It is essential and in the public interest that programmes are able to discuss controversial issues and take a position on those issues, even if that position is highly critical, particularly during times of conflict. However, a broadcaster must maintain an adequate and appropriate level of impartiality in its presentation of matters (and major matters) of political controversy. It may be necessary, in order to comply with the due impartiality requirements, that alternative viewpoints are broadcast.

The definition of “due impartiality” in Section Five of the Code states that “due impartiality” does not mean an equal division of time has to be given to every view or that every argument and every facet of every argument has to be represented”. However, Rule 5.12 requires that when dealing with matters of major political controversy, as this programme did, an “appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight”. As explained above, we considered that the historic conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy and that, although the documentary concerned matters taking place before February 2022, many of the allegations made in the programme had been widely reported as being referred to by the Russian Government to justify its current invasion of Ukraine.

Given the highly contentious statements made about the background to the conflict in the Donbas, including strong criticisms of the alleged actions of the Ukrainian authorities in the region (including its military) and the perceived influence of the US and other Western allies on the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, we considered whether an appropriately wide range of significant views were included and given due weight in this programme.

Ofcom acknowledged that this programme did include other perspectives on the background to the conflict in the Donbas. For instance, as stated by TV Novosti in its representations, the comments made by Charles Kupchan provided an alternative perspective to the statements and allegations which were generally aligned with the perspective of the Russian state. In particular, Mr Kupchan said that:

- he would not describe the 2014 regime change in Kyiv as *“a coup”* but rather *“the popular overthrow of an illegitimate regime”*;
- *“to me it looks like an illegal, unabashed open act of Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine”*;
- the Western response to the situation in Ukraine since 2014 *“has been in response to Russian aggression, has been in response to the fact that Russia went in illegally, has violated the sovereignty of its neighbours, and the United States and its NATO partners have felt an obligation to help Ukrainians better defend themselves”*; and
- *“atrocities”* and *“extrajudicial killings”* have taken place *“in most conflicts that we find around the world”*.

TV Novosti submitted that Mr Kupchan’s statements were “the words of an acknowledged scholar...[and] may be seen as sufficiently representing “the Western position” which, under circumstances, fully coincides with the views and narratives existing in the current Ukrainian government [sic]”.

Ofcom went on to consider the extent to which other alternative perspectives were represented in the programme. In particular, we acknowledged that the narrator presented a different view on the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics, referring to the Ukrainian Government’s designation of them *“as separatists and terrorist organisations”*. The programme also included a clip of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, addressing the UN General Assembly in 2019, saying: *“Over 13,000 civilians have been killed, 30,000 have been wounded, and 1.5 million have been forced to leave their homes”*.

In Ofcom’s view, these statements, including those made by Mr Kupchan, did, to some extent, offer or point to the existence of alternative perspectives on the conflict in the Donbas region taking place since 2014, in that they reflected the views of the West and provided some further context to the relationship between the West and Ukraine. However, we also noted that Mr Kupchan’s comments regarding the nature of the conflict and the occurrence of *“atrocities”* and *“extrajudicial killings”* preceded a clip of George Eliason standing in an excavated burial site as he said: *“You can’t walk into this and say, well, it was war, it happens and no, it doesn’t. People don’t cut each other’s heads off – and especially not civilians. Armies don’t do this...Maybe ISIS does this. And what do you do with groups like ISIS? How was Ukraine different?”*.

In the context of the programme as a whole, Ofcom considered that the statements from Mr Kupchan, Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the narrator were limited and were not sufficient to ensure that an appropriately wide range of significant views, such as the view of the Ukrainian Government, was included in the programme with due weight.

For example, the programme made no reference to the significant view of the Ukrainian state and/or military in relation to the numerous highly critical and specific allegations that they: had committed war crimes and violence against civilians; were fascists or Nazis who were attempting a genocide of Russian-speaking people in the Donbas; had orchestrated contested events such as the Odesa Trade Union building fire in 2014; and were acting under the influence of the West.

Similarly, the programme made no reference to the views of residents in the Donbas, for example, who are not pro-separatist, who do not recognise the self-proclaimed republics in Donetsk and

Luhansk, or who in any way support the actions of the Ukrainian Government in the Donbas. By contrast, allegations that were highly critical of the conduct of the Ukrainian authorities were made repeatedly throughout the programme, frequently accompanied by emotive and graphic footage of warfare and its after effects, including footage of victims of violence, such as footage of: corpses on the ground in the aftermath of the Odesa Trade Union building fire; a woman whose legs appeared to have been severed from her body in an air strike on Luhansk City Hall; and a man with a swastika shape apparently burned onto his torso as an act of torture. In our view the inclusion of such footage is a legitimate editorial technique, and, depending on the circumstances, there will often be significant public interest in using such content in news and current affairs programmes. However, Ofcom considered that in this programme it served to strengthen the impact of the claims and repeated allegations that the Ukrainian authorities, including the military, were fascists or Nazis who were attempting to commit genocide against Russian-speaking people in the Donbas.

Overall, we considered that the highly contentious and critical claims about the Ukrainian authorities, taken together, served to undermine the significance of the limited alternative viewpoints included in the programme.

We acknowledged that, in its representations, TV Novosti drew Ofcom's attention to the second of the disclaimer captions which was shown at the start of each part of the programme and after each advertising break, which read:

"The opinions of the people who appear in this film are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or position of RTD

The Ukrainian authorities have been asked to comment on the issues presented in this film but have yet to respond".

TV Novosti submitted that the inclusion of this text was "sufficient to prove RT had been demonstrating good will and seeking an "alternative view" from the current Kiev government". TV Novosti did not draw Ofcom's attention to any other specific captions.

Ofcom's Guidance Notes on Section Five states that "if alternative views cannot be obtained from particular institutions, governments or individuals, broadcasters could refer to public statements by such institutions, governments or individuals or such viewpoints could be expressed, for example, through presenters' questions to interviewees"³⁹.

In this case, Ofcom's view was that the disclaimer captions stating that comment from the Ukrainian authorities had been sought, but they had not responded, did not reflect their alternative viewpoint with due weight in the context of the programme. The disclaimer captions were therefore insufficient to preserve due impartiality.

Ofcom recognised that RT viewers would have expected to see programmes on the channel relating to the history of the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine from a predominantly Russian perspective. As stated above, in line with the right to freedom of expression, it was legitimate for RT to broadcast a programme on the history of the conflict in Ukraine from a Russian perspective and also to report on the allegations that were made by Russian officials and spokespersons about Ukrainian forces in the

³⁹ Paragraph 1.37.

Donbas. We also recognised the public interest in documentary makers including the personal perspectives of some Donbas residents to tell their stories about the impact the ongoing conflict has had on their lives, including making allegations of wrongdoing against the Ukrainian military and government. However, it was incumbent on TV Novosti to maintain due impartiality on this matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy by including a wide range of significant alternative viewpoints and giving them due weight in this programme or in clearly linked and timely programmes, including, for example, the perspective of the Ukrainian authorities.

Taking account of all the relevant contextual factors discussed, we did not consider that an appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy, were adequately represented within this programme and given due weight as required under the special impartiality requirements as contained in Rules 5.11 and 5.12.

In this case, we have taken careful account of the broadcaster's and audience's rights of freedom of expression and all the relevant contextual factors. We consider our decision is proportionate and necessary in pursuance of the legitimate aim to protect audiences from harmful, partial broadcast current affairs content. For all the reasons set out above, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this programme.

Breaches of Rules 5.11 and 5.12

Conclusion

The heightened special impartiality requirements under Rules 5.11 and 5.12 were engaged and applied to the programme under investigation. This was because we considered that the historic conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine was a matter of major political controversy and a major matter relating to current public policy, and that many of the allegations made in the programme had been widely reported as being referred to by the Russian Government to justify its current invasion of Ukraine.

Therefore the broadcaster was required to preserve due impartiality by including an appropriately wide range of significant views with due weight, in order to comply with Section Five of the Code.

In Ofcom's view, this programme contained highly contentious claims about the background to the conflict in the Donbas, including strong criticisms of the alleged actions of the Ukrainian authorities in the region (including its military) and the perceived influence of the US and other Western allies on the actions of the Ukrainian authorities. An appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints on the relevant matter of major political controversy and major matter relating to current public policy were not adequately represented or given due weight within this programme.

Therefore, Ofcom's Decision is that TV Novosti failed to preserve due impartiality in this news programme in relation to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Our Decision is to record breaches of Rules 5.11 and 5.12 of the Code against TV Novosti.

Ofcom considers that these breaches were serious, and we are minded to consider them for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

Annex: Programme summaries

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RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 05:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott ("PS"), who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Kiev locals film what they say is crossfire with advancing Russian forces, as numerous explosions are reported in the region around Ukraine's capital. And the SWIFT international payment system prepares to implement Western powers' decision to disconnect some Russian banks from its services.*

It's just gone 8am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott, taking over from Sean Thomas and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, we start with news from the newly recognised Donbass Republics where intense fighting continues along the front lines. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the Lugansk People's Republic ["LPR"] and local authorities allege a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught on fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Well, let's cross live now to our correspondent in Donetsk, Roman Kosarev. Roman, tell us what's happening on the ground right now".

This was followed by a live report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev ("RK") in Donetsk (**"the Kosarev Report"**):

RK: *"Well, good morning. Here in Donetsk, it has been a relatively quiet night and, uh, in regards to what happened in Lugansk a little bit earlier, well, local authorities report that it was the local oil depot was struck by a ballistic missile. Now, this ballistic missile is called Tochka-U in Russian. Its NATO classification is Scarab-21. It's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case in that incident, but the people's militia at the scene report huge, massive fires to the oil depot that's ablaze.*

Now, fortunately, there were no casualties there. However, back here in Donetsk, uh, there was a lot of fighting reported near the airport, and 152-millimeter howitzer shells have landed in the city of Donetsk and destroyed several houses. Fortunately, no casualties were reported there either. We managed to speak to one of the people that was, whose house was destroyed. Let's have a listen".

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident ("DR") was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR: *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

The programme then returned to Roman Kosarev, who continued his live report:

RK: *"Though there were no casualties overnight and on Saturday here in Donetsk, well, over the last 72 hours, at least seven civilians had been killed and, uh, a lot of civilian infrastructure was damaged as well. Thousands of people in Donetsk are still without access to water or electricity. Now, I visited a site also near the airport here in Donetsk on Saturday, where a kindergarten was shelled and this is what I have witnessed at the scene".*

The programme then cut to a pre-recorded item of Roman Kosarev at a kindergarten in Donetsk:

RK: *"This kindergarten in one of Donetsk's districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way, right next to the kindergarten. Thankfully, it was done overnight. No kids were here, no teachers, and so nobody was hurt. But you can take a look all around me. This is a heavily populated residential area. There are people living in each and every one of these houses and I can see absolutely no military positions here at all. But the front line is located not very far away from here. But this place in Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed. Roman Kosarev, RT, Donetsk".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a live report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov ("IZ") who was in the studio alongside him ("**the Zhdanov Report**"):

PS: *"And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we can't yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze. You can see the fire and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. Now, RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov joins me in the studio to discuss the latest developments from the Ukrainian capital. Um, conflicting reports coming about gunfire from the street. Do we know anything concrete at this moment?"*

IZ: *"Well, absolutely. It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the*

Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station”.*

PS: *“Yeah, I heard about that one”.*

IZ: *“Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr*

Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening”.

A clip of Volodymyr Zelenskyy (“VZ”), President of Ukraine, was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“The decisive moment has come to close once and for all the issue of Ukraine’s accession to the EU. I hope that Germany and Hungary will have the courage to support this decision”.*

The programme returned to Peter Scott and Igor Zhdanov live in the studio:

IZ: *“So, essentially, this was the message by the Ukrainian President that, basically, the world stands united in support of Ukraine and these were the words of reassurance that he found to, well, help and alleviate some of the mental suffering of his, you know, of the Kiev locals”.*

PS: *“Well, Igor, thank you very much for that update on what’s a very fluid situation at the moment. Thank you. Britain’s Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Paula Slier (“PSI”) about Western sanctions against Russia (**“the Slier Report”**):

PS: *“Well, RT’s Paula Slier has the latest on Russia’s access to the SWIFT international payment system”.*

PSI: *“It certainly is very significant. If you remember, there has been some discussion between European capitals for quite some time now as to whether or not to remove Russia from the SWIFT international monetary system. The UK has already made that move and we’re now hearing from the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen saying that they are now moving ahead and disconnecting some Russian banks from SWIFT so that they won’t be able to operate globally. It was issued as part of a joint statement that was signed off on by the European Union, the United Kingdom, the, the United States and Canada. Take a listen”.*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen (“UvdL”), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“I will now propose to EU leaders the following measures. First, we commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their*

ability to operate globally. Second, we will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions, and it will made it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets".

Paula Slier continued:

PSI: *"Now she went on to also say that they were looking at limiting the sale of citizenship, in other words what is known as golden passports, that allows wealthy Russian businessmen who are connected to the Russian Government become citizens of European countries and in that way, gain access to Europe's financial markets".*

Another clip of Ursula von der Leyen was shown:

UvdL: *"We will work to prohibit Russian oligarchs from using their financial assets on our markets. All of these measures will significantly harm Putin's ability to finance his war".*

Paula Slier continued:

PSI: *"This coming week, there will be a transatlantic task force that will be set up, whose primary goal will be to ensure the effective implementation of these financial sanctions, by identifying and freezing the assets of sanctioned individuals and companies that exist within European jurisdiction. The organisation will also set up coordination against disinformation and hybrid warfare. All of this coming on the back of the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announcing that the UK will now accept refugees from Ukraine".*

The programme again returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Western sanctions against Russia ("**the Dubenskij Report**"):

PS: *"As for other measures being taken in response to the so-called special military operation, France is boosting its supplies of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany is also U-turning on its non-intervention policy, confirming now that it would deliver arms to the country. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"Well, we heard on Saturday from President Macron some very grave words indeed. He said that the war in Ukraine would last and that there would be consequences. Now, Macron has been meeting with his Defence Council ministers on Saturday. We're waiting to find out what was agreed on, if anything, in that Defence Council. But we did hear from the Élysée Palace earlier on Saturday, saying that France's main objective when it comes to the situation in Ukraine is to avoid the collapse of the country and to be able to negotiate a ceasefire. That is something it says it is still pursuing between Russia and Ukraine. Now, there are the possibility of further sanctions that could be announced by the EU. We just heard from Josep Borrell, this is the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, who has said that he's going to convene a meeting on Sunday in the evening of foreign affairs ministers and the suggestion is that there will be a new package of emergency assistance put forward for Ukraine, in his words, to*

support the heroic fight there. Also, a very big U-turn coming out of Germany on Saturday and this is the fact that Germany has now decided to send weapons to Ukraine. It has a longstanding policy of not sending armoury to conflict zones. This is what the German Chancellor had to say”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, and was accompanied by an English voiceover:

“It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin”.

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *“We've also seen more and more EU countries deciding that they will ban Russian aircraft from not just landing at their airports, but also from flying over their airspace. Estonia, Poland, Latvia and others piling in to say that they will not allow that to happen from now on. And in a further blow to Russia, we know that Sweden is now pushing for all member states within the European Union to essentially kaput, to eject their sporting links with Russia. The Swedish Sporting Minister saying that that would be the case as long as the invasion lasts. And just finally, on another separate issue, a Russian cargo ship that was on its way to St Petersburg was seized earlier on Saturday morning by the French coastguards. It was taken to Boulogne sur Mer which is the largest port in northern France, in fact in France itself, and the crew there have been allowed to disembark. Apparently, it was seized as a result of the fact that the owning company of that cargo ship is on the list of sanctioned companies in the US. For the moment, though, it has been seized. The crew are allowed to wander around as they like. The Russian Embassy here in Paris has sent a note requesting information about what's happened to that cargo ship and says that it will do everything it can to protect the security of the crewmen of that. But, for the moment, it will be up for a court to decide if that cargo ship remains seized or whether it can go back on its journey towards St Petersburg”.*

The programme then returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil (“AP”), a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region (**the Parampil Interview**):

PS: *“Well, the editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it then and continues to do so now”.*

AP: *“It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known*

that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point”.

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about Serbia’s support for Russia:

PS: *“Now, while many countries have condemned Russia's so-called special military operation in Ukraine, some in Serbia are actually offering support. This video shows a rally in Serbia's capital Belgrade, with demonstrators lining up in support of Putin and his allies in the Donbass and Belarus. Serbia is largely pro-Russian, with his leader Aleksandar Vučić saying it won't back sanctions against Moscow given their close historical ties. Meanwhile, China has been one of a handful of countries abstaining from voting on a UN resolution against Russia. The Chinese Embassy in Russia has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the US”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Peter Scott then introduced a live interview with Victor Gao (“VG”), Chair Professor of Soochow University, about China and NATO (**the Gao Interview**):

PS: *“The Russian Embassy, sorry, the Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts in the US. They're the ones that the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where armed conflicts took place. The Chinese Embassy accused the US of having initiated more than 80% of those conflicts. Let's cross live now to international relations expert Victor Gao, a professor at China's Soochow University. Victor, welcome to the programme, welcome to RT International. It's great to have you with us. Thank you. Now, China was one of a handful of countries that abstained from voting on that UN resolution condemning Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. Why do you think that was?”*

VG: *“Well, China did the right thing. China emphasised that, while the United Nations Charter need to be respected, international law should be respected. The Ukrainian situation needs to be looked at on the basis of each case by case and depending on the merits of each case, we need to make the right decision. And, uh, China believes that*

Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world.

Therefore, when the war is going on as we speak, we hope the eventual situation in Ukraine should also be looked at. And while war eventually need to wind down, I think there will be no more talk about Ukraine becoming a NATO member because that will truly be destabilising of the situation as far as Russia is concerned and some other better arrangement need to be worked out. And this will require negotiation between Russia, the United States, NATO organisation and we just hope from the Chinese perspective that war will be coming to an end as soon as possible, negotiation will start as soon as possible, and the eventual shape and form of Ukraine will no longer constitute a threat to Russia. This is very important”.

PS: *“I think we're all hoping that it all comes to an end very soon. Now, as I mentioned before, the Chinese Embassy in a recent tweet listed a series of countries that they say the US has bombed. Do you think there is a difference in the way that the US and Russia is treated, especially when it comes to armed conflicts?”*

VG: *“Well, if you look at the world now, especially on the Western world, they universally condemn Russia for the special military operation in Ukraine while, at the same time, as the Chinese Embassy in Moscow correctly pointed out, the United States was the culprit for more than 80% of all the armed conflict since the end of the Second World War, and the United States seems to be wantonly initiating, launching one war after another in so many different parts of the world. And the Western media tend to be very silent, or very selective, in reporting about such wars initiated by the United States over the past seven decades since the end of the Second World War. While, whereas, at the same time they focus on the Ukrainian situation as if there is only one party guilty for the outbreak of the war, whereas, as a matter of fact, the United States and the provocation of the United States in recruiting Ukraine into NATO, is very much a root cause of the conflict involved in the Ukrainian situation. So, I hope media in the Western part of the world will be more objective and more decent in reporting on armed conflicts like this. And I personally just hope the conflicts involving Ukraine will soon come to an end with minimum civilian loss and with a rule of law very closely followed and eventually negotiation and peaceful diplomacy will prevail, leading to a more peaceful situation involving Ukraine”.*

PS: *“To what extent do you believe the US fears a closing of ties between Russia and China?”*

VG: *“Well, I remember Dr Henry Kissinger used to say that, in the big trilateral relations involving China, the United States and the former Soviet Union and today's Russia, whichever country which is in one pole, opposed to the other side, will be very much disadvantaged. In the world of today, China and Russia are firmly standing together. They coordinate many strategic issues and the two countries on February 4th, when President Putin visited the Beijing during the Beijing Olympics, pledged that they both oppose the continued expansion of NATO. This is very important. And in terms of all*

the sanctions imposed by the United States and Western countries against Russia, so long as China and Russia can stand side by side, such sanctions will be futile. They will not bring Russia down to its knees. So, this is the very important thing and I hope the United States will be realistic in looking at the strong close relations between China and Russia and come to their senses, come to the conclusion that this situation involving Ukraine needs to be negotiated between Russia and the United States and NATO member countries to achieve a lasting, sustainable peace involving Ukraine and that part of the world. I think a big country like Russia needs to be respected, and simply condemning Russia for what it's doing in Ukraine does not solve the problem. We hope the solution, peaceful solution, will be realised as soon as possible”.

PS: *“Yes, well you’ve actually partially answered my, my next question there. What sort of impact on the world economy do you think these sanctions that have been imposed on Russia will have?”*

VG: *“Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable. So, I think European countries should really look at the situation in Ukraine in their own independent mind and refuse to be hijacked by certain other country and forfeiting their long term economic and political interest. I would say instability in Europe hurts all the European countries. No one will be a winner and we need to do whatever we can to bring diplomacy and negotiation back to the table so that there will be a lasting peace involving Ukraine”.*

PS: *“Victor Gao, I wish we had more time to discuss this, but I'm afraid that's it for now. That's Victor Gao, international relations expert and professor at Chinese Soochow University. Thank you”.*

VG: *“Thank you”.*

Peter Scott then introduced a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter (“DC”) about the Donbas region (**“the Courter Report”**):

PS: *“Well, today is the fourth day of the so-called Russian special military operation in Ukraine, with the situation developing very quickly on the ground. Let's get the latest live now from RT's Don Courter. What have been the most recent develop, developments in Russia's military operation?”*

DC: *"Hi there, Peter. Well, the Russian armed forces have destroyed a dam that was stopping the water flow from the North Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula since it was built back in 2014. Since then, it's caused a lot of water shortages for the peninsula. But the Russian armed forces now say that water supplies should be fully restored soon. Now, as for the Chernobyl exclusion zone, it was taken by Russian forces back two days ago, and after that happened, the Ukrainian military that was there also defending it, they agreed to jointly continue to defend the area with Russian forces. And because of that friendship, that joint defence of this area, actually staff are still working there normally. The radiation levels there are fine and there isn't any fighting going on there. Now, as for the reasons, as for the regions in which there is fighting going on, the Russian defence ministry has said that neo-fascist armed, armed groups are taking tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera cars in the fighting. Let's take a listen".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IK"), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"The nationalist battalions use so-called Bandera cars, which have increased off-road capability and are equipped with large calibre small arms or mortars. Let me remind you that this tactic is used by international terrorists in Syria".*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"Now, there are also reports of fighting going on in the Kharkov region, located near Donbass and the Russian border as well. Apparently, planes are flying overhead, people can hear gunfights, large explosions, and the Russian military is apparently destroying Ukrainian Army warehouses in that region. So, those are basically the main takeaways from what's going on in the war closer to the Russian border".*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *"Well, thank you very much for that update on the ground. That's RT's Donald Courter. Thank you. That's all the latest from Russia's ongoing military intervention in Ukraine. My name is Peter Scott, and I'll be back again in 30 minutes".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 06:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Kiev locals film, what they say is crossfire with advancing Russian forces, as numerous explosions are reported in the region around Ukraine's capital. Western powers ramp up their sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, with the SWIFT international payment system preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from its services. And while many countries condemn Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, China offers its support."*

It's just gone 9am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. We start with news from those newly recognised Donbass Republics where intense fighting continues along the front lines. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught on fire. Several people have also reportedly been injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Let's cross live now to our correspondent in Donetsk, Roman Kosarev. Roman, good morning to you. What is happening on the ground right now?"

This was followed by a live report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk ("**Kosarev Report 2**"):

RK: *"Indeed, an oil depot was struck in [LPR], by a ballistic missile and indeed a massive blaze has been reported at the scene there. Now, the ballistic missile in question is called Tochka-U in Russian. It's a Soviet weapon. Its NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now, it's a 2000 kilogramme weapon and it's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously that was not the case in this instance. However, the people's militia in Lugansk do report casualties but no civilian deaths at the moment as they're fighting, uh, to, uh, with this blaze. Uh, now, indeed, shelling is taking place across the Donetsk People's Republic ["DPR"] here as well. Earlier on Saturday, uh, we heard several explosions here, and reportedly they were from, um, howitzer shells. They're 152-millimeter calibre shells that landed on the territory of the city of Donetsk. Several houses were damaged. However, no casualties have been reported. We managed to speak to one of the, one of the people that witnessed this attack."*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR: *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

The programme then returned to Roman Kosarev, who continued his live report:

RK: *"As a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended. Now, Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and unfortunately, uh, civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here are still, still have no access to water or electricity. Also, on Saturday morning, a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck in an area near the, near the airport, very close to the front line, and I visited that place, and this is the report that I sent from there".*

The programme then cut to a pre-recorded item of Roman Kosarev at a kindergarten in Donetsk:

RK: *"This kindergarten in one of Donetsk districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way, right next to the kindergarten. Thankfully, it was done overnight. No kids were here, no teachers, and so nobody was hurt. But you can take a look all around me. This is a heavily populated residential area. There are people living in each and every one of these houses and I can see absolutely no military positions here at all. But the front line is located not very far away from here. But this place in Donetsk has been shelled throughout the eight years since this conflict existed. Roman Kosarev, RT, Donetsk".*

The programme then returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

PS: *"Well, the editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it then and continues to do so now".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to*

respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point”.

The programme again returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 (“**the Zhdanov Report**”):

PS: *“And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we can't yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze. You can see the fire and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. Now, RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov joins me in the studio to discuss the latest developments from the Ukrainian capital. Um, conflicting reports coming about gunfire from the street. Do we know anything concrete at this moment?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not.*

The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed

cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station”.*

PS: *“Yeah, I heard about that one”.*

IZ: *“Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening”.*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong. Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So, it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day, I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world”.*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced an item on financial sanctions relating to the SWIFT payment system:

PS: *“Well, Western powers have announced their decision to penalise Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system, which is the world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. The EU Commission's President announced the measurement, the measures in a statement”.*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it made it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets”.*

Peter Scott continued in the studio:

PS: *“Well, Western powers have been clear that only certain Russian banks will be affected. Other measures include a crackdown on so-called green passports, which is the sale of citizenship in Western countries for wealthy Russians. There is also to be a transatlantic task force set up to ensure the implementation of these measures.*

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report by RT reporter Ilya Petrenko (“IP”) about Western sanctions against Russia (**“the Petrenko Report”**):

PS: *“RT's Ilya Petrenko takes a closer look at the Western sanctions against Russia and whether, when it comes to the energy sector, they're all bark and no bite”.*

IP: *“I've lost count how many times in the last couple of days I heard European, American heavyweights say ‘We stand by Ukraine and we're going to punish Putin's Russia like never, ever before’”*

Clips were then shown of Prime Minister Boris Johnson (“BJ”), High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell (“JB”), and US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh (“DS”):

BJ: *“The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen”.*

JB: *"This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot".*

DS: *"The sanctions measures we impose today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and, arguably, the most consequential ever levied in history".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Those who'd invested in Russian stocks woke up to find themselves in the red earlier this week. But, soon after, there was relief for Russian business. The indexes, as well as the ruble, Russia's currency, recovered. Slightly. Not all the way to the levels of last week, but they did bounce back. Why? Maybe because the sanctions didn't live up to the expectations of those who wished Russia economic hell. But I noticed something else. Have a look at the following".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen was then shown:

UvdL: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Serious stuff, huh? The Russian energy sector be like... because the big hitters gave up the idea of targeting the energy sector. Otherwise, how are they going to warm themselves if an immense share of fuel resources comes from Russia?"*

Clips of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner ("CL"), which was accompanied by an English voiceover, and of Joe Biden ("JBi"), President of the United States, were then shown:

CL: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supplies because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies, what impact will that have on our supply?"*

JBi: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds and yen, to be part of the global economy. We're going to stunt the ability of, to finance and grow... the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank, a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself, cut it off the US financial system".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"But Russia's biggest lender, Sberbank, has had fewer problems than expected. Their operations are still good to go. The energy sector, a bit like with the EU".*

Another clip of Daleep Singh was shown:

DS: *"To be clear, our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Part of the reason is, perhaps, that the Democrats don't want to disappoint American voters too much. They don't want gas prices to go through the roof even more".*

Another clip of President Biden was shown:

JB: *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools, every tool at its disposal, to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Especially when 57% of Americans disapprove of how Joe Biden is handling affairs. Right, so, that brings me to my earlier observation. They may be firmly reassuring Kiev they'll try their absolute best to save Ukraine and give the Kremlin a beating. But let's be realistic. No one is ready to go too far if some business folks are going to suffer back home".*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij about Western sanctions against Russia (**Dubenskij Report 2**):

PS: *"And as for other measures being taken in response to what Russian President Vladimir Putin has called a special military operation, France is boosting its supplies of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany is also U-turning on its non-intervention policy, confirming now that it will deliver arms to the country. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"Well, a grave warning coming from President Macron of France, who said that the war will last and there will be consequences. The Élysée Palace, though, has said that it is still working to ensure that the collapse of Ukraine doesn't happen and that it's looking for a ceasefire and that it will continue to work towards that. Josep Borrell, who is the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, has said that he will be holding a meeting with EU foreign ministers later on Sunday to discuss possible defensive and emergency assistance to send to Ukraine, he said, to support the heroic fight there. Also, Germany is going to be sending weaponry to Ukraine. The country has had a longstanding policy of not sending armoury to conflict zones. This is what the German Chancellor had to say about that".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin".

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Other measures that have been announced over the weekend, including more EU countries saying that they are banning Russian aircraft from not just landing at their airports but also flying through their airspace, with Estonia joining the likes of Latvia,*

Bulgaria and others in the European Union signing up to that particular sanction. And in a further blow to Russia, Sweden says it's going to try and persuade its other EU members to boycott sporting links with the country. The Swedish Sporting Minister says that would last for as long as the invasion of Ukraine does. Now, in a separate development, a Russian cargo ship was seized by French port authorities on Saturday morning. That cargo ship was then towed to the port of Boulogne sur Mer in the north of France, the largest port in the country. Originally, it was over checking documentations, but it later emerged that that cargo ship belongs to a Russian company that is on the US sanction list, and that's why, apparently, it was detained. The Russian Embassy here in Paris says it has written a note requesting more information, and it says it will do all it can to protect the measures and security of the crew on board that. They are apparently being allowed to disembark and to freely move around. But the cargo and the ship itself have been seized. That will now be up to a court to decide whether that will be able to continue to make its journey towards St Petersburg".

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced a report about freedom of expression ("**the Belkina Report**"), which included an interview with RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anna Belkina ("AB") and political analyst Nikola Mirkovic ("NM"):

PS: *"YouTube has blocked access to RT videos in Ukraine and disabled the monetisation of all RT channels. That's after several European countries took our network's broadcasts off air. Earlier on Saturday, Australian TV service Foxtel said it would no longer distribute RT due to the situation in Ukraine. Earlier, we heard from RT's Deputy Editor-in-Chief".*

The programme then showed a clip of Anna Belkina:

AB: *"RT journalists tirelessly work to bring valuable facts and views to an audience of millions around the world. When an organisation or government either call for or force RT to be taken off the air, it simply highlights the policy of media freedoms in the nations they represent. Just look at the Association of European Journalists who, on the one hand, self-righteously declare themselves as defenders of journalistic rights, yet so regularly turn their back on this very founding principle to support the suppression of news and journalists under political pressure. If ever there were time to recognise the importance of all that gathering news and understanding of all views, it is now".*

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"Foxtel has sent a letter to RT saying it's ended distribution over, quote, 'concern about the situation in Ukraine'. It said it had the right to do so under the licence agreement with the network. On Thursday, Poland made RT one of five Russian channels to be taken off air and Britain's Culture Secretary asked regulator Ofcom to review RT's licence. Even before the current crisis erupted, RT's German language sister channel, RTDE, was blocked in Germany. A political analyst we spoke to said that banning Russian news outlets sets a dangerous precedent".*

The programme then showed a clip of Nikola Mirkovic:

NM: *"I've done a number of debates on RT and I've discussed many times with people who, with whom I disagree on many opinions with. A lot of people, I mean, it's a, there are a lot of debates on a lot of different subjects. RT has brought people together from different, different political horizons, have brought them to debate, to discuss. Some agree, some disagree. And that is the purpose of journalism, and that is the purpose of the media. Let the people who are watching make their own opinion. RT is not an ideology, it's a place where people can meet, discuss, debate on ideas and that's fundamental. If we take that out of our democracies, there is no more democracy, so it's extremely important. Maybe they may shut down TV stations who have to find something on the internet. If it's the internet is closed down, we have to find something else. It will be tough. These times are extremely tough now. I don't know if they will get better, but we have to continue the fight for free speech. Everybody is entitled to free speech. Aren't our democracies, uh, sort of, based on that? Isn't that what we're taught? Isn't that what's written in our constitution? We've got to fight for the right for free speech and that means we have access to all the media and let the people choose what is right and right is wrong".*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about China's response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

PS: *"Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying those measures cannot resolve the Ukrainian crisis. China has been one of just a handful of countries abstaining from voting on a UN resolution against Russia. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the US".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number".

Peter Scott then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University ("**Gao Interview 2**") that had taken place live in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

PS: *"The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of the cities and years where armed conflicts took place. The Chinese Embassy accused the US of having initiated more than 80% of those conflicts. Victor Gao, an international relations expert at China's Soochow University, says sanctions against Russia will be mutually destructive".*

VG: *"China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in*

that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable".

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 2**"):

PS: *"Today is the fourth day of what Putin calls the special military operation in Ukraine, with the situation developing very quickly on the ground. Let's get the latest from RT's Don Courter, who is in Taganrog. Donald, the... what have been the most recent developments in Russia's military operation?"*

DC: *"Well, Peter, the Russian military has now entered the city of Kharkov. It's located in a region that borders both Donbass and Russia. According to the Ministry of Defence, hundreds of Ukrainians have dropped their weapons and surrendered and, according to, and actually, over the past several hours, planes have been flying by. We've heard gunshots there. There has been large explosions. Apparently, the Russian military has been destroying Ukrainian arms depots there. Now, as for Mariupol, the neo-fascist armed groups have been shelling civilian areas and they've even destroyed one school there. And also, the Ministry of Defence has been saying that they've been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook, using so-called Bandera cars. Let's take a listen to what they said".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"The nationalist battalions use so-called Bandera cars, which have increased off-road capability and are equipped with large calibre small arms or mortars. Let me remind you that this tactic is used by international terrorists in Syria".*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"Now, the Russian military has also recently destroyed a dam that was cutting off water supplies from the North Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula. It's been actually a source of severe water shortages in Crimea since the Ukrainians built it in 2014, but the Russian defence ministry says that full supply should be restored soon. Now, as for the Chernobyl exclusion zone, it was taken by the Russian forces just two days ago, and the Ukrainian forces that were there actually, afterwards, agreed to jointly defend the area with Russian forces. And because of that, staff are still working*

there, radiation levels there are normal and there is basically no fighting going on there, actually no fighting at all. So, those are really the main updates from the war closer to Russia's border".

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *"Well, Don, thank you very much for those updates. That's RT's Donald Courter reporting from southern Russia. Thank you. That's all for this hour. My name is Peter Scott and I'll be back with all the latest developments on the situation in Ukraine in around 30 minutes".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 07:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering the city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up their sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, with the SWIFT international payment system preparing to disconnect some banks from its services. And China opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying that such measures cannot solve Ukraine crisis."*

It's just gone 10am on Sunday morning here in Moscow. My name is Peter Scott, and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, residents of Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, have shared videos of Russian forces entering the city as the local administration reports Russian military units in central areas. Let's get the latest now from RT's Donald Courter. Donald, you're on the ground in southern Russia, Taganrog. What do we know about what's happening in Kharkov at the moment?"

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 3**"):

DC: *"Well Peter, the Russian armed forces have just entered the city of Kharkov, it's located in a region that borders Donbass, as well as the Russian Federation. According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, hundreds of Ukrainian troops have laid down their weapons and surrendered immediately upon entry. Over the past several hours, we heard a lot of reports of planes flying by, gun fights going on around there, explosions. The Russian military was actually taking out Ukrainian arms warehouses there".*

PS: *"The Russian defence ministry has described the city of Mariupol as a, as a fighting hotspot. What do we know about what's happening there?"*

DC: *"Well, the neo-fascist groups that have been fighting around there, have actually been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. According to Russia's Ministry of Defence, they've been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and shelling civilian areas there in Mariupol. Let's take a listen to what the Russian Ministry of Defence had to say".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm, Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential*

buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations”.

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

PS: *“Okay and more generally speaking Don, what more developments are there in Russia's ongoing military operation?”*

DC: *“Well, earlier today, the Russian military destroyed a dam that was cutting off water supplies from the north Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula. This has been a source of severe water shortages in Crimea since the Ukrainians built it back in 2014, and Russia's Ministry of Defence now says that water supplies should be soon fully restored to normal. Now in the Chernobyl exclusion area that was taken by Russian forces two days ago and after it was taken, the Ukrainian military that was stationed there actually agreed to continue to defend the area with Russian forces, and because of that, staff are still working there, radiation levels are still at normal levels and there hasn't been any fighting around there. So those are basically the main updates from today's, uh, from, from today's events in the war near Russia's border”.*

PS: *“Well Don, thank you for bringing us those developments, that's RT's Donald Courter reporting from Southern Russia, Taganrog, thank you. And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we can't yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze. You can quite clearly see the fire here and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. RT's Igor Zhdanov earlier brought me the latest on what's been happening in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region”.*

This was followed by a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 (**“the Zhdanov Report”**):

IZ: *“It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that*

Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station”*

PS: *“Yeah, I heard about that one”.*

IZ: *“Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening”.*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So, it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 06:00 ("**Kosarev Report 3**"):

PS: *"And now moving to the newly recognised Donbass Republics, where intense fighting with Ukrainian forces continues along the front line. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepared to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Roman Kosarev is in Donbass".*

RK: *"An oil depot was struck in [LPR], by a ballistic missile and indeed a massive blaze has been reported at the scene there. Now the ballistic missile in question is called Tochka- U, in Russian. Is a Soviet weapon, its NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now, it's a 2000 kilogramme weapon and it's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case in this instance. However, the people's militia in Lugansk do report casualties but no civilian deaths at the moment as they're fighting to, uh, with this blaze. Now, indeed, shelling is taking place across the [DPR] here as well. Earlier on Saturday, we heard several explosions here, and reportedly they were from howitzer shells. They're 152-millimeter calibre shells that landed on the territory of the city of Donetsk. Several houses were damaged. However, no casualties have been reported. We managed to speak to one of the one of the people that witnessed this attack."*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR: *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"As a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended. Now, Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and unfortunately, uh, civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here are still, still have no access to water or electricity. Also, on Saturday morning, a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck in an area near the, near the airport, very close to the front line, and I visited that place, and this is the report that I sent from there".*

The programme then cut to Roman Kosarev at a kindergarten in Donetsk:

RK: *"This kindergarten in one of Donetsk districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way".*

The programme then returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

PS: *"The editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it back then and continues to do so now".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced an item on financial sanctions relating to the SWIFT payment system:

PS: *"Western powers have announced their decision to penalise Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system, which is the world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. The EU's, the EU Commission's President, announced the measure in a statement".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will*

freeze its transactions and it will made it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets”.

Peter Scott continued in the studio:

PS: *“Western powers have been clear that only certain Russian banks will be affected. Other measures include a crackdown on so-called golden passports, the sale of citizenship in Western countries for wealthy Russians, and there is also to be a transatlantic task force set up to ensure the implementation of these measures. Britain's Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.

The programme again returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij about Western sanctions against Russia (**“Dubenskij Report 2”**):

PS: *“And as for other measures being taken in response to what Russian President Vladimir Putin has called a special military operation, France is boosting its supplies of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany is also U-turning on its non-intervention policy, confirming now that it will deliver arms to the country. RT’s Charlotte Dubenskij reports”.*

CD: *“Well, a grave warning coming from President Macron of France, who said that the war will last and there will be consequences. The Élysée Palace, though, has said that it is still working to ensure that the collapse of Ukraine doesn't happen and that it's looking for a ceasefire and that it will continue to work towards that. Josep Borrell, who is the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, has said that he will be holding a meeting with EU foreign ministers later on Sunday to discuss possible defensive and emergency assistance to send to Ukraine, he said, to support the heroic fight there. Also, Germany is going to be sending weaponry to Ukraine. The country has had a longstanding policy of not sending armoury to conflict zones. This is what the German Chancellor had to say about that”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin”.

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Other measures that have been announced over the weekend, including more EU countries saying that they are banning Russian aircraft from not just landing at their airports but also flying through their airspace, with Estonia joining the likes of Latvia, Bulgaria and others in the European Union signing up to that particular sanction. And in a further blow to Russia, Sweden says it's going to try and persuade its other EU members to boycott sporting links with the country. The Swedish Sporting Minister says that would last for as long as the invasion of Ukraine does. Now, in a separate development, a Russian cargo ship was seized by French port authorities on Saturday morning. That cargo ship was then towed to the port of Boulogne sur Mer in the north of France, the largest port in the country. Originally, it was over checking documentations, but it later emerged that that cargo ship belongs to a Russian company that is on the US sanction list, and that's why, apparently, it was detained.*

The Russian Embassy here in Paris says it has written a note requesting more information, and it says it will do all it can to protect the measures and security of the crew on board that. They are apparently being allowed to disembark and to freely move around. But the cargo and the ship itself have been seized. That will now be up to a court to decide whether that will be able to continue to make its journey towards St Petersburg".

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report by RT reporter Ilya Petrenko about Western sanctions against Russia (**"the Petrenko Report"**):

PS: *"RT's Ilya Petrenko takes a closer look at the Western sanctions against Russia and whether, when it comes to the energy sector, they're all bark and no bite".*

IP: *"I've lost count how many times in the last couple of days I heard European, American heavyweights say 'We stand by Ukraine and we're going to punish Putin's Russia like never, ever before'"*

Clips were then shown of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, and US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh:

BJ: *"The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen".*

JB: *"This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot".*

DS: *"The sanctions measures we impose today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and, arguably, the most consequential ever levied in history".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Those who'd invested in Russian stocks woke up to find themselves in the red earlier this week. But, soon after, there was relief for Russian business. The indexes, as well as the ruble, Russia's currency, recovered. Slightly. Not all the way to the levels of last*

week, but they did bounce back. Why? Maybe because the sanctions didn't live up to the expectations of those who wished Russia economic hell. But I noticed something else. Have a look at the following".

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen was then shown:

UvdL: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Serious stuff, huh? The Russian energy sector be like... because the big hitters gave up the idea of targeting the energy sector. Otherwise, how are they going to warm themselves if an immense share of fuel resources comes from Russia?"*

Clips of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner, which was accompanied by an English voiceover, and of President Biden were then shown:

CL: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supplies because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies, what impact will that have on our supply?"*

JB: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds and yen, to be part of the global economy. We're going to stunt the ability of, to finance and grow... the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank, a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself, cut it off the US financial system".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"But Russia's biggest lender, Sberbank, has had fewer problems than expected. Their operations are still good to go. The energy sector, a bit like with the EU".*

Another clip of Daleep Singh was shown:

DS: *"To be clear, our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Part of the reason is, perhaps, that the Democrats don't want to disappoint American voters too much. They don't want gas prices to go through the roof even more".*

Another clip of President Biden was shown:

JB: *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools, every tool at its disposal, to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Especially when 57% of Americans disapprove of how Joe Biden is handling affairs. Right, so, that brings me to my earlier observation. They may be firmly reassuring Kiev they'll try their absolute best to save Ukraine and give the Kremlin a beating. But let's be realistic. No one is ready to go too far if some business folks are going to suffer back home”.*

A clip of political analyst Alessandro Bruno (“ABr”) was then shown:

ABr: *“Mostly for me, it's the natural gas issue that is the one that is a definite masochistic move in that sense, because it hurts the EU. We're going to have a number of factors affecting the economies of the West and particularly Europe with inflation rising, a situation that's going to be much worse than it was in 1973 with the energy crisis, the oil engineers after the 1973 Middle East war. So, it's very much like shooting on the streets”.*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about China’s response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

PS: *“Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying those measures cannot resolve the Ukrainian crisis. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the US”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Peter Scott then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**Gao Interview 2**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

PS: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place. More than 80% of which the Chinese Embassy said were initiated by the US. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that the US should ask yourself who has been the aggressor in those conflicts. Meanwhile, Victor Gao, an international relations expert at China's Soochow University, warned that sanctions against Russia will be mutually destructive for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia*

from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio:

PS: *“And just before we go, some news, just in. A Russian delegation has just arrived in Belarus for negotiations with the Ukraine, Ukrainian counterparts. The Kremlin has said there has been a tentative agreement, without elaborating. The Russian delegation includes representatives of the foreign and defence ministries as well as Putin's administration. Moscow says it's ready for the talks and is waiting for the Kiev representatives in the Belarusian city of Gomel. Well, that's all for this hour. My name is Peter Scott, and I'll be back with all the latest developments on that situation in Ukraine, and, of course, those potential negotiations. I'll be back around the top of the hour. Thank you for watching”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 08:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials but Kiev doesn't approve of the location. That's as Russia's military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian troops entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes such measures, saying they cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis."*

You're watching RT International. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow's delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiation, Kiev says the location isn't appropriate. Let's get the latest from RT's Donald Courter. Donald - what's going on between these two countries? It seems that the negotiations just can't seem to get off the ground".

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 4**"):

DC: *"Well Peter, Moscow has said it's ready for negotiations for days now and it's just reiterated that, like you said, a Russian delegation of negotiators has arrived in Belarus and they are ready to hold negotiations with Ukrainian officials. Let's take a listen to what the Kremlin spokesperson had to say about it".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"In accordance with the agreement reached, the Russian delegation... has arrived in Belarus for negotiations with the Ukrainians. We will be ready to start these negotiations in Gomel".

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

PS: *"The special operation is -".*

DC: *"As for the Ukrainian side, Zelenskyy at first was saying he's ready for negotiations, but at the same time he's then... he then said that he's not ready for them, but now he's saying he's ready for them again and that he wants peace. But like you said, he seems to be a bit picky about the venue".*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago. Make the right choice. This is the most important decision of your lives".*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

PS: *"Apologies for interrupting you there, Don. Now what... Russia's ongoing operation, what Putin has called the special military operation in Ukraine, is now entering its fourth day. What can you tell us so far about that?"*

DC: *"That's alright, Peter. Well, the latest update is that Russian forces have entered the city of Kharkov that's located in a region that borders both Donbass and the Russian Federation. According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, hundreds of Ukrainians had dropped their weapons and surrendered upon the entry of Russian troops. And throughout the past several hours, actually, we've been hearing reports of planes flying overhead, gunfights in that area, bombs going off. Apparently, the Russian military was busy taking out Ukrainian Army warehouses there".*

PS: *"Now the Russian defence ministry has also described the city of Mariupol as being a fighting hotspot at the moment. What's the latest from there?"*

DC: *"Well according to Russia's defence ministry, these neo-fascist armed groups have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They've been using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that have been equipped with light artillery and they have been heavily shelling civilian areas around Mariupol actually".*

PS: *"Ukraine, what other developments are there with this ongoing operation?"*

DC: *"Well Russian forces have also just recently blown up a dam that was actually built by Ukrainian authorities after Crimea declared that it wanted to be part of Russia in 2014. The Ukrainians built this dam to cut off water supplies from the north Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula. It's been the source of many severe water shortages throughout these eight years since then, but now the Ministry of Defence is saying that water supplies should be restored to normal any day now, very soon... and we've also got more news from the Chernobyl exclusion zone that was taken by Russian forces just two days ago. After which Ukrainian forces that were stationed there agreed to jointly defend the area with Russia so that, that means basically the staff are continuing to work. The radiation levels have remained at normal levels and this is just a good thing. I mean this, this means that there hasn't been really any fighting there at all, and everything is OK around the Chernobyl station".*

PS: *"Well, Don, thank you very much for those updates. I hope you'll keep us up to date with the latest information as and when you get it. That's RT's Donald Courter reporting from Taganrog in Southern Russia. Thank you. Now moving to the newly recognised Donbass Republic, where intense fighting with Ukrainian forces continues along the front line. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepared to... retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR].*

Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught on fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Roman Kosarev is in Donbass”.

This was followed by an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 06:00 (“**Kosarev Report 3**”):

RK: *“An oil depot was struck in [LPR], by a ballistic missile and indeed a massive blaze has been reported at the scene there. Now the ballistic missile in question is called Tochka- U, in Russian. It’s a Soviet weapon, its NATO classification is SS-21 Scarab. Now, it’s a 2000 kilogramme weapon and it’s capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case in this instance. However, the people’s militia in Lugansk do report casualties but no civilian deaths at the moment as they’re fighting to, uh, with this blaze. Now, indeed, shelling is taking place across the [DPR] here as well. Earlier on Saturday, we heard several explosions here, and reportedly they were from howitzer shells. They’re 152-millimeter calibre shells that landed on the territory of the city of Donetsk. Several houses were damaged. However, no casualties have been reported. We managed to speak to one of the one of the people that witnessed this attack.”*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR: *“Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance”.*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *“As a result of this attack, public transportation service was suspended. Now, Donetsk has seen continuous shelling over the last 72 hours and unfortunately, uh, civilian deaths have been recorded as well, in Gorlovka and on the outskirts of Donetsk, and damage to civilian infrastructure as well as thousands of people here are still, still have no access to water or electricity. Also, on Saturday morning, a kindergarten in Donetsk was struck in an area near the, near the airport, very close to the front line, and I visited that place, and this is the report that I sent from there”.*

The programme then cut to Roman Kosarev at a kindergarten in Donetsk:

RK: *“This kindergarten in one of Donetsk districts is just one of the places that was shelled on Saturday morning. You can see shattered glass all around me, pieces that fell off the building. At least 32 windows here have been shattered, and this is the place of impact, if you can point the camera this way”.*

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The programme again returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 (**"the Zhdanov Report"**):

PS: *"And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we can't yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres away from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze and you can clearly see the fire and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. RT's Igor Zhdanov earlier brought me the latest on what's been happening in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region".*

IZ: *"It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that*

Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station”*

PS: *“Yeah, I heard about that one”.*

IZ: *“Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening”.*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world”.*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced an item on financial sanctions relating to the SWIFT payment system:

PS: *“Western powers have announced their decision to penalise Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system. The world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. The EU Commission's President announced the measure in a statement”.*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets”.*

Peter Scott continued in the studio:

PS: *“Western powers have been clear that only certain Russian banks will be affected. Other measures include a crackdown on so-called golden passports, which is the sale of citizenship in Western countries to wealthy Russians. There is also to be a transatlantic taskforce set up to ensure the implementation of these measures. Britain's Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.

The programme again returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij about Western sanctions against Russia (**“Dubenskij Report 2”**):

PS: *“And as for other measures being taken in response to what Russian President Vladimir Putin has called a special military operation, France is boosting its supplies of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany is also U-turning on its non-intervention*

policy, confirming now that it will deliver arms to the country. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".

CD: *"Well, a grave warning coming from President Macron of France, who said that the war will last and there will be consequences. The Élysée Palace, though, has said that it is still working to ensure that the collapse of Ukraine doesn't happen and that it's looking for a ceasefire and that it will continue to work towards that. Josep Borrell, who is the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, has said that he will be holding a meeting with EU foreign ministers later on Sunday to discuss possible defensive and emergency assistance to send to Ukraine, he said, to support the heroic fight there. Also, Germany is going to be sending weaponry to Ukraine. The country has had a longstanding policy of not sending armoury to conflict zones. This is what the German Chancellor had to say about that".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin".

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Other measures that have been announced over the weekend, including more EU countries saying that they are banning Russian aircraft from not just landing at their airports but also flying through their airspace, with Estonia joining the likes of Latvia, Bulgaria and others in the European Union signing up to that particular sanction. And in a further blow to Russia, Sweden says it's going to try and persuade its other EU members to boycott sporting links with the country. The Swedish Sporting Minister says that would last for as long as the invasion of Ukraine does. Now, in a separate development, a Russian cargo ship was seized by French port authorities on Saturday morning. That cargo ship was then towed to the port of Boulogne sur Mer in the north of France, the largest port in the country. Originally, it was over checking documentations, but it later emerged that that cargo ship belongs to a Russian company that is on the US sanction list, and that's why, apparently, it was detained. The Russian Embassy here in Paris says it has written a note requesting more information, and it says it will do all it can to protect the measures and security of the crew on board that. They are apparently being allowed to disembark and to freely move around. But the cargo and the ship itself have been seized. That will now be up to a court to decide whether that will be able to continue to make its journey towards St Petersburg".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report by RT reporter Ilya Petrenko about Western sanctions against Russia (**"the Petrenko Report"**):

PS: *"RT's Ilya Petrenko takes a closer look at the Western sanctions against Russia and whether, when it comes to the energy sector, they're all bark and no bite".*

IP: *"I've lost count how many times in the last couple of days I heard European, American heavyweights say 'We stand by Ukraine and we're going to punish Putin's Russia like never, ever before'"*

Clips were then shown of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, and US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh:

BJ: *"The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen".*

JB: *"This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot".*

DS: *"The sanctions measures we impose today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and, arguably, the most consequential ever levied in history".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Those who'd invested in Russian stocks woke up to find themselves in the red earlier this week. But, soon after, there was relief for Russian business. The indexes, as well as the ruble, Russia's currency, recovered. Slightly. Not all the way to the levels of last week, but they did bounce back. Why? Maybe because the sanctions didn't live up to the expectations of those who wished Russia economic hell. But I noticed something else. Have a look at the following".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen was then shown:

UvdL: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Serious stuff, huh? The Russian energy sector be like... because the big hitters gave up the idea of targeting the energy sector. Otherwise, how are they going to warm themselves if an immense share of fuel resources comes from Russia?"*

Clips of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner, which was accompanied by an English voiceover, and of US President Biden were then shown:

CL: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supplies because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies, what impact will that have on our supply?"*

JBid: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds and yen, to be part of the global economy. We're going to stunt the ability of, to finance and grow..."*

the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank, a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself, cut it off the US financial system".

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"But Russia's biggest lender, Sberbank, has had fewer problems than expected. Their operations are still good to go. The energy sector, a bit like with the EU".*

Another clip of Daleep Singh was shown:

DS: *"To be clear, our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Part of the reason is, perhaps, that the Democrats don't want to disappoint American voters too much. They don't want gas prices to go through the roof even more".*

Another clip of President Biden was shown:

JB: *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools, every tool at its disposal, to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Especially when 57% of Americans disapprove of how Joe Biden is handling affairs. Right, so, that brings me to my earlier observation. They may be firmly reassuring Kiev they'll try their absolute best to save Ukraine and give the Kremlin a beating. But let's be realistic. No one is ready to go too far if some business folks are going to suffer back home".*

A clip of political analyst Alessandro Bruno was then shown:

ABr: *"Mostly for me, it's the natural gas issue that is the one that is a definite masochistic move in that sense, because it hurts the EU. We're going to have a number of factors affecting the economies of the West and particularly Europe with inflation rising, a situation that's going to be much worse than it was in 1973 with the energy crisis, the oil engineers after the 1973 Middle East war. So, it's very much like shooting on the streets".*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about China's response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

PS: *"Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying those measures cannot resolve the Ukrainian crisis. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the US".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Peter Scott then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**“Gao Interview 2”**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

PS: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place. More than 80% of which the Chinese Embassy said were initiated by the US. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson suggested that the US should ask yourself who has been the aggressor in those conflicts. Meanwhile, Victor Gao, an international relations expert at China's Soochow University, warned that sanctions against Russia will be mutually destructive for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *“Well, that's a wrap for now. For more news and analysis on the Ukrainian crisis, head over to RT. com. My name's Peter Scott and I'll be back again at the top of the hour”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 09:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn't approve of the location and refuses to participate. That's as Russia's military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian troops entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes the measures, saying they cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis."*

You're watching RT International. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now peace talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow's delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiation, Kiev says the location isn't appropriate. Let's get the latest from RT's Donald Courter. Donald - what's going on between Russia and Ukraine on a diplomatic level? Why are these talks struggling to get off the ground?"

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region (**Courter Report 5**):

DC: *"Well Peter, Moscow has long said already that it's ready for negotiations, and it's just reiterated that, by sending a Russian delegation to Belarus to a location that Kiev itself chose, according to the Kremlin spokesperson. But we just heard from Ukraine that they will not be sending a delegation to negotiate. They say it's because Russia, at the very last moment, demanded that Ukraine, the Ukrainian military, put down its weapons and surrender. But let's take a listen to what the Kremlin spokesperson said earlier today".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"In accordance with the agreement reached, the Russian delegation... has arrived in Belarus for negotiations with the Ukrainians. We will be ready to start these negotiations in Gomel".

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Over the past couple days, Zelenskyy has been going back and forth, saying he's for negotiations at first, at which point the Russians stopped their military offensive to work out the details. Then Zelenskyy said he wasn't ready for them. And now, just until a couple moments, just until a couple of minutes ago, he was saying he was ready*

again for negotiations. But like I said, the Ukrainians have said that they're not going to send a delegation, one of the reasons being that Zelenskyy was not happy with the venue. He says that he doesn't want to negotiate in a country that's apparently waging war against Ukraine. He's accusing Belarus of basically allowing Russian troops to wage war against Ukraine from that territory. Alexander Lukashenko rejected that. He called that a lie and that he's not doing that. But let's take a listen to what Zelenskyy said and part of his recent speech".

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Like I said before, last time, Zelenskyy said he was prepared for negotiations. Russia halted its offensive in preparation for those, that unfortunately didn't pan out. But this time it's important to note, Russia said it will not be halting its offensive in expectation for these negotiations".*

PS: *"And what's the latest on Russia's military operation in general. I believe Russian forces have recently entered Kharkov, which is in the east of the country?"*

DC: *"That's right. Russian forces have entered the city of Kharkov. This is located in a region that borders both Donbass and the Russian Federation. According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers laid down their weapons and surrendered almost immediately after that happened, and over the span of the past several hours we've heard reports of planes flying by, gunfights in this area, large explosions. Apparently, the Russian military was actually destroying several Ukrainian military warehouses in the area".*

PS: *"Defence ministry has also described the city of Mariupol as a hotspot of fighting at the moment. What do you know about that?"*

DC: *"That's right. The defence ministry is basically saying that neo-fascist armed groups in this area have been taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They've been using so-called Bandera cars that are armed with light artillery and they've been shelling civilian positions. They even destroyed a school. Let's take a listen to what the defence ministry had to say about that".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and*

the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations”.

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

PS: *“What other developments are there in what Russian President Vladimir, Vladimir Putin has called a special military operation as it entered its fourth day?”*

DC: *“Well Russian forces have recently just blown up a dam that the Ukrainian Government built to stop water from flowing from the north Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula back after Crimea determined it's, uh, will to join the Russian federation back in 2014. Because they built that dam back then, Crimea has had seen many severe water shortages since then, and the Russian Ministry of Defence is saying that now because that's gone, soon a full supply of water will be restored to the area. It's also important to note that in the Chernobyl exclusion zone that was taken by Russian forces two days ago and after that happened, the Ukrainian military that was stationed there agreed to continue to defend the area alongside Russian troops. And because of that, staff are still working, their radiation levels are at normal levels and there hasn't been any fighting there at all. So those are basically the major updates from the fighting in Ukraine and the Donbass region near the Russian Federation”.*

PS: *“Well, Don, thank you very much for bringing us the latest updates on day four of that Russian military operation in Ukraine. That's RT correspondent Don Courter reporting from Taganrog, southern Russia. Now, earlier political expert Ali Rizk told us that he still thinks that negotiations are possible, but it's not clear who has the influence”.*

This was followed by an excerpt from a pre-recorded interview with journalist Ali Rizk (“AR”) about the negotiations (“**the Rizk Interview**”):

AR: *“Well, I think there's always a chance of diplomacy, but my fear is the influence or the sway, the strength of the neo-Nazis. Your correspondent just mentioned the Azov Battalion, which is a well-known neo-Nazi group that has been active in the Donbass region for quite some time. Human organisations like Human Rights Watch have documented the, the violations carried out by such groups. And it's been said, it's reportedly said that it's not necessarily, necessarily the case that Zelenskyy has the final say in matters, that he is under the sway of right-wing elements, like groups like the Azov Battalion”.*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a live report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk (“**Kosarev Report 4**”):

PS: *“Now moving on to the newly recognised Donbass Republics, where intense shelling by Ukrainian military units has been reported at residential areas, causing increasingly more damage. Local authorities in both the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight artillery attacks. Ukrainian military units and nationalist militia groups in the region have allegedly intensified shelling as they prepare to retreat westward. A massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR].*

Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. Let's cross live now to our correspondent in the Donbass region, Roman Kosarev. Roman, what's the latest on the front lines there?"

RK: *"Well, yes, indeed. Let's start with the front lines where both armies of the Donetsk and [LPR] are advancing deeper into the territory currently controlled by Ukraine. Now we've seen soldiers liberating towns and, uh, switching, switching Ukrainian flags to those of the [DPR] or [LPR]. Now, according to officials in both Republics, Ukrainian Army, as they retreat, they're destroying everything on its way. They're targeting civilian infrastructure. They're targeting people's homes as well as they're retreating from the oncoming Donetsk and Lugansk people's armies. Now the Head of the [DPR], Denis Pushilin, says that this operation to liberate Donbass will end very, very soon. But it will only end once the entire [DPR] is free. And that sentiment is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".*

Clips of two unnamed soldiers ("US1" and "US2") were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *"In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".*

US2: *"The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".*

The programme then returned to Roman Kosarev, who continued his live report:

RK: *"Well obviously the situation on the front lines is very intense, but it's also very intense here in the city of Donetsk and all the nearby towns as civilians continue hiding in bomb shelters from the shelling that's, that's coming in here from the Ukrainian Army. Now on Saturday it was very loud here in Donetsk, as Ukrainian Army used 152- millimetre howitzer shells to, uh, to bomb a civilian population here. As we understand, one person had died here in Donetsk as a result of those attacks. Now, municipal transportation on Saturday was suspended until the shelling stopped. And here's a witness account from one of the local residents who witnessed the attack".*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR: *"Here, there was no window. There, glass was shattered. We covered it ourselves. That was back in 2014 and now this happened. I was near the entrance".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"So this latest casualty brought the total number of deaths in the last 72 hours to eight people and scores of people have been wounded as a result of these attacks. Now civilian infrastructure had also been targeted. Over in Lugansk, an oil depot was damaged and massive blazes have been reported there as well. Uh, no deaths in that attack. However, some people were wounded and injured as a result of that attack.*

They are being treated in hospitals. Apparently, Ukrainian Army used ballistic missile. It's NATO classification is SS-21 scarab. Now it's a 2000 kilogramme rocket that's capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Obviously, that was not the case this time around. However, the impact is definitely horrific. But once again, thankfully, there were no fatalities in that case".

PS: *"Roman, thank you very much for bringing us that update from the Donbass region. That's RT correspondent Roman Kosarev. The editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it back then and continues to do so now".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 ("**the Zhdanov Report**"):

PS: *"And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we can't yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres away from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze and you can clearly see the fire and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. RT's Igor Zhdanov earlier brought me the latest on what's been happening in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region".*

IZ: *"It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that*

the... we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So again, we were trying to kind of looking at the videos which people, so far this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows like here, for example. This is one of the... this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight in, almost like in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. Of course, we can see trace arounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack. But so far, uh, it had... the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that well, they've managed to ward off the Russian world, Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city, but so far well, there... we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured, uh in the videos. Or, like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. And given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And they have already been reports that there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when you know, two... when local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups and they shot at each other. There have even been reports of casualties and also some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion. This strike on the oil depot has been arguably well, it has been the biggest event of the night, military wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So in some videos it looks like it was a dawn, like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we've seen quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation, amid a full on, you know, I mean, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was... we saw a report of a baby being born on one of the tube stations as, as yeah, as their mother was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population, for example, he is what he said in the evening”.*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world”.*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced an item on financial sanctions relating to the SWIFT payment system:

PS: *“Western powers have announced their decision to penalise Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system. The world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. The EU Commission's President announced the measure in a statement”.*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets”.*

Peter Scott continued in the studio:

PS: *“Western powers have been clear that only certain Russian banks will be affected. Other measures include a crackdown on so-called golden passports, which is the sale of citizenship in Western countries to wealthy Russians. There is also to be a transatlantic taskforce set up to ensure the implementation of these measures. Britain's Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression".

The programme again returned to the studio and Peter Scott introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij about Western sanctions against Russia ("**Dubenskij Report 2**"):

PS: *"In response, the Russian central bank says it has all the necessary tools to keep the country's financial sector operating as normal and will be able to maintain stability despite the pressure of Western sanctions. It assures that all money stored in Russian banks is safe and accessible. As for other measures being taken in response to what Putin calls a special military operation, France is boosting its supplies of military equipment to Ukraine, and Germany is also U-turning on its non-intervention policy, confirming now that it will deliver arms to the country. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"Well, a grave warning coming from President Macron of France, who said that the war will last and there will be consequences. The Élysée Palace, though, has said that it is still working to ensure that the collapse of Ukraine doesn't happen and that it's looking for a ceasefire and that it will continue to work towards that. Josep Borrell, who is the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, has said that he will be holding a meeting with EU foreign ministers later on Sunday to discuss possible defensive and emergency assistance to send to Ukraine, he said, to support the heroic fight there. Also, Germany is going to be sending weaponry to Ukraine. The country has had a longstanding policy of not sending armoury to conflict zones. This is what the German Chancellor had to say about that".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"It is our duty to do our best to help Ukraine defend against the invading army of Putin".

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Other measures that have been announced over the weekend, including more EU countries saying that they are banning Russian aircraft from not just landing at their airports but also flying through their airspace, with Estonia joining the likes of Latvia, Bulgaria and others in the European Union signing up to that particular sanction. And in a further blow to Russia, Sweden says it's going to try and persuade its other EU members to boycott sporting links with the country. The Swedish Sporting Minister says that would last for as long as the invasion of Ukraine does. Now, in a separate development, a Russian cargo ship was seized by French port authorities on Saturday morning. That cargo ship was then towed to the port of Boulogne sur Mer in the north of France, the largest port in the country. Originally, it was over checking documentations, but it later emerged that that cargo ship belongs to a Russian*

company that is on the US sanction list, and that's why, apparently, it was detained. The Russian Embassy here in Paris says it has written a note requesting more information, and it says it will do all it can to protect the measures and security of the crew on board that. They are apparently being allowed to disembark and to freely move around. But the cargo and the ship itself have been seized. That will now be up to a court to decide whether that will be able to continue to make its journey towards St Petersburg”.

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about China’s response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

PS: *“Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying those measures cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the US”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Peter Scott then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**“Gao Interview 2”**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

PS: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place. More than 80% of which the Chinese Embassy said were initiated by the US. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that the US should ask yourself who has been the aggressor in those conflicts. Meanwhile, Victor Gao, an international relations expert at China's Soochow University, warned that sanctions against Russia will be mutually destructive for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *“Well, that's a wrap for now. For more news and analysis on the Ukrainian crisis, head over to RT. com. My name's Peter Scott and I'll be back again in about thirty minutes”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 10:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn't approve of the location and refuses to participate. That's as Russia's military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film, what they say are Russian forces entering their city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. Authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes such measures, saying they cannot resolve the Ukraine crisis."*

You're watching RT International. My name is Peter Scott and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. Now peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow's delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiation, Kiev says the location isn't appropriate. Let's get the latest from RT's Donald Courter. Donald - what's going on between Russia and Ukraine on a diplomatic level? Why are these talks struggling to get off the ground?"

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 6**"):

DC: *"Well Peter, Moscow has been saying for days now it's ready to negotiate. And it just reiterated that it sent a Russian delegation to Belarus for negotiations at a location of Kiev's choice, according to the Kremlin spokesperson. Now this delegation has guaranteed the safety of any Ukrainians that come to negotiate. But they've also said that they're going to leave in two hours if nobody shows up within that time, let's take a listen to what the Head of the Russian delegation had to say".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky ("VM"), head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"The initiative to hold the negotiations was expressed the day before yesterday by the Ukrainian side. We have found a compromise and, at the suggestion of the Ukrainian side, we have agreed to hold the talks in Gomel. We have been here since the early morning. We are not guided by emotions and are waiting for the Ukrainian delegation to come. I repeat once again we are for peace. In case they refused to negotiate, all responsibility for the bloodshed will be on the Ukrainian side".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Now as for the Ukrainian side, Zelenskyy has been going back and forth. Earlier, he said he was ready for negotiations. At that point, Russia halted its offensive to work*

out the details, and then Zelenskyy basically backtracked on that. He said he wasn't going to negotiate, and the Russian offensive continued. Today again, Zelenskyy said he was ready to sit down at the negotiating table, but, and that he wanted peace, basically. He said he was ready to negotiate. But since then, actually, Ukraine has said that it's not going to send a delegation. It says that Russia at the last moment demanded that Ukraine lay down its arms in preparation for these negotiations, so they refused. Another thing like you said is that Ukraine was not satisfied with the venue. It says, Zelenskyy said, that he doesn't want to negotiate in a country that's allowing Russia to wage war against Ukraine on its territory. This is something that Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus, said was a lie. He said they're not allowing anyone to wage war against Ukraine on their territory. But let's take a listen to part of what Zelenskyy said earlier today".

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Now, look, I said the first time Zelenskyy said he was ready for negotiations, Russia halted its offensive. But it's important to note that this time they said they are not going to halt that offensive, waiting around for negotiations to work out".*

PS: *"And Don, what can you tell us about Russia's ongoing military operation there? I believe Russian forces have recently entered Kharkov in the east of the country".*

DC: *"That's correct. Russian forces have entered the city of Kharkov that's located in a region that borders both Donbass and the Russian Federation. We heard earlier reports over the past several hours of planes flying overhead, gunfire, gunfights and large explosions. Apparently, the Russian military was carrying out operations to destroy Ukrainian Army warehouses in the area".*

PS: *"Now the defence ministry, the Russian defence ministry, has also described the city of Mariupol as a hotspot of fighting. What can you tell us about that?".*

DC: *"Well, neo-fascist, armed groups around that area have been basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook according to the Ministry of Defence. They've been using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery that these neo-fascist groups have been using to bomb civilian installations around that area. Let's take a deeper look at what the Ministry of Defence said".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *“On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations”.*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

PS: *“What other developments are there today on what the Russian President Vladimir Putin, has called the special military operation? It's day four now”.*

DC: *“Well Russian forces have recently just blown up a dam that was blocking the water supply from the north Crimean Canal to the Crimean Peninsula, it was built by Ukraine in 2014 for specifically that purpose after Crimea had a referendum to join the Russian Federation, and the Ministry of Defence has said that soon full water supplies will be restored to Crimea because since 2014, since the construction of this dam, there have been severe water shortages there. Another thing we have to pay attention to is the fact that the Chernobyl area where, of course, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster happened in the 1980s, that has come under Russian control. It came under Russian control two days ago, and since that happened, the Ukrainian forces who were stationed there have agreed to jointly defend the area with Russian forces. Now that means that staff are still working on site there. Radiation levels are at a normal level, and there hasn't been any fighting around there. So those are basically the main takeaways from the updates from the action that's happening quite close to the Russian border”.*

PS: *“Well, thank you for those updates, Don. I'm sure you'll keep them coming as and when you get them. That's RT Correspondent Donald Courter reporting from Taganrog, excuse me, Taganrog in southern Russia. Thank you. Well, let's cross live now to Dr George Szamuely, a political expert and author of the book Bombs for Peace: NATO's Humanitarian War in Yugoslavia. Welcome to the programme. Thank you for joining us now. A few days ago, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he said he was open to diplomacy with Russia and Russia did propose a meeting today in Belarus, which Zelenskyy has now refused. But can you blame him or his officials for not wanting to meet on the territory of such a close ally to Russia? Even though the Donbass agreements were thrashed out in Minsk?”*

This was followed by an interview about the conflict with researcher and author Dr George Szamuely (“GS”) (**“the Szamuely Interview”**):

GS: *“Well, as you say, the agreements were thrashed out in Minsk. Look, the first priority at this stage should be to end the fighting. There will have to be some peace agreement worked out between Russia and Ukraine. Unfortunately, Zelenskyy is being egged on by his, uh, you know, Western sponsors who have actually served Ukraine very badly. Um, as your correspondent pointed out, you know, they've been training many of these neo-fascist battalions. You know, they're fighting in ways that they've been fighting in Syria, and there's basically, the more that Ukraine continues this fight,*

it will lead to greater and greater casualties. Eventually, Ukraine and Russia will have to, uh, sign a peace agreement, um, and basically, the longer this goes on, the worse it's going to get".

PS: *"That actually brings me on nicely to my next question. Now the West is obviously providing lethal aid to Ukraine, and we recently had Germany making a U-turn and also now agreeing to send lethal aid. In your opinion, how is this shaping the conflict?"*

GS: *"Well, as I say it's, it's making things more difficult to create a resolution of this. Germany sending arms to Ukraine sends a very bad message to Russia. It just infuriates the Russians because they remember only too well the neo-Nazi brigades that were set up in 2014. And of course, you know, the Ukrainian, uh, collaborators, war criminals, who worked with the Nazi German invaders during the World War two. A war, incidentally, that went on after 1945. It took several years before these various, uh, neo-Nazi battalions were defeated. So it sends a very bad message that the Germans are getting so actively involved in Ukraine."*

PS: *"Now, as this military operation continues, the West has been gradually ramping up sanctions recently. Obviously, a number of Russian banks have been excluded from the SWIFT payment system. I've got two questions now. What impact do you think this will have on Russia? And to what extent are the EU and the US also taking a hit by imposing these sanctions".*

GS: *"Well, I would think that it will have a detrimental impact. On the other hand, uh, there's an alternative to SWIFT that's been developed by Russia, has been developed by China. No doubt they've also been collaborating on putting this system together. Um, you know, a long-term effect will be to minimise the importance of SWIFT in the world financial system, which I think is a good thing. But as you say, I mean it does also raise the question. What effect will this have on the European economy? At the moment, there are many hitting the banks that are already under sanction. They are leaving out the part about the German energy payments. But as the hysteria mounts, uh, in the West, Germany is going to come under pressure to, uh, cut out even the energy payments. Now, what happens then? What happens when Germany, uh, no longer pays for its natural gas? Well, obviously, there will be no more natural gas. And then what happens to the German economy, which is the economic powerhouse of Europe? It collapses. So, you know, the West may well be just shooting itself in the foot if it continues on this path".*

PS: *"The Belarusian, the long-term Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko said that if NATO were to move nuclear weapons eastward, he would ask Russia to have nuclear weapons on Russia's, sorry, on Belarussia's territory. I guess what my question is, is what do you think the chances are of this conflict spilling outside of Ukraine?"*

GS: *"Yeah, well, there is always this danger, as long as this continues, that, uh, it escalates. I think it's in everybody's interest, really, for this to be wrapped up as quickly as possible. Were there intelligent, responsible political leadership in the West, in Europe and in the United States, they would be saying, 'Look, you know, there's a limit to what*

we can do for Ukraine. Ukraine is not a member of NATO. We just have to, you know, let this work itself out.’ It was the intelligent leadership that was there in 1956 when the Soviet Union, uh, invaded Hungary. Again, the Soviet Union saw a serious security threat if they were to lose Hungary in ’56. Then, of course, Czechoslovakia in 1968. This was the height of the Cold War, and the West said, ‘Look, there’s nothing we can do. Let’s just get this over with as quickly as possible at the minimum loss of life.’ Unfortunately, we have an irresponsible leadership that seems to want to continue a fight that can only lead to more casualties and a spillover and an escalation, you know, possibly, to kind of a world war and, you know, too terrible to contemplate what that would lead to”.

PS: *“Of course. Well, Dr Szamuely, thank you very much for your time and your insight into what can only be described as a very fluid situation at the moment. That’s Dr George Szamuely political expert and author of the book Bombs for Peace: NATO’s Humanitarian War in Yugoslavia. Thank you. Now, it’s the fourth day of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army. Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres and zooming out to Ukraine, these are the cities that Russia’s military claims to have either seized or to be currently fighting for. As Ukrainian military units are reportedly retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk, the Republics, they have allegedly intensified shelling against residential areas, causing increasingly more damage. Local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in overnight attacks. Meanwhile, a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have reported to be injured, but the numbers are so far unclear. We can go live now to our correspondent in the Donbass region, Roman Kosarev. Roman, what’s the situation right now for the people in the Donbass region?”*

This was followed by a live report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk (**“Kosarev Report 5”**):

RK: *“The situation is alarming indeed. The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people’s homes, and they’re using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians’ homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that’s according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I’m standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those*

attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night”.

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident (“DR2”) was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: “What can you do? You just can’t do anything about it. Thank God. At least I’m alive. God is looking out for me.”

The programme then returned to Roman Kosarev, who continued his live report:

RK: “Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army’s attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it’s a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn’t the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people’s militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack.”

PS: “And moving on to the front line now, what can you tell us about the engagements on the front, Roma?”

RK: “Well, according to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Militias [“DPM” and “LPM”] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They’re also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war.

Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that’s statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well”.

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: “In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well”.

US2: “The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that’s mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up”.

The programme then returned to Roman Kosarev, who continued his live report:

RK: *"It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".*

PS: *"That's RT's Roman Kosarev reporting live from the Donbass region. Roman, thank you very much. The editor of The Grayzone news site Anya Parampil spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, emphasising that the US supported it back then and continues to do so now".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Peter Scott introduced a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 ("**the Zhdanov Report**"):

PS: *"And now to the latest news from Ukraine's capital. This video, which we cannot yet verify, appears to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres from the capital, an oil depot has erupted in flames, reportedly due to an explosion. This unverified video shows the blaze and you can clearly see the fire and the vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. RT's Igor Zhdanov earlier brought me the latest on what's been happening in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region".*

IZ: *"It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people".*

PS: *"Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?"*

IZ: *"Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital".*

PS: *"Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?"*

IZ: *"Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station"*

PS: *"Yeah, I heard about that one".*

IZ: *"Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening".*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world".*

The programme returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who introduced an item on financial sanctions relating to the SWIFT payment system:

PS: *"Western powers have announced their decision to penalise Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system. The world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. The EU Commission's President announced the measure in a statement".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions and it will make it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets".*

Peter Scott continued in the studio:

PS: *"Western powers have been clear that only certain Russian banks will be affected. Other measures include a crackdown on so-called golden passports, which is the sale of citizenship in Western countries to wealthy Russians. There is also to be a transatlantic taskforce set up to ensure the implementation of these measures.*

Britain's Prime Minister says the removal of some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system is just a stepping stone, with more sanctions yet to come”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have taken decisive action tonight with our international partners to shut Russia out of the global financial system, including the important first step of ejecting Russian banks from SWIFT. We will keep working together to ensure Putin pays the price for his aggression”.

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *“In its response, the Russian central bank says it has all the necessary tools to keep the country's financial sector operating as normal and will be able to maintain stability despite the pressure of Western sanctions. It assures that all money stored in Russian banks is safe and accessible. That's all for now and from me, Peter Scott. But Andrew Farmer will be here at the top of the hour to bring you all the latest developments on that Ukraine crisis”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 11:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer ("AF"), who presented the programme's headlines:

AF: *"A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn't approve of the location and refuses to participate as Russia's military operation in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Well, residents in Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering their city. Sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot that erupted in a massive blaze. Also this hour, Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China opposes the move, though, saying it won't resolve the Ukraine crisis."*

Hello, welcome, you're watching RT International. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials do appear to have once again reached a dead end. As Moscow's delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiations, Kiev says the location isn't appropriate. So, let's get more on this now and go to RT's Don Courter. He joins us now. Don, we know that these two sides have been struggling to get some sort of talks off the ground and again there is disappointment it seems".

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 7**"):

DC: *"That's right, Andy. Well, Moscow has been ready to negotiate for days now, actually, and it just reiterated that. It sent a Russian delegation to Belarus to a location of Kiev's choosing actually, according to the Kremlin spokesperson. This delegation has guaranteed the safety of any Ukrainians that are going to come to negotiate. But it said that it will leave after an hour if nobody shows up by that time, let's take a listen to what Russian officials are saying about the potential for negotiations".*

A clip of Leonid Slutsky ("LS"), Russian State Duma Member, Foreign Policy Chief, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

LS: *"If you are concerned about Ukraine's fate, you need to come. You need to start the negotiations today. We can discuss a position that will really lead the parties to a common position. It can't be any other way because people's lives are at stake".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"At the same time, Zelenskyy earlier said he was ready for negotiations. At that time, Russia halted its military offensive to work out the details. Then he backtracked, saying that he wasn't ready for negotiations and the offensive continued. Today again, he said he was ready to sit down at the negotiating table, but then backtracked again. He said that Russia gave Ukraine an ultimatum that they had to put down their weapons"*

and surrender at the last minute. So they've refused at this point, but let's take a listen to a little bit of what Zelenskyy said in his recent speech".

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Zelenskyy also said, as you heard there, he wasn't happy about the venue. He said he didn't want to negotiate in a country that was allowing Russia to attack Ukraine from its territory. But we also heard comment from the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. He said that actually Zelenskyy is lying about this, that Belarus is not letting any war being waged against Ukraine from its own territory and we're actually seeing Alexander Lukashenko potentially becoming a mediator in these potential negotiations, let's take a listen".*

A clip of Alexander Lukashenko ("AL"), President of Belarus, was shown, with an English voiceover:

AL: *"Everyone is in Gomel in waiting. When they arrive there will be negotiations. If they don't come, as the President of Russia told me yesterday, it's their choice. So for the last time, I call for them to get a grip on common sense and make a decision. One's life is the most valuable".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"As I said before, the first time Zelenskyy said he was ready to negotiate the Russian Government halted its offensive, but it's important to note that this time Russia has said it's not going to halt its offensive waiting for negotiations".*

AF: *"And Don, just bring us up to date on the latest on events on the ground. Because there are reports that Russian forces have recently entered the city of Kharkov in the east of the country".*

DC: *"That's right. The Russian military has entered the city of Kharkov. It's located in a region that borders both Donbass and the Russian Federation. Over the past several hours, we've been hearing reports that planes have been flying over that area. We've heard gun gunfire from that area, large bombs going off and according to the Ministry of Defence actually, hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers surrendered after the Russian military entered Kharkov and the reason for a lot of those sounds of explosions is that they've been saying that the Russian military has been destroying Ukrainian army depots in the area."*

AF: *"And also we know, Don, there is fierce fighting, isn't there? The Russian defence ministry has told us in the city of Mariupol. What's the latest?"*

DC: *"That's right. According to the Russian defence ministry, these neo-fascist armed groups are using tactics from the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery and they've been rolling up to civilian installations and bombing them indiscriminately. Let's take a listen to what the Ministry of Defence had to say".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations."*

The programme returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

AF: *"Okay, so Kharkov. Mariupol at the centre of the fighting at the moment. So Don, just bring us up to date with other developments across the country."*

DC: *"Well, the Russian armed forces have recently blown up a dam that was built by the Ukrainians in 2014 after Crimea had declared that it wanted to become part of Russia, the purpose of this dam was to block clean water from making its way into Crimea. And that's actually over the years created a lot of severe shortages of clean water. But now that that dam is gone, the Ministry of Defence says water supplies are going to return to normal. It's also important to note that in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, this was taken by Russian forces two days ago, and after that happened, Ukrainian forces that were stationed there had agreed to jointly defend the area with the Russian military. This means that staff are still working there and radiation is at acceptable levels, and there hasn't been any fighting there since then. So that's basically the main takeaways from the fighting closer to the Russian border".*

AF: *"Okay, well, thank you for the update there, Don. That was RT's Don Courter and we can speak now to a journalist and geopolitical analyst Javed Rana about these latest developments and thank you for your time this afternoon. Um, let's start with the attempts that's formulating further, I say further, formulating some sort of peace talks between the two sides. Again, it seems to have reached a dead end. What are your hopes that the two sides can sit down and talk?"*

This was followed by a live interview about the conflict with journalist Javed Rana ("JR") ("**the Rana Interview**"):

JR: *"Well, I think common sense, I hope, prevails at the end of the day because if there are no talks, if there are no peace talks, that means more violence in the Ukraine. And now, as the situation exists on the ground, it seems that the Russian forces will take over the entire Ukraine and it may be in a matter of days and weeks. So I think it is an option with the Ukrainian Government now to directly speak with the Russian*

Government and hold negotiations and get concessions. And if the situation persists, I think that really does not bode well for the Ukrainian Government because already more than 150,000 people they are internally displaced and over 50 to 60,000 people they are migrating to the European destinations, so that means more problems for the Europe as well. But I think there is, unfortunately, it seems, a bigger game plan, which is being played upon the Ukraine and that is the West, perhaps it has been influenced by the military industrial complex. They want their weapons to be stored now in the Ukraine. And I think that will be a part of the problem because it was very known to everybody that there is no match to the Russian military and nonetheless the Ukraine is not opting for the negotiations. That means that the West perhaps wants more war in that part of the world”.

AF: *“Okay. But of course they would argue that they’re sending weapons in to defend Ukraine against the Russian military operation as it’s called by President Putin. But just stay on these peace talks because is there hope in the sense that alternative locations for these peace talks are now being discussed, or at least put out there? Does that suggest there is a will, at least to try and move forward here?”*

JR: *“I think if the Ukraine doesn't agree upon on the, on any destination in the Belarus, that means Turkey could possibly be another destination. But I think for that to happen, the Ukraine needs to have a will to negotiate. But they still believe that they can resist and the Ukraine is being a pawn by the Western countries. And I think that is a part of the problem. If this, this conflict continues, if it persists, that means more humanitarian crisis. That means more selling of the weapons to the Western government and then they are sending those weapons to the Ukrainian Government. As a matter of fact, let me explain that the West thinks that it may be another Afghanistan. This Ukraine is not Afghanistan. Already a significant portion of Ukraine population, they have the Russian origin. Russia has a support base inside Ukraine, and the ethnic composition and the religious composition of the Ukraine is as such that it would not resist to the Russian attacks. Unlike Afghanistan, it's a very different scenario. Let's hope the peace prevails, but my understanding of the situation is that as long as the Russian troops they move forward, they take over more cities, the Ukraine probably would not be agreed to hold negotiations. Destinations should not be a problem. I think Turkey may serve as an excellent destination for negotiations because by and large, Turkey has stayed neutral in this conflict”.*

AF: *“How concerned are you about the accusations that human shields are being used in this conflict? I know President Putin has made that claim against the Ukrainian military. We've heard the Ukrainian military make that claim about forces that are in the Donbass region at the moment”.*

JR: *“I think that has been the typical tactics which have been used by militants across the region. When a military cannot face a bigger military then obviously, they will shield themselves into the population centres. That means that they are creating the conditions where the Russian military could possibly conduct air strikes on the population centre and then the Western media will make a lot of hue and cry and they*

will say the Russians are killing innocent citizens. The fact that the Russian Ukrainian military, uh, they cannot face the Russian military power and that is why they have sought shelter inside the civilian population centres, but that would be at the cost of the innocent civilians. But let me give you a bigger picture. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of hue and cry about what is happening inside the Ukraine. One wonders to understand that the Americans have been bombing Iraq, have been bombing Libya and other Middle Eastern country and particularly I would refer here about Iraq on a very fast pretext of a presence of weapons of mass destruction. Now they say, it was intelligence failure, they took over, destroyed the entire country and directly, indirectly more than a million people have died there, and it has become a hotbed of the militancy and now they're talking about similar things in, in the Ukraine. They are making a hue and cry. Yes, there, unfortunately, there is a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, but there was a far bigger crisis in Afghanistan. The Americans killed over 200,000 people there, and similarly they have been killing tens of thousands in Libya and other countries. But again, it is a pure strategic game which is being played in that part of the world. Now I say that it smacks of the hypocrisy on the part of the Western medias when they talk about only one aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and they're forgetting of what they have been reporting and analysing when it comes to the Muslim countries. And they were simply silent. Even they were using the... Donald Trump invented the term of a beautiful, beautiful weapons. Does it make sense? The weapons always destroys people. So, I think there are, unfortunately, double standards, and that is at the heart, at the heart of the geostrategic politics being played in that part of the world".

AF: *"Okay, well, let's hope that there is a breakthrough at least finding a location for these peace talks that are being proposed. Javed, nice to talk to you. That was Javed Rana, a journalist and political analyst, live there from Islamabad now. It is the fourth day of Russia's so-called special military operations in Ukraine, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army. Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Now in the newly recognised Donbass republics there is intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reported too in residential areas, causing more damage. Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. Local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a massive fire has erupted at a fuel depot near [LPR]. Local authorities there claim a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel having caught fire. Several people have reportedly been injured too, but the numbers are so far unclear. RT's Roman Kosarev has more now from the Donbass region".*

This was followed by an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 ("**Kosarev Report 6**"):

RK: *"The situation is alarming indeed. The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack." According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".*

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *"In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".*

US2: *"The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AF: *"Now, the editor of The Grayzone news site, Anya Parampil, spoke with us about the beginning of the turbulence in Ukraine eight years ago, and expressed concerns about the US position"*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT correspondent Paula Slier about Western sanctions on Russia ("**Slier Report 2**"):

AF: *"Okay, well, Western powers have announced they will impose severe economic sanctions on Moscow by disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money*

transfer system, the world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. So let's get more on this now and go to Paula Slier. Good afternoon to you, Paula. Um, with regards to this, just let us know what this means. What is the significance of this move to remove some of those banks from SWIFT and also the European reaction we've been hearing, the latest reaction to the conflict?"

PSI: *"Well, certainly this is the major topic under conversation here in Europe. A number of European Union countries are considering banning Russian flights from their airspace. We've already had individual European countries who have agreed to do this. Later today, Sunday, European foreign ministers will be meeting to discuss this, and if they go ahead with it, it will be part of a new package of sanctions being posed by the European Union. Now, as you mentioned, late on Saturday there was also a decision to ban a number of Russian banks from the SWIFT international monetary system. The US, Canada and key European countries, including Germany, signed off on this agreement. Earlier, though, the United Kingdom had already agreed to do so".*

A clip of Prime Minister Boris Johnson was then shown:

BJ: *"SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It is incredibly important for tightening the ligature, the economic ligature around the Putin regime. And today you've seen more and more countries, France and others, coming forward to say that they will not block a banning, a boycott of SWIFT".*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now Britain is preparing a so-called hit list of Russian oligarchs that it plans to impose sanctions on. We heard earlier from the UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who said, to quote, that there would be 'nowhere left to hide' for these mega rich Russians, many who are aligned with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. She said that every few months there would be new names added to the list".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now Greece and Romania are the latest countries to announce that they will be sending defence equipment and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Romania has also offered to take care of the wounded in military and civilian hospitals. Germany, in a turnaround, has also announced now that it will be sending weapons to the Ukraine, including anti-aircraft missiles and tank busting rockets. Now this is a reversal of an earlier policy. What we heard from the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, is that, to quote, it is our duty to support Ukraine to the best of our ability in defending Putin's aggressive and invading army. So that's how the German chancellor justified this U-*

turn in policy. Berlin also says that it will now allow the Netherlands to deliver German- made weapons to the Ukraine, and that is also a reversal of policy. We've heard from Amsterdam saying that they plan to do this and that they have authorised that they will deliver these weapons".

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"We commit to ensuring that a certain number of Russian banks are removed from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and harm their ability to operate globally. We will stop Putin from using his war chest. We will paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank. This will freeze its transactions and made it impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets".*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now Finland is the latest country to announce that it will be closing its airspace to Russia. Other countries, including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany and Poland, have blocked their airspace to Russian aircraft, which is provoking huge detours. So, we'll be keeping you abreast of the reactions here in Europe and in the UK as further sanctions are considered against Moscow".*

AF: *"Okay, thank you for that, Paula. That was RT's Paula Slier. Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry says it opposes the sanctions against Russia, saying the measures cannot resolve the Ukrainian crisis. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has echoed remarks made by the Russian envoy to the UN in condemnation of the United States".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number".

Andrew Farmer then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University ("**Gao Interview 2**") that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

PS: *"The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place. More than 80% of which the Chinese Embassy said were initiated by the US. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that the US should ask yourself who has been the aggressor in those conflicts. Meanwhile, Victor Gao, an international relations expert at China's Soochow University, warned that sanctions against Russia will be mutually destructive for the West".*

VG: *"China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in*

that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.

Andrew Farmer then closed the programme:

AF: *“So that brings you up to date for now. You're watching RT. Don't forget, you can stay across events by using our website, and you can find that at RT.com”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 12:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer, who presented the programme's headlines:

AF: *"A Russian delegation arrives in Belarus for peace talks with Ukrainian officials, but Kiev doesn't approve of the location and refuses to participate, as the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth day. Meanwhile, residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze. And Western powers ramp up sanctions against Moscow, preparing to disconnect some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. China, though, opposes the move, saying it won't resolve the Ukraine crisis."*

Hello, good afternoon, you're watching RT International. Now, peace talks between Russia and Ukrainian officials appear to have once again reached a dead end as Moscow's delegation arrives in Belarus for the negotiations while Kiev says that the location is not appropriate. Well, let's get more on this now from ah, RT's Don Courter. Don, good afternoon to you again. What are the hopes, then that these peace talks can go ahead you think, given that we've seen attempts for them to start and also fail over the last few days?"

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the Donbas region ("**Courter Report 8**"):

DC: *"Hi there, Andy. Well, Moscow has been saying for days now it's ready for negotiations and it's just recently reiterated that. It sent a Russian delegation to Belarus for negotiations to a place actually of Kiev's choosing, according to the Kremlin spokesperson. And the Russian delegation has guaranteed the safety of any Ukrainian delegates that are going to come to negotiate. But they did give them a deadline and that deadline has expired as of two minutes ago. So we're going to have to see if the delegation is going to extend it or if they're going to go back to Moscow. But as for now, let's take a listen to what Russian officials have said about these potential negotiations"*

A clip of Leonid Slutsky, Russian State Duma Member, Foreign Policy Chief, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

LS: *"If you are concerned about Ukraine's fate, you need to come. You need to start the negotiations. Today we can discuss a position that will really lead the parties to a common position. It can't be any other way because people's lives are at stake"*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"At the same time, Zelenskyy earlier said he was ready for negotiations. At that time, Russia stopped its offensive to work out the details. But then Zelenskyy backtracked. He said he wasn't ready, and the offensive continued. Today, though, he again said he was ready to sit down at the negotiating table. He said he wanted peace, but Kiev has since declared that they are not going to send a delegation. The reason for that that they say, is that apparently Russia gave them an ultimatum, that they had to lay down their weapons and surrender at the last moment. So they have since refused. Ukraine has also said that they're not happy about the venue. They say that, Zelenskyy says he doesn't want to negotiate in a country that is allowing Russia to attack Ukraine from its territory. And let's take a listen to what the Ukrainian President said earlier".*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Now the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, actually accused Zelenskyy of lying. He said that nobody is waging war against Ukraine from Belarusian territory, and in fact it's starting to seem like Lukashenko is coming forward as a potential mediator in these negotiations. If they do happen".*

A clip of Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus, was shown, with an English voiceover:

AL: *"Everyone is in Gomel in waiting. When they arrive, there will be negotiations. If they don't come, as the President of Russia told me yesterday, it's their choice. So, for the last time, I call for them to get a grip on common sense and make a decision. One's life is the most valuable".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Zelenskyy has since said that he's already had... he's already on a telephone conversation with President Lukashenko. We haven't confirmed that yet, but also it's important to note that Israel has said its ready to step in as a potential mediator between Russia and Ukraine. But I also have to mention that like I said before the first time, Zelenskyy said he was ready for negotiations, Russia put a halt to its military offensive. But it has said that this time it's not ready to do so".*

AF: *"Don, in terms of what's happening then on the ground in Ukraine, there are reports, aren't there that the Russian forces have entered Kharkov? What more can you tell us about that?"*

DC: *"Well, we have heard the governor of that region say that the region is actually still under Ukrainian control. But according to the Russian Ministry of Defence, they say*

that Russian forces have entered the city of Kharkov that's located in a region that borders Donbass and the Russian Federation and according to the, the Ministry of Defence, the Russian Ministry of Defence, they said that hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers put down their weapons and surrendered almost immediately after Russian troops arrived. And we've also been hearing reports over the past several hours of planes flying overhead in that region, gunfights going on, large explosions, that's potentially connected to the Russian military - the fact that the Russian military has been destroying Ukrainian arms depots in that area".

AF: *"Another city too where there's been fierce fighting, Don, is Mariupol. What's the Russian defence ministry been saying there?"*

DC: *"Well it's saying that neo-fascist armed groups are basically taking tactics out of the Syrian terrorist playbook. They're using so-called Bandera cars. These are off-road vehicles that are equipped with light artillery and they've been rolling up to civilian areas, bombing civilian infrastructure indiscriminately. Let's take a listen to what the Ministry of Defence said about it."*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations."*

The programme returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who continued speaking with Donald Courter:

AF: *"Before you go, just run through other major developments then over the last 24 hours as we now enter day four of the fighting".*

DC: *"The Russian military has recently blown up a dam that was constructed by the Ukrainian authorities in 2014 after Crimea determined that it wanted to be part of the Russian Federation. This dam has actually cut off or did cut off the clean drinking water supply to Crimea. It's created severe water shortages there over the years, but now that the Russian military was able to blow that up, the Ministry of Defence has said that water supplies are going to go back to normal soon. Another thing that's important to mention is that the Chernobyl exclusion zone had two days ago fallen under the control of Russian forces, and at that time the Ukrainian military that was stationed there agreed to jointly defend the area with Russian troops. That means that staff are still working there. Radiation levels are normal and there hasn't been any fighting there in that region. So those are basically the major updates from the area closer to the Russian border".*

AF: *"Okay, thanks for that. That was RT's Don Courter and as we mentioned too it is the fourth day of this conflict in Ukraine. With reports now to advances by Russian troops*

and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in the east of the country. Now marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In the newly recognised Donbass Republics, intense shelling, reportedly by Ukrainian military units, has been reportedly hitting residential areas, causing more damage. As we said earlier, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, and local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far though unclear.

Roman Kosarev has more from the Donbass region."

This was followed by an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 ("**Kosarev Report 6**"):

RK: "The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: "What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: "Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very

frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".

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AF: *"Roman Kosarev speaking there. Now, Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site did tell us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks*

in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a report about Kyiv from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 05:00 (**"the Zhdanov Report"**):

AF: *"Okay, well, let's get the latest now from Ukraine's capital Kiev because this video, which we can't verify just yet, does appear to show crossfire taking place just kilometres from the very heart of Kiev. The shooting was reported close to the capital's Infrastructure Ministry. And just 25 kilometres from the capital, an oil depot has burst into flames, reportedly from an explosion. This unverified video shows that blaze. You can see the fire and vast plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. RT's Igor Zhdanov earlier brought us the latest on what's been happening in Ukraine's capital and the surrounding region".*

IZ: *"It is very important right now to try and make sense of all the, you know, video, of all the information that is pouring outside of the Ukrainian capital, especially given that the, we are at the height of the information war and a lot of fakes are coming from, well, frankly, both sides. So, again, we were trying to kind of, looking at the videos, which people, so far, this is the main source of information as to what's going on there. People just filming out of their windows, like here, for example, this is one of the, uh, this is one footage that we're seeing, and apparently it shows a firefight, almost, like, in the heart of the Ukrainian capital. There's, of course, we can see tracer rounds being, being fired, sounds of gunfire. But the problem here is that it's not clear who's fighting who, because the logical assumption would be that, well, the Ukrainians are trying to repel a Russian attack, but so far the reports have been rather conflicting as to whether or not Russian troops are inside the capital. In fact, the Ukrainian side has been denying and saying that, well, they've managed to ward off the Russian, well, the Russian troops, who they are calling occupiers. And so, uh, so, some, of course, are saying that sabotage groups, you know, some Ukrainian officials are saying that Russian sabotage groups are operational within the city. But so far, well, we haven't seen any documents on people who have been shown, as you know, captured in the videos or like, you know, photos matched between those who were captured in Kiev to some of their, maybe, like, social media profiles, for example, where they would have listed where, like, their, for example, the military, particular military branch where they are serving. So, and given how much firepower has been pumped into the Ukrainian capital, more than 20,000 rifles have been handed out to the general population, and they didn't even ask for passports. So, right now, even the Ukrainian authorities have no idea who has, you know, who is armed and who's not. The Ukrainian law enforcement don't know that, the Ukrainian Army doesn't know that. And there have*

already been reports that, there have been, in fact, confirmed cases of, you know, friendly fire when, you know, two local groups, when they just took one another, they took each other for, for, like Russian saboteurs, saboteur groups, and they shot at each other and there have even been reports of casualties. And, also, some other people that have been using the firepower that they got to, well, to maraud and to scare people”.

PS: *“Now, as you mentioned earlier, there have been numerous reports of explosions not too far from the capital, including an oil depot and it must be terrifying for local residents. What sort of threats are they facing and what are local officials saying?”*

IZ: *“Well, absolutely. This explosion, this strike on the oil depot has been arguably, well, it has been the biggest event of the night military-wise. We saw basically a missile hit an oil depot. There was a massive fire that lit up the night sky. So, in some videos it looks like it was a dawn like, like, like the sun was rising. That's how bright it was. Also, a gas storage facility apparently was targeted as well, and it was, well, set ablaze by an explosion. And so, yeah, also the night, the night, you know, was pierced with sounds of air raid sirens and so on and so forth. So, a restless night for the Ukrainian capital”.*

PS: *“Certainly. Now we're seeing quite a few emotional videos of, you know, residents of Kiev doing the rounds on social media. Can you tell us more about what they're facing right now?”*

IZ: *“Well, the city is scared after all. Remember, they aren't exactly used to living amid, you know, a military operation. I mean, a full out, you know, amid, you know, air strikes and gun fire and fire fights. So, a lot of people chose to shelter in the tube, and the trains, in fact, have been stopped. So, the tube in Kiev is right now used exclusively to give people shelter. In fact, there was, we saw a report of a baby being born in one of the tube station”*

PS: *“Yeah, I heard about that one”.*

IZ: *“Yeah, as their mother was, was hiding from all the mayhem that's going on, on the surface. And of course, the Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he has been trying to like, calm down and to reassure the population. For example, here is what he said in the evening”.*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“The world has seen that Ukrainians are strong, Ukrainians are powerful. Ukrainians are brave. So it's not surprising that these people always have friends more powerful than enemies. During the day I spoke every hour with heads of states, friends of Ukraine. It seems that Ukraine has gained the sincerity and attention of the entire normal civilised world”.*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT correspondent Paula Slier about Western sanctions on Russia (**“Slier Report 3”**):

AF: *“Western powers have announced they are now imposing one of the severest possible financial sanctions on Moscow, disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system, the world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. So let's get the latest on this and speak with RT's Paula Slier.*

Good afternoon to you, Paula. Just run through, then, the significance of these latest sanctions”.

PSI: *“Well, Western allies are agreeing to block Russia from the international SWIFT monetary system. Signing off last night Saturday, we heard from the United States, Canada and a number of European countries, saying that they were selecting targeted Russian banks that no longer would be able to conduct financial transactions in this way. Earlier, the UK already agreed to it”.*

A clip of Prime Minister Boris Johnson was then shown:

BJ: *“SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It is incredibly important for tightening the ligature, the economic ligature around the Putin regime. And today you've seen more and more countries, France and others, coming forward to say that they will not block a banning, a boycott of SWIFT”.*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now it comes as Britain is also preparing a so-called hit list. This will be the names of Russian oligarchs, of wealthy Russian businessman who are aligned to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. The Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, says that there will be, quote, ‘nowhere left to hide’ for these people and that every few weeks the UK will be adding new names to the list of who they're imposing.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO”.

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now, Greece and Romania are the latest countries to announce that they will be sending defence equipment and humanitarian aid to the Ukraine. Romania has also offered to care for wounded people in both its civilian and military hospitals. It comes as Germany does a U-turn in its foreign policy. We're now hearing that it will send weapons to the Ukraine, including anti-aircraft missiles and tank bursting rockets. This is, as I mentioned, a reversal of an earlier policy in which Germany said that it would not be providing any kind of military to countries that are not involved in NATO. We heard from the German chancellor Olaf Scholz, saying, and I quote, ‘it's our duty to support Ukraine to the best of our ability in defending’, to quote, ‘against Putin's invading army’. Now Berlin has also allowed the Netherlands to send German-made*

weapons. This also breaks with the German foreign policy, and we have heard from Amsterdam that it will be sending those weapons as soon as possible”.

A clip of Olaf Scholz (“OS”), Chancellor of Germany, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

OS: *“Let's not kid ourselves. Putin will not change his course overnight, but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already, in the last week, the Russian stock markets sank by more than 30%. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions”.*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now the European Union is also considering banning Russian planes from European airspace. Already, a number of countries individually have banned Russian planes. Later today, the European foreign ministers will discuss this. You have countries, for example, Finland being the latest and others already, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Poland who have announced that they will no longer allow Russian planes to fly overhead. Should this be enacted, it will be part of a new body of sanctions imposed by the European Union on the Russian Federation.*

AF: *“Okay, thanks for that Paula. That was RT’s Paula Slier. Well, RT’s Ilya Petrenko has been taking a closer look at the Western sanctions against Russia and whether restrictions on the likes of the energy sector are more bark than bite”.*

This was followed by a pre-recorded report by RT reporter Ilya Petrenko about Western sanctions against Russia (**“the Petrenko Report”**):

IP: *“I've lost count how many times in the last couple of days I heard European, American heavyweights say ‘We stand by Ukraine and we're going to punish Putin's Russia like never, ever before’”*

Clips were then shown of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, and US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh:

BJ: *“The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen”.*

JB: *“This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot”.*

DS: *“The sanctions measures we impose today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and, arguably, the most consequential ever levied in history”.*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Those who’d invested in Russian stocks woke up to find themselves in the red earlier this week. But, soon after, there was relief for Russian business. The indexes, as well as*

the ruble, Russia's currency, recovered. Slightly. Not all the way to the levels of last week, but they did bounce back. Why? Maybe because the sanctions didn't live up to the expectations of those who wished Russia economic hell. But I noticed something else. Have a look at the following".

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen was then shown:

UvdL: *"This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Serious stuff, huh? The Russian energy sector be like... because the big hitters gave up the idea of targeting the energy sector. Otherwise, how are they going to warm themselves if an immense share of fuel resources comes from Russia?"*

Clips of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner, which was accompanied by an English voiceover, and of President Biden were then shown:

CL: *"You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supplies because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies, what impact will that have on our supply?"*

JBid: *"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds and yen, to be part of the global economy. We're going to stunt the ability of, to finance and grow... the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank, a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself, cut it off the US financial system".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"But Russia's biggest lender, Sberbank, has had fewer problems than expected. Their operations are still good to go. The energy sector, a bit like with the EU".*

Another clip of Daleep Singh was shown:

DS: *"To be clear, our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Part of the reason is, perhaps, that the Democrats don't want to disappoint American voters too much. They don't want gas prices to go through the roof even more".*

Another clip of President Biden was shown:

JBid: *"As we respond, my administration is using the tools, every tool at its disposal, to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Especially when 57% of Americans disapprove of how Joe Biden is handling affairs. Right, so, that brings me to my earlier observation. They may be firmly reassuring Kiev they'll try their absolute best to save Ukraine and give the Kremlin a beating. But let's be realistic. No one is ready to go too far if some business folks are going to suffer back home”.*

A clip of political analyst Alessandro Bruno was then shown:

ABr: *“Mostly for me, it's the natural gas issue that is the one that is a definite masochistic move in that sense, because it hurts the EU. We're going to have a number of factors affecting the economies of the West and particularly Europe with inflation rising, a situation that's going to be much worse than it was in 1973 with the energy crisis, the oil engineers after the 1973 Middle East war. So, it's very much like shooting on the streets”.*

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about China's response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

AF: *“Meanwhile, China has opposed the sanctions against Russia, saying that they won't resolve the Ukrainian crisis, and highlighted previous conflicts involving the United States”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Andrew Farmer then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**“Gao Interview 2”**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

AF: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the United States has been involved in since World War Two, and you can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place there, the overwhelming majority of which, the Embassy added, were initiated by one country: the United States. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that Washington should ask itself who has been the main aggressor. Now an international relations expert does warn that sanctions against Russia will be destructive too for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible*

to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable".

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who introduced a report about freedom of expression ("**the Belkina Report**"), which included an interview with RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anna Belkina and political analyst Nikola Mirkovic:

AF: *"Now, YouTube has blocked access to RT videos in Ukraine and disabled the monetisation of all RT channels after several European countries took our networks broadcast off air. On Saturday, Australian TV service Foxtel said it would no longer distribute this channel due to the situation in Ukraine. We heard from RT's deputy editor-in-chief".*

The programme then showed a clip of Anna Belkina:

AB: *"RT journalists tirelessly work to bring valuable facts and views to an audience of millions around the world. When an organisation or government either call for or force RT to be taken off the air, it simply highlights the policy of media freedoms in the nations they represent. Just look at the Association of European Journalists who, on the one hand, self-righteously declare themselves as defenders of journalistic rights, yet so regularly turn their back on this very founding principle to support the suppression of news and journalists under political pressure. If ever there were time to recognise the importance of all that gathering news and understanding of all views, it is now".*

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *"Foxtel has sent a letter to RT saying it's ended distribution over, quote, 'concern about the situation in Ukraine'. It said it had the right to do so under the licence agreement with the network. On Thursday, Poland made RT one of five Russian channels to be taken off air and Britain's Culture Secretary asked regulator Ofcom to review RT's licence. Even before the current crisis erupted, RT's German language sister channel, RTDE, was blocked in Germany. A political analyst we spoke to said that banning Russian news outlets sets a dangerous precedent".*

The programme then showed a clip of Nikola Mirkovic:

NM: *"I've done a number of debates on RT and I've discussed many times with people who, with whom I disagree on many opinions with. A lot of people, I mean, it's a, there are a lot of debates on a lot of different subjects. RT has brought people together from different, different political horizons, have brought them to debate, to discuss. Some agree, some disagree. And that is the purpose of journalism, and that is the purpose of the media. Let the people who are watching make their own opinion. RT is not an ideology, it's a place where people can meet, discuss, debate on ideas and that's*

fundamental. If we take that out of our democracies, there is no more democracy, so it's extremely important. Maybe they may shut down TV stations who have to find something on the internet. If it's the internet is closed down, we have to find something else. It will be tough. These times are extremely tough now. I don't know if they will get better, but we have to continue the fight for free speech. Everybody is entitled to free speech. Aren't our democracies, uh, sort of, based on that? Isn't that what we're taught? Isn't that what's written in our constitution? We've got to fight for the right for free speech and that means we have access to all the media and let the people choose what is right and right is wrong".

Andrew Farmer then closed the programme:

AF: *"Just gone half past three in the afternoon here in Moscow. That brings you up to date. Back again at the top of the hour".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 13:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer, who introduced a live report from RT reporter Donald Courter about the potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine (**"Courter Report 9"**):

AF: *"Good afternoon, you're watching RT International. Russia's delegation says it will stay in Belarus for ceasefire talks despite the deadline expiring. That's after information came in at the last moment that Ukraine will actually attend and send a delegation. So let's get more on this and hand across to RT's Don Courter. Don, what more do we know then about these latest developments?"*

DC: *"Well Moscow said it's been ready for talks for days now and today, it reiterated that, it sent a Russian delegation to Belarus for negotiations to a location that was Kiev's choice, actually, according to the Kremlin spokesperson. The delegation has assured anyone, any Ukrainians who come to negotiate that there, their security is going to be guaranteed. And just at the last moment, minutes after the deadline had expired that they had set, did they get word that Ukraine was ready to negotiate. Let's take a listen".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Now over the past several days, Zelenskyy has kind of gone back and forth. Earlier, he said he was ready to negotiate, and then Russia put a stop to its military offensive so they could work out the details. He then backtracked, said he didn't want to negotiate, and today he's changed his mind again. He said he was ready to sit down at the negotiating table. Russia sent this delegation, and for a time, actually Kiev said it was not going to send anyone. But it was only after a conversation actually with Lukashenko, apparently, that they decided to come to the table".*

A clip of Belarusian politician Yuri Voskresensky ("YV") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

YV: *"As far as I know, President Zelenskyy just telephoned President Lukashenko. President Lukashenko convinced President Zelenskyy to save Ukraine's state sovereignty and the Ukrainian delegation will come to the negotiations".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"Earlier, Zelenskyy rejected any sort of negotiations because he said that Russia gave him an ultimatum at the at the last moment, saying that they demanded that Ukraine*

put down its weapons and surrender basically. He also didn't like the venue very much. He said he didn't want to negotiate in a country that was allowing Russian forces to wage war against Ukraine on its own territory. But on the other hand, Alexander Lukashenko said that that was a lie, that nobody was waging war against Ukraine on Belarusian territory. But let's take a listen to what Zelenskyy had to say earlier, in an earlier speech".

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Donald Courter continued with his report:

DC: *"So now, with another chance for negotiations to take place, we're going to have to see how the situation develops".*

AF: *"Yeah, thank you for the update there, Don. That was that RT's Donald Courter on the potential for those peace talks to take place after all in Belarus. Now, Vladimir Putin has given a speech, meanwhile, on the current situation in Ukraine. This is what he said a short time ago. Okay, I apologise. We will wait a little longer for that. We thought it was going to happen now, but we will wait a few minutes now... I'm told he is speaking".*

A clip of President Vladimir Putin ("VP") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"Are attempting unfriendly actions against us, not only economically. What I'm talking about are the sanctions you know very well about, but also the highest officials. The top officials of NATO nations make aggressive and hostile statements towards Russia. So I order the Minister of Defence and the Chief of General Staff to put Russia's Army and Russia's reserves into the special regime of combat readiness".*

The programme returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio:

AF: *"Okay, that was Vladimir Putin speaking just a short time ago on the current situation in Ukraine. Now it is the fourth day of this latest conflict and with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in the east of the country, here are videos of eyewitnesses from Ukrainian Kharkov showing that Russian, the Russian Army, has entered that city. Kharkov's mayor himself confirmed the information. According to him, part of the Russian forces are in the central part of that city as well. Russian defence ministry has said that Ukrainian nationalist battalions used to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and have also tried to target the school in the city itself. Let's listen."*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"On February 26 from 4pm to 4.20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and the school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations."*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 (**"Kosarev Report 6"**):

AF: *"Meanwhile, fighting is reported in the suburbs of Kiev. We are seeing some buildings caught on fire there amid the clash, the local mayor in his video address does say that Ukrainian forces have repelled that Russian move. Now marked in red here and blue on this map are the two Donbass republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics do claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far unclear. More now from Roman Kosarev in the Donbass region."*

RK: *The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".*

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *"In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".*

US2: *"The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region (**"the Parampil Interview"**):

AF: *"Roman Kosarev reporting there. Now Anya Parampil is of The Grayzone independent news website and she told us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly..."*

Andrew Farmer interrupted the report:

AF: *"Okay, we just interrupted that report because President Putin is continuing to give a statement he was making just a few minutes ago".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"Make hostile statements with respect to Russia. That is why I made the decision to order the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff to put Russia's deterrence forces into combat readiness".*

The programme returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio:

AF: *"Okay, that was just a bit more from statements that Vladimir Putin has been making. Just recently this afternoon he says deterrence forces in Russia are now being put into combat readiness. Now, in other developments, RT's Ilya Petrenko is taking a closer look now at some of the Western sanctions that have been put in place against Russia and the impact that they are having".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded report by RT reporter Ilya Petrenko about Western sanctions against Russia (**"the Petrenko Report"**):

IP: *"I've lost count how many times in the last couple of days I heard European, American heavyweights say 'We stand by Ukraine and we're going to punish Putin's Russia like never, ever before'"*

Clips were then shown of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, and US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh:

BJ: *"The UK is announcing the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen".*

JB: *"This package of sanctions that has been approved by unanimity by the member states will hurt Russia, and it will hurt a lot".*

DS: *"The sanctions measures we impose today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and, arguably, the most consequential ever levied in history".*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *"Those who'd invested in Russian stocks woke up to find themselves in the red earlier this week. But, soon after, there was relief for Russian business. The indexes, as well as the ruble, Russia's currency, recovered. Slightly. Not all the way to the levels of last week, but they did bounce back. Why? Maybe because the sanctions didn't live up to*

the expectations of those who wished Russia economic hell. But I noticed something else. Have a look at the following”.

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen was then shown:

Uvdl: *“This package includes financial sanctions that cut Russia's access to the most important capital markets, and these sanctions will increase Russia's borrowing costs, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial base”.*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Serious stuff, huh? The Russian energy sector be like... because the big hitters gave up the idea of targeting the energy sector. Otherwise, how are they going to warm themselves if an immense share of fuel resources comes from Russia?”*

Clips of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner, which was accompanied by an English voiceover, and of US President Biden were then shown:

CL: *“You must ask yourself if you come to this exclusion, is this a trigger that will cause Russia to stop its gas supplies because they can no longer be paid for? And if it ends its gas supplies, what impact will that have on our supply?”*

JBid: *“We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds and yen, to be part of the global economy. We're going to stunt the ability of, to finance and grow... the Russian military. We've cut off Russia's largest bank, a bank that holds more than one third of Russia's banking assets by itself, cut it off the US financial system”.*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“But Russia's biggest lender, Sberbank, has had fewer problems than expected. Their operations are still good to go. The energy sector, a bit like with the EU”.*

Another clip of Daleep Singh was shown:

DS: *“To be clear, our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world”.*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Part of the reason is, perhaps, that the Democrats don't want to disappoint American voters too much. They don't want gas prices to go through the roof even more”.*

Another clip of President Biden was shown:

JBid: *“As we respond, my administration is using the tools, every tool at its disposal, to protect American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump”.*

Ilya Petrenko continued:

IP: *“Especially when 57% of Americans disapprove of how Joe Biden is handling affairs. Right, so, that brings me to my earlier observation. They may be firmly reassuring Kiev*

they'll try their absolute best to save Ukraine and give the Kremlin a beating. But let's be realistic. No one is ready to go too far if some business folks are going to suffer back home".

A clip of political analyst Alessandro Bruno was then shown:

ABr: *"Mostly for me, it's the natural gas issue that is the one that is a definite masochistic move in that sense, because it hurts the EU. We're going to have a number of factors affecting the economies of the West and particularly Europe with inflation rising, a situation that's going to be much worse than it was in 1973 with the energy crisis, the oil engineers after the 1973 Middle East war. So, it's very much like shooting on the streets".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT correspondent Paula Slier about Western sanctions on Russia ("**Slier Report 4**"):

AF: *"Meanwhile, Western Powers have announced they are imposing one of the severest possible financial sanctions on Moscow, disconnecting some Russian banks from the SWIFT money transfer system, the world's biggest mechanism for conducting international financial transactions. Let's talk more about this and go to Paula Slier. She's in London covering these developments. Good afternoon, Paula. Just run through then the implications of removing some of these Russian banks from the SWIFT system".*

PSl: *"Well, the implications certainly are far reaching. As you correctly say, what we are hearing is a decision by Western allies to now remove Russia from the international SWIFT monetary banking system. Last night, the United States, Canada and key European countries, including Germany, signed off on the proposal and the agreement to remove so-called 'selected' Russian banks from the SWIFT system. It was a decision that the UK had earlier made".*

A clip of Prime Minister Boris Johnson was then shown:

BJ: *"SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It is incredibly important for tightening the ligature, the economic ligature around the Putin regime. And today you've seen more and more countries, France and others, coming forward to say that they will not block a banning, a boycott of SWIFT".*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSl: *"Now Britain has also announced that it's put together a so-called hit list when it comes to imposing sanctions. And this includes a number of Russian oligarchs who are closely aligned with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. We have heard from the British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, saying, to quote, that they will have nowhere to hide and that in the coming weeks there will be more names who will be added to the sanction list".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO”.

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now, Greece and Romania are the latest countries to announce that they will be sending defence equipment and humanitarian aid to the Ukraine. Romania has also offered to take care of people who have been wounded in both the military and civilian hospitals. In a reverse of policy, Germany has now announced that it will be sending weapons to Ukraine and that these weapons will include anti-aircraft missiles and tank busting rockets. We have heard from the German Chancellor Scholz saying, and I quote, ‘it is our duty to support Ukraine to the best of our ability in defending the country against Putin’s invading army’. Now the German Government has also announced, also in a reverse of policy, that it will allow the Netherlands to send German-made weapons to Kiev, and Amsterdam has already confirmed that it will be doing so as soon as possible”.*

A clip of Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

OS: *“Let’s not kid ourselves. Putin will not change his course overnight, but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already, in the last week, the Russian stock markets sank by more than 30%. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions”.*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now, France is the latest country here in Europe to announce that it is closing its airspace to Russian aircraft. The European Union has also been mulling over a decision in terms of banning all Russian aircraft from air space here. There are a number of individual countries who have already done this. Earlier, we heard from Finland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Poland. Foreign ministers will be meeting later today and top of the agenda is going to be this option of closing airspace. An EU-wide measure to do this would then pave the way for a whole new set of sanctions”.*

AF: *“Okay, well, thank you for that, Paula. That was RT’s Paula Slier reporting from London. Meanwhile, China has opposed the sanctions against Russia, saying that they won’t resolve the Ukrainian crisis, and also highlighted previous conflicts involving the United States”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Andrew Farmer then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**“Gao Interview 2”**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

AF: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the United States has been involved in since World War Two, and you can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts took place there, the overwhelming majority of which, the Embassy added, were initiated by one country: the United States. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that Washington should ask itself who has been the main aggressor. Now an international relations expert does warn that sanctions against Russia will be destructive too for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.*

Andrew Farmer then closed the programme:

AF: *“You're watching RT International. Thanks for your company this afternoon. We'll have more news for you in half an hour”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 14:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer, who presented the programme's headlines:

AF: *"Russia's delegation says it was ready to leave Belarus after the deadline for ceasefire talks expired, but will stay after information came in at the last minute that Ukraine will attend. Also this hour, following a raft of aggressive NATO statements, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrence forces, including nuclear forces, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector; I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *"Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film, what they say are Russian forces entering their city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze.*

Good afternoon, 5pm in Moscow you're watching RT International. Russia's delegation says it will stay in Belarus for ceasefire talks despite the deadline expiring. That's after information came in at the last moment that Ukraine will attend and will send a delegation of their own. So, let's get more on this and speak with our correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov and Konstantin just run through then what's been happening over the last couple of hours".

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov ("KR") about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine ("**the Rozhkov Report**"):

KR: *"Sure, hello, Rory. So there's been a lot of back and forth leading up to this meeting, but as of now it seems that it's really going to happen. I mean, the Head of the Russian delegation here in Belarus, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that they were actually about to leave, but then all of a sudden, they received a message saying that the Ukrainian side is ready to negotiate and ready to come to Belarus. He also said that the Russian side is now headed to the Belarusian city of Gomel at the Belarus-Ukraine border. It's a three-hour drive from where we are now and that's also where we're going to head, where we're going to go right after this live. So let's have a snippet from Mr Medinsky's statement".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, it's hard to tell what exactly caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told that he, even though he wants to have peace talks, he doesn't want to have them in Belarus. He suggested other European capitals like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest as well as Istanbul in Turkey and Baku in Azerbaijan. But now he actually phoned to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and he confirmed that the Ukrainian delegation wants to engage in peace talks in Belarus and that the Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, is on its way to the City of Gomel. Now. Now let's have a listen to what, uh, Mr Zelenskyy told".*

A clip of President Zelenskyy was shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia that can end this war and return peace to all of us. And Minsk is often mentioned as a platform for these negotiations, a platform that was not chosen by us. Now we are saying – not Minsk. I sincerely hope that Belarus becomes as kind and safe again, as everyone saw it not so long ago".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, just to bring you up to speed, the Russian delegation in Belarus includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's Parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as an aide to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Medinsky, he is a former Minister of Culture in Russia, but now he was appointed as the head of this delegations in these peace talks in Belarus. He said, Mr Medinsky, he said that the Russian side did everything to ensure safe passage for the Ukrainians so that they could come from Kiev to the city of Gomel, on the border between Belarus, close to the border between Belarus and Ukraine, and understand that right now the Russian delegation is headed from Minsk too towards the city of Gomel and uh, we were told that there is also preparation, security preparations in place to make sure that both sides feel safe and ready to engage in dialogue there. But you know, I got to tell you, it's unclear at this point if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. I mean, we know from what the Russian President said earlier, uh, that the Russian military operation in Ukraine was put to a halt on February 25th when Mr Zelenskyy first told that he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. But then he changed his mind and the operation was resumed. So, this is not something that is going to happen right now. According to the spokesperson for the Russian President, President Dmitry Peskov, he said that even when these negotiations in Belarus are going to happen, it doesn't mean that the military operation by the*

Russian armed forces in Ukraine is going to be stopped. But maybe something will change after these talks. You know, we'll see about that".

AF: *"Yeah. Okay. We'll keep an eye on how all of this develops. Thank you, Konstantin. That was Konstantin Rozhkov in Belarus. Okay, well, let's go back to our top headline this hour because in response to what the Russian President called aggressive language by NATO member states, Vladimir Putin has put the country's strategic forces, which includes nuclear weapons units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector, I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT correspondent Paula Slier about Western sanctions on Russia ("**Slier Report 5**"):

AF: *"Okay, that was Vladimir Putin speaking a short time ago. In the meantime, as it was mentioned, SWIFT and the removal of Russian banks from the SWIFT financial system was announced by European leaders yesterday, early this morning. We can talk more about the consequences of all of this with RT's Paula Slier. Good afternoon, Paula. I hope you can hear me. Just run through what has been happening in some major developments".*

PSI: *"Well, as you correctly say, the news that's just breaking is that the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has ordered his defence ministry to put strategic missile forces on special alert. We are receiving news that this is following what the President has termed aggressive behaviour by NATO's countries. The order was announced in the last few minutes and it came after a meeting between the Russian President Vladimir Putin, his Defence Minister and the Chief of the General Staff. We are waiting here in the UK to gauge some kind of British or European reaction. Already countries here have been moving in the direction of isolating Russia from the international stage as much as possible. As you correctly said, the latest move that was announced last night was European countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as Canada, signing off on an agreement to no longer have a number of Russian banks as part of the international SWIFT monetary system. Now, there are concerns that this could affect the economies here in Europe negatively as well. But what we have heard, particularly from the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who already agreed to remove Russia from SWIFT earlier, is that countries feel they were left with no other option. Take a listen".*

A clip of Prime Minister Boris Johnson was then shown:

BJ: *"SWIFT is the mechanism that stops people making payments to Vladimir Putin's Russia. It is incredibly important for tightening the ligature, the economic ligature*

around the Putin regime. And today you've seen more and more countries, France and others, coming forward to say that they will not block a banning, a boycott of SWIFT”.

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now Britain has also put together what it calls a hit list. Essentially, what this is is the names of oligarchs, Russian billionaires who are closely aligned with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. We have heard from the British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, and I'm quoting where she says “these people will have nowhere to hide”. We're also being told that this list will be continuously updated, particularly in the coming weeks, with new names being added”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO”.

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Now at the same time, more and more countries are coming forward and announcing assistance to Ukraine. Of course, Ukraine is not a member of NATO, and in the past you've had countries like Germany saying that they will not provide weaponry to Kiev. Germany has now done a U-turn and has reversed its policy, with the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz justifying this reversing policy, saying that “It's our duty to support Ukraine to the best of our ability in defending against Putin's invading army”. Berlin has also agreed to allow the Netherlands to deliver German made weapons to Ukraine. The Netherlands has said that it plans to do this as soon as possible and has confirmed that in fact it will be going ahead with this move”.*

A clip of Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

OS: *“Let's not kid ourselves. Putin will not change his course overnight, but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying. Already, in the last week, the Russian stock markets sank by more than 30%. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions”.*

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *“Germany has also said that amongst the weapons it will be sending our anti-aircraft missiles and tank busting rockets. We've also heard now from Greece and Romania that they'll be sending defence equipment and humanitarian aid. Romania, like other countries, offering to help bring the wounded to their civilian and military hospitals. Now all of this is coming against the backdrop of more and more European countries closing their airspace to Russian aircraft. The latest country to announce this in the last hour or so was France. Earlier we heard from Finland and then we've also heard from other countries who say that Russian aircraft will no longer be allowed to fly overhead.*

And these include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Poland. Later today, EU foreign ministers will be meeting to discuss this. And should they go ahead with a blanket agreement to close Europe to Russian aircraft, then this will be part and parcel of a new package of sanctions being imposed from Europe on Russia”.

AF: *“Okay, thanks for that, Paula. That was Paula Slier there, reporting from London. Now let's run through what's been happening on the ground in Ukraine. It is the fourth day of this latest conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces too against the Ukrainian Army in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage, which they say show Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Russia's defence ministry says a Ukrainian nationalist battalion, meanwhile, used heavy artillery to attack residential areas in the suburbs of the city of Mariupol in south-eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces, it's claimed, also targeted a school in the city itself”.*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *“On February 26 from 4pm to 4:20pm Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov Battalion used Grad rocket launchers to attack residential areas in the suburbs of Mariupol and a school in the city of Mariupol. This resulted in the destruction of residential buildings and deaths among the civilian population. Russia's defence ministry had warned that Ukrainian nationalists were preparing to conduct such provocations.”*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 (**“Kosarev Report 6”**):

AF: *“Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes, the local mayor in a video address, says the Ukrainian forces, though, have repelled Russian attacks. And overnight an unverified video here appeared from Kiev apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital, close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. Around 25 kilometres from the capital are reports an explosion has caused a large fire at an oil depot. This unverified video does show the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. Marked in red and blue on this map are Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced too that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused that blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured. The exact numbers are so far unclear, but with more on the situation in the Donbass region, here's Roman Kosarev”.*

RK: *The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".*

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *"In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".*

US2: *"The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".*

AF: *"That's Roman Kosarev there reporting from eastern Ukraine. Now Anya Parampil is of The Grayzone independent news site, and she told us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the tensions and the situation in Ukraine".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at The Grayzone news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about China's response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

AF: *"Now China has opposed the sanctions against Russia, saying that they won't resolve the Ukrainian crisis and it also highlighted previous conflicts involving the United States".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number".

Andrew Farmer then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University ("**Gao Interview 2**") that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

AF: *"The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of the cities and the years where the armed conflicts took place, the overwhelming majority of which, the Embassy added, were initiated by one country, the United States. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested that Washington should ask itself who has been the main aggressor. Now an international relations expert has warned that sanctions against Russia could be destructive also for the West".*

VG: *"China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned, very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, et cetera, is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand, but it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I believe the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries, and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable".*

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who introduced a report about freedom of expression ("**the Belkina Report**"), which included an interview with RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anna Belkina and political analyst Nikola Mirkovic:

AF: *"Meanwhile, YouTube has blocked access to RT videos in Ukraine and disabled the monetisation of all RT channels. After several European countries took our network's broadcasts off air. On Saturday, Australian TV service Foxtel said it would no longer distribute this channel due to the situation in Ukraine. We heard from RT's Deputy Editor in Chief".*

The programme then showed a clip of Anna Belkina:

AB: *"RT journalists tirelessly work to bring valuable facts and views to an audience of millions around the world. When an organisation or government either call for or force RT to be taken off the air, it simply highlights the policy of media freedoms in the*

nations they represent. Just look at the Association of European Journalists who, on the one hand, so infectiously declare themselves as defenders of journalistic rights, yet so regularly turned their back on this very founding principle to support the suppression of news and journalists, under political pressure. If ever there were time to recognise the importance of all that gathering news and understanding of all views, it is now”.

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *“Well Foxtel has sent a letter to RT saying it ended distribution over, quote, “concern about the situation in Ukraine”. It said it had the right to do so under the licence agreement with the network. On Thursday, Poland made RT one of five Russian channels to be taken off air and Britain's Culture Secretary asked regulator Ofcom to review RT's licence. Even before the current crisis erupted, RT's German language sister channel RT DE, was blocked in Germany. A political analyst we spoke to said that banning Russian news outlets does set a dangerous precedent”.*

The programme then showed a clip of Nikola Mirkovic:

NM: *“I've done a number of debates on RT and I've discussed many times with people who, with whom I disagree on many opinions with a lot of people. I mean there are a lot of debates on a lot of different subjects. RT has brought people together from different political horizons, have brought them to debate, to discuss. Some agree, some disagree, and that is the purpose of journalism and that is the purpose of the media. Let the people who are watching make their own opinion. RT is not an ideology, it's a place where people can discuss, debate on ideas and that's fundamental. If we take that out of our democracies, there is no more democracy, so it's extremely important. Maybe they may shut down TV stations, we'll have to find something on the Internet. If the Internet is closed down, we have to find something else. It will be tough. These times are extremely tough. Now I don't know if they will get better, but we have to continue the fight for free speech. Everybody is entitled to free speech. Aren't our democracies based on that, isn't that what we're taught? Isn't that what's written in our Constitution? We've got to fight for the right for free speech, and that means we have access to all the media and let the people choose what is right and what is wrong”.*

Andrew Farmer then closed the programme:

AF: *“You're watching RT coming to half past five in the afternoon in Moscow. Thanks for watching, back again at the top of the hour”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 15:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer, who presented the programme's headlines:

AF: *"Following a raft of aggressive NATO statements and huge new arms deliveries pledged by the bloc members, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrent forces, including nuclear forces, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector, I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *"Meanwhile, the Russian delegation is waiting for talks with Kiev officials on the Ukraine Belarus border, with the Ukrainian delegation agreeing to negotiate quote without preconditions. And residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film what they say are Russian forces entering their city as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republics in the east of the country say that the Ukrainian military there is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a huge blaze.*

Hello. Good evening. You're watching RT International. Now in response to what the Russian President has called aggressive language by NATO member states, Vladimir Putin has put the country's strategic forces, which includes nuclear weapons units, on high alert".

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector, I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT reporter Peter Oliver ("PO") about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**the Oliver Report**"):

AF: *"Let's discuss this further now and head to Berlin speaks to our Europe correspondent Peter Oliver. Peter, good evening. Has there been any Western reaction to this latest statement by Vladimir Putin?"*

PO: *"A lot of attention being paid to this announcement by the Russian President that the strategic defensive forces, that of course including Russia's nuclear weaponry of, some of Russia's nuclear weaponry, would be placed on high alert. Vladimir Putin made the statement alongside Russia's the Defence Minister and his Chief of Staff. It is being viewed as a major escalation here in Europe by Moscow, following on from the sanctions that were put in place on Russia following the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. Now what we have is an immediate response to this news of the high alert status for Russia's nuclear weaponry. That immediate response has come from Washington, D.C., in which they have said that it's based on threats that do not exist, that the USA and NATO do not threaten Russia at all. Now, earlier we had heard from Germany here in Berlin where I'm speaking to you from, and the German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz addressing the Bundestag, in which he said that there would be a real change in German policy, that he confirmed Berlin would be sending weaponry to Ukraine now. He also said that there would be a major increase in defence spending on the German military and that all of this was linked to Russia's actions in Ukraine".*

A clip of Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

OS: *"Let's not kid ourselves. Putin will not change his course overnight, but very soon the Russian leadership will feel the high price it is paying already. In the last week, the Russian stock markets sank by more than 30%. That shows our sanctions are working and we reserve the right to impose further sanctions".*

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"The British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, has also been speaking on Sunday. She has warned about the potential of the military actions taking place in Ukraine spilling over into a conflict in the wider region".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"I'll be looking for more reaction from here in Europe and around the world as that news comes out that the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has put the strategic defence deterrence forces which includes Russia's nuclear weapons on high alert".*

AF: *"Okay, well, thank you for that piece. That was RT's Peter Oliver. Meanwhile, Russia's delegation does say it will stay in Belarus at the moment for ceasefire negotiations despite the deadline for talks expiring. That's after information did come in at the last moment that Ukraine had agreed to attend negotiations with no preconditions. Reporting now from the Belarus capital, here's Konstantin Rozhkov".*

This was followed by an edited version of the report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, as featured in the programme broadcast at 14:00 (**"Rozhkov Report 2"**):

KR: *"As of now, it seems that it's really going to happen. I mean, the Head of the Russian delegation here in Belarus, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that they were actually about to leave, but then all of a sudden, they received a message saying that the Ukrainian side is ready to negotiate and ready to come to Belarus. He also said that the Russian side is now headed to the Belarusian city of Gomel at the Belarus-Ukraine border. It's a three-hour drive from where we now".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, it's hard to tell what exactly caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told that he, even though he wants to have peace talks, he doesn't want to have them in Belarus. He suggested other European capitals like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest as well as Istanbul in Turkey and Baku in Azerbaijan. But now he actually phoned to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and he confirmed that the Ukrainian delegation wants to engage in peace talks in Belarus and that the Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, is on its way to the City of Gomel. Now. Now let's have a listen to what, uh, Mr Zelenskyy told".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from President Zelenskyy and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border near the Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all aeroplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks".

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"The Russian delegation in Belarus includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's Parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as an aide to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Medinsky, he is a former Minister of Culture in Russia, but now he was appointed as the head of this delegations in these peace talks in Belarus. He said, Mr Medinsky, he said that the Russian side did everything to ensure safe passage for the Ukrainians so*

that they could come from Kiev to the city of Gomel, on the border between Belarus, close to the border between Belarus and Ukraine, and understand that right now the Russian delegation is headed from Minsk too towards the city of Gomel and uh, we were told that there is also preparation, security preparations in place to make sure that both sides feel safe and ready to engage in dialogue there. But you know, I got to tell you, it's unclear at this point if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. I mean, we know from what the Russian President said earlier, uh, that the Russian military operation in Ukraine was put to a halt on February 25th when Mr Zelenskyy first told that he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. But then he changed his mind and the operation was resumed. So, this is not something that is going to happen right now.

According to the spokesperson for the Russian President, President Dmitry Peskov, he said that even when these negotiations in Belarus are going to happen, it doesn't mean that the military operation by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine is going to be stopped. But maybe something will change after these talks. You know, we'll see about that".

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about fighting taking place in Kyiv:

AF: *"Okay, well, let's have a look at developments then on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage which they say, those show Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city of Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes there. The local mayor in a video address says that Ukrainian forces, though, have repelled Russian attacks and overnight unverified video did appear here from Kiev, apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital close to the Infrastructure Ministry building.*

And around 25 kilometres from the capital, a reported explosion has caused a large fire at an oil depot. This unverified video two shows the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. Now also in the suburbs of Kiev, Russia's defence ministry says the Ukrainian Army has used ammunition filled with phosphorus as well as rockets internationally banned by the UN".

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"Ukrainian units desperate to stop the Russian Army have begun the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus in the suburbs of Kiev and near the Hostomel airfield. They have used 122-millimetre howitzer shells and rockets for Grad installations from Soviet times. The use of these munitions is prohibited by the Third Protocol of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 (**"Kosarev Report 6"**):

AF: *"Marked in red and blue on this map are the two Donbass Republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has just announced too that the Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics and local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at the fuel depot here in [LPR]. Local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured, although the exact numbers are so far unclear. With more now from the Donbass region, here is Roman Kosarev".*

RK: *"The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me now".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this*

ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *"In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".*

US2: *"The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".*

The programme then returned to the studio and Andrew Farmer introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AF: *"That was that Roman Kosarev there, reporting from eastern Ukraine. Now Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site to tell us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to*

US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point”.

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about China’s response to the sanctions placed on Russia:

AF: *“Meanwhile, China has opposed the sanctions against Russia, saying that they won't resolve the Ukrainian crisis, and has highlighted previous conflicts involving the United States”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Chinese Embassy in Russia’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions across the world from 1945 to 2001, 201 were initiated by the US, accounting for 81% of the total number”.

Andrew Farmer then introduced an excerpt from the interview about China and NATO with Victor Gao, Chair Professor of Soochow University (**“Gao Interview 2”**) that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 05:00:

AF: *“The Chinese Embassy in Russia has posted a list of the armed conflicts the US has been involved in since World War Two. You can see the names of cities and years where the armed conflicts did take place and the overwhelming majority of which the Embassy has added were initiated by one country: the United States. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson suggested to that Washington should ask itself who has been the main aggressor. An international relations expert warns that sanctions against Russia will be destructive too for the West”.*

VG: *“China believes that Ukraine has been very much used by the United States and Western countries, in tempting to recruit Ukraine into NATO, which is very, very aggressive as far as Russia is concerned. Very destabilising of peace and stability in that part of the world. Such sanctions will be very mutually destructive, mainly because Russia is a very, very important country in the world, politically, militarily, in terms of energy, economic relations of all kinds. And Russia is such an important and indispensable energy supplier to so many countries in Europe. So, by taking out Russia from the SWIFT settlement system, for example, as well as making it almost impossible to Russia to deal with other countries in Europe in terms of trade, export, energy, businesses, etc. is very hurtful to Russian interest, of course, on the one hand. But it's very hurtful of the European interest. Who benefits from all this? I think the United States has an agenda to benefit hugely because they want to sell LNG to Europe countries and they do not want to have European countries buy more and more of oil and natural gas from Russia, which is cheaper and which is more sustainable”.*

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who introduced a report about freedom of expression ("**the Belkina Report**"), which included an interview with RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anna Belkina and political analyst Nikola Mirkovic:

AF: *"YouTube has blocked access to RT videos in Ukraine and disabled the monetisation of all RT channels. That's after several European countries took our network's broadcasts off air. Earlier on Saturday, Australian TV service Foxtel said it would no longer distribute RT due to the situation in Ukraine. Earlier, we heard from RT's Deputy Editor-in-Chief".*

The programme then showed a clip of Anna Belkina:

AB: *"RT journalists tirelessly work to bring valuable facts and views to an audience of millions around the world. When an organisation or government either call for or force RT to be taken off the air, it simply highlights the policy of media freedoms in the nations they represent. Just look at the Association of European Journalists who, on the one hand, self-righteously declare themselves as defenders of journalistic rights, yet so regularly turn their back on this very founding principle to support the suppression of news and journalists under political pressure. If ever there were time to recognise the importance of all that gathering news and understanding of all views, it is now".*

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *"Foxtel has sent a letter to RT saying it's ended distribution over, quote, 'concern about the situation in Ukraine'. It said it had the right to do so under the licence agreement with the network. On Thursday, Poland made RT one of five Russian channels to be taken off air and Britain's Culture Secretary asked regulator Ofcom to review RT's licence. Even before the current crisis erupted, RT's German language sister channel, RTDE, was blocked in Germany. A political analyst we spoke to said that banning Russian news outlets sets a dangerous precedent".*

The programme then showed a clip of Nikola Mirkovic:

NM: *"I've done a number of debates on RT and I've discussed many times with people who, with whom I disagree on many opinions with. A lot of people, I mean, it's a, there are a lot of debates on a lot of different subjects. RT has brought people together from different, different political horizons, have brought them to debate, to discuss. Some agree, some disagree. And that is the purpose of journalism, and that is the purpose of the media. Let the people who are watching make their own opinion. RT is not an ideology, it's a place where people can meet, discuss, debate on ideas and that's fundamental. If we take that out of our democracies, there is no more democracy, so it's extremely important. Maybe they may shut down TV stations who have to find something on the internet. If it's the internet is closed down, we have to find something else. It will be tough. These times are extremely tough now. I don't know if they will get better, but we have to continue the fight for free speech. Everybody is entitled to free speech. Aren't our democracies, uh, sort of, based on that? Isn't that*

what we're taught? Isn't that what's written in our constitution? We've got to fight for the right for free speech and that means we have access to all the media and let the people choose what is right and right is wrong".

Andrew Farmer then closed the programme:

AF: *"You're watching RT. We'll be back with more news at the top of the hour".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 16:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Andrew Farmer, who presented the programme's headlines:

AF: *"The headlines this hour. Following a raft of aggressive NATO statements and huge new arms deliveries pledged by bloc members, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrence forces, including nuclear units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Andrew Farmer continued:

AF: *"Also to come. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on their way to the Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate quote without preconditions. And residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film, what they say are Russian forces entering their city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area. And authorities in the newly recognised Donetsk and Lugansk Republic say that the Ukrainian military is conducting relentless shelling of residential areas and has attacked a fuel depot, sparking a massive blaze.*

Hello, good evening. Just gone seven o'clock in Moscow, you're watching RT International. President Putin has reacted to aggressive language from NATO members and big new pledges of weaponry to Ukraine by putting the country's strategic forces, which include nuclear weapons units, on high alert".

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector; I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert for Russia".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced a live report from RT reporter Peter Oliver about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**Oliver Report 2**"):

AF: *"Well, strategic forces do include both nuclear and non-nuclear forces, long range bombers, submarines, ships and jets. The high alert also connects missile attack warning systems and anti-space defenses. So, let's get more on these latest developments now and speak with our Europe correspondent Peter Oliver. Good evening again, Peter. Let's just talk about the reaction we've heard firstly then to President Putin's latest statement".*

PO: *"Well, this has been seen as a major escalation by Moscow to place the strategic deterrence forces, which, as you said, includes nuclear elements, on high alert. It's, it comes as a response to the sanctions that were put in place upon Russia following the invasion of Ukraine. Now we have had reaction immediately from the United States from Washington, D.C. where the response was that these actions were based on threats that do not exist in Washington, saying that neither the US nor NATO pose any threat to Russia. We've also heard from NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who described the decision to place these forces on high alert as dangerous. He also said that the alliance would continue to support Ukraine".*

A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ("JS") was then shown:

JS: *"This is dangerous rhetoric. That's the reason why we both provide support Ukraine, but also why we, over the last weeks and months, have significantly increased the presence of NATO in the eastern part of the alliance".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"Earlier here in Berlin, there was a huge anti-war demonstration took place. Over 100,000 people estimated to have been out on the streets of the German capital. It came as Olaf Scholz, the German chancellor, was speaking in the Bundestag. There, he confirmed an about face when it comes to a major German policy, saying that Germany would now send weapons to Ukraine. He also said that there would be major investment in the German military. We're talking around a €100 billion worth of investment into the German armed forces and he said that all of this was due to Russia's actions in Ukraine".*

A clip of Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

OS: *"With the attack, Putin wanted to wipe an independent country off the world map in Ukraine. He puts himself on the sidelines of the entire international community. We stand by your side on the right side of history".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"France, Italy and Finland, as well as Denmark, have become the latest European countries to close their airspace to Russian commercial air travel. It means pretty much all of European airspace is currently closed to Russian commercial flights".*

AF: *"Okay, thanks for the latest there, Peter. That was RT's Peter Oliver. Now we can get more reaction to and speak with the assistant editor of The Grayzone website. Ben Norton is with us this evening. Good evening to you, Ben. Firstly, let's just talk about this latest development. President Putin has said that his defence deterrence forces, which do include nuclear weapons, will be put on high alert. We should stress it does not mean an intent to use them, but a very worrying escalation".*

This was followed by a live interview about the conflict with journalist Ben Norton ("BN") ("**the Norton Interview**"):

BN: *"Yeah, and we should understand that this is undergirding the entire problem here, which is NATO. You know, the Western corporate media loves to talk about the supposed military threat of Russia, and now they're taking these comments out of context. But we should also keep in mind that NATO has been doing exactly the same, threatening Russia on its borders with missile deployments. I mean, even Estonia, which is right on Russia's borders, has been doing military exercises with NATO for months 100 kilometres from the Russian border. So, I think what all of this underscores, you know, people using the, the nuclear word. I mean, that's a very scary word to ever hear. What it all underscores is that there needs to be diplomacy. But the reality is that the United States and NATO were the ones that sabotaged all attempts at diplomacy. You know, Russia was repeatedly asking for diplomacy, going back to December, asking for security guarantees, and the United States and NATO refused to meet the security guarantees. So, I'm one of many people in the United States, some, one of many Americans who is very critical of the US Government's policy for creating this entire situation in the first place. For leading to this situation of war, which is tragic and horrible for everyone. And I think that, you know, I and many Americans hope that the US Government can now see that they need to actually engage in serious diplomacy to prevent this from escalating further".*

AF: *"What do you make of the White House's reaction then to this latest development? Because they say 'but there's actually no threat from NATO to Russia'".*

BN: *"Well, I mean, that is preposterous. And the US constantly says things like this. They say that NATO is a defensive alliance. I mean, that would be news to the people of Libya whose government was destroyed in 2011 in a NATO war. That would be news to the former people of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia no longer exists as a country because NATO destroyed it. That would be news to the people of Afghanistan who were, who suffered under 20 years of a NATO US Military occupation. So, you know, the US constantly says things like this. It always acts as though it's acting defensively. It always acts as though it's innocent. But the reality is that there are at least two NATO member states right now directly on Russia's borders. And then there are also numerous other NATO member states near Russia's borders that have missiles. Some of them have nuclear weapons and they are threatening Russia, and this is in contravention of agreements that were made by the Western powers back in 1990 at the time of German reunification. We have so many documents from Western government showing that the United States, Britain and France, and then also later the unified German Government all promised that NATO would not expand one inch east after German reunification. And they lied about that. And NATO not only expanded once and not only expanded twice, it expanded 14 times. And every single country that was added to NATO after German reunification was to the east of Germany and many of those countries were former allies of the Soviet Union and Russia and many of those countries are right near Russia's borders. So, the US says that NATO is not threatening Russia, but then it constantly insists that every country on Russia's borders should be part of this military alliance. But it's not a tenable position".*

AF: *"Uh, then we have got hopes of peace talks. Very tentatively, we have a Russian delegation and a Ukrainian delegation expected to meet on the Belarusian-Ukraine border shortly. What are your hopes? What are your expectations? We all hope a peaceful solution, obviously. But what can we expect from this?"*

BN: *"Well, I certainly hope that there can be a diplomatic breakthrough that brings peace because war is bad for everyone. I mean, it's bad for the people of Ukraine, it's bad for Russia, which is now being targeted by all these Western sanctions. No one wants war, but the reality is that the US and NATO have been the ones that refused to give any concessions. They have to give concessions. So what, what I hope to see is that the US finally admits that NATO will not add Ukraine and also Georgia, that NATO will stop its eastward expansion because that is what brought about this war. It is NATO's constant endless goal to surround Russia with military bases, potentially with nuclear weapons. NATO no longer even should exist. Frankly, I'm one of many Americans who thinks that this this alliance should not exist. It should be abolished, and there should be a new security agreement reached because NATO, at this point, is all about maintaining US control over Europe. When we see that countries like Germany and France actually were trying to have what they call strategic independence. The reality is that this conflict has only made that worse, that situation worse. So, what I hope to see is that finally the US agrees to say that it's going to stop expanding NATO. But as we've seen in the past few months, that doesn't look likely".*

AF: *"Well Ben, they would argue that recent events in Ukraine, the conflict that's there now is the perfect reason to increase the size of NATO".*

BN: *"Yeah, and that's why I said that this war is bad for everyone. I mean, it's been some ways, you know, it's going to hurt Russia. And that's why I think diplomacy really needs to be the path forward, because the US is using this as an excuse to continue to expand Russia, excuse me, to continue to expand NATO, to strengthen NATO. But the reality is that NATO, this Cold War alliance, the US says that doesn't want a new Cold War with Russia and also China. But then the US continues to expand NATO around Russia's borders. This is the attitude of the Cold War. This is the strategy of a new Cold War. So, yes, I really hope that we can have serious diplomatic breakthroughs. The US has refused to give any diplomatic concessions. This could be a turning point. The US could finally say, all right, we're not going to continue this new Cold War on Russia. We're going to try to have peace in Europe. Unfortunately, I can't be very optimistic, given the long history of US war and aggression. But the US, there, there are some people in Washington who don't want to see a war with Russia. Maybe this could be an eye-opening moment where they say, 'wow, we bear responsibility for this crisis in Ukraine and we could end it if we're serious about diplomacy'".*

AF: *"Okay, Ben, appreciate your views tonight. That was Ben Norton from The Grayzone website. Thank you for coming on. Okay, well, let's talk more then, about the potential for peace talks, which could happen later today because Russia's delegation does say it will stay in Belarus for ceasefire negotiations despite the deadline, previous deadline for talks expiring. That's after information did come in at the last moment that Ukraine*

had agreed to attend negotiations with no preconditions, and their delegation is now on the way reporting from the Belarus capital. Here's Konstantin Rozhkov".

This was followed by an edited version of the report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, as featured in the programme broadcast at 14:00 (**"Rozhkov Report 2"**):

KR: *"As of now it seems that it's really going to happen. I mean, the Head of the Russian delegation here in Belarus, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that they were actually about to leave, but then all of a sudden, they received a message saying that the Ukrainian side is ready to negotiate and ready to come to Belarus. He also said that the Russian side is now headed to the Belarusian city of Gomel at the Belarus-Ukraine border. It's a three-hour drive from where we are now".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, it's hard to tell what exactly caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told that he, even though he wants to have peace talks, he doesn't want to have them in Belarus. He suggested other European capitals like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest as well as Istanbul in Turkey and Baku in Azerbaijan. But now he actually phoned to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and he confirmed that the Ukrainian delegation wants to engage in peace talks in Belarus and that the Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, is on its way to the City of Gomel. Now. Now let's have a listen to what, uh, Mr Zelenskyy said".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from President Zelenskyy and was accompanied by an English voiceover:

"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border near the Pripjat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all aeroplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks".

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"The Russian delegation in Belarus includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's Parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as an aide to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Vladimir*

Medinsky, he is a former Minister of Culture in Russia, but now he was appointed as the head of this delegations in these peace talks in Belarus. He said, Mr Medinsky, he said that the Russian side did everything to ensure safe passage for the Ukrainians so that they could come from Kiev to the city of Gomel, on the border between Belarus, close to the border between Belarus and Ukraine, and understand that right now the Russian delegation is headed from Minsk too towards the city of Gomel and uh, we were told that there is also preparation, security preparations in place to make sure that both sides feel safe and ready to engage in dialogue there. But you know, I got to tell you, it's unclear at this point if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. I mean, we know from what the Russian President said earlier, uh, that the Russian military operation in Ukraine was put to a halt on February 25th when Mr Zelenskyy first told that he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. But then he changed his mind and the operation was resumed. So, this is not something that is going to happen right now. According to the spokesperson for the Russian President, President Dmitry Peskov, he said that even when these negotiations in Belarus are going to happen, it doesn't mean that the military operation by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine is going to be stopped. But maybe something will change after these talks. You know, we'll see about that".

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about fighting taking place in Kyiv:

AF: *"Okay, well, let's have a look at developments, then, on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage which say, which they say does show Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes there. The local mayor, in a video address, said that Ukrainian forces had repelled Russian attacks and overnight unverified video did appear from Kiev, apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. And then 25 kilometres from the capital a reported explosion did cause a large fire at an oil depot. Uh, we have unverified video showing the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the sky. And there we are, now, also in the suburbs of Kiev, Russia's defence ministry says that the Ukrainian Army has used ammunition filled with phosphorus, as well as rockets. This is footage of an oil depot that was on fire. Ukraine has not yet commented, though, on those allegations and we will bring you their response as soon as we get it".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"Ukrainian units desperate to stop the Russian Army have begun the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus in the suburbs of Kiev and near the Hostomel*

airfield. They have used 122-millimeter howitzer shells and rockets for Grad installations from Soviet times. The use of these munitions is prohibited by the third Protocol of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons”.

The programme then returned to the studio, where Andrew Farmer introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 (“**Kosarev Report 6**”):

AF: *“Now on this map marked in red and blue, it does show the two Donbass Republics according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that began Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. Meanwhile, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk and local authorities in both Republics are claiming that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meanwhile, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot to in the, the [LPR], local authorities say the Ukrainian missile attack caused this blast with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured, although the exact numbers are so far unclear. With more on the situation in the Donbass is Roman Kosarev”.*

RK: *The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night”.*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *“What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God, At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me”.*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *“Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic*

missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According, according to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: "In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".

US2: "The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: "It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".

AF: "That was that Roman Kosarev there, reporting from eastern Ukraine, now Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site to tell us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine".

This was followed by a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at The Grayzone news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

AP: "It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just

approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".

The programme returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who introduced a pre-recorded report about evacuees from RT reporter Maria Finoshina ("MF") ("**the Finoshina Report**"):

AF: *"Now, with the Russian air company stopping flights to its regions close to Ukraine, our correspondent Maria Finoshina has shown how the only way now to get to some of these locations is the long way around".*

MF: *"We arrived to Rostov in Russia's southwest. Usually it's a two hour relaxing flight from Moscow, but instead this time it took us more than 15 hours on a train. All major airports in the area bordering the conflict have been closed since the beginning of the operation. As you can see, security is tight even here, while it's more than 200 kilometres away from the fighting. Also remember, at her meeting with Russian counterpart, British Foreign Secretary said that Britain will never recognise Rostov and Veronese regions as Russian, mistaking them for Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, war- torn areas not far from here. That's here. Thousands of evacuees have escaped here in the last days fleeing the fighting. The border crossing is just a couple of hours drive away, and we are now taking the same trip but opposite direction".*

The programme then returned to Andrew Farmer in the studio, who spoke about anti-war protests in Russia:

AF: *"Now people have taken to some of Russia's biggest cities to protest against the conflict. Here, hundreds took to the streets of central St Petersburg, chanting 'no to war'. Footage does show some protesters being taken into police vans. And there are reports too, that more than 300 people have been arrested in 32 cities across Russia. Similar demonstrations are being held all around the world. You're watching RT. Just coming up to half past seven in the evening".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 17:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Kevin Owen ("KO"), who presented the programme's headlines:

KO: *"Tonight, after a raft of aggressive NATO statements and huge new arms deliveries pledged by bloc members, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrence forces, including nuclear units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as a ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the bloc. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on the way tonight to the Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate quote 'without preconditions'. Residents of Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov film, what they say are Russian forces entering their city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area.*

Good evening, this is RT international live from Moscow. You're watching our World News at Eight this Sunday, the 27th of February. I'm Kevin Owen. Just one story dominating. Tonight, President Putin has reacted to aggressive language from NATO members and big new pledges of weaponry to Ukraine by putting Russia's strategic forces, which include nuclear weapons units, on high alert".

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking on unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector. I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

The programme returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced a live report from RT reporter Peter Oliver about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**Oliver Report 3**"):

KO: *"Russia's strategic forces include both nuclear and non-nuclear units, long range bombers, submarines, ships and jets. The high alert also connects missile warning systems and defences against attacks from space. Let's go straight to our*

guys. So Peter, an extremely serious situation. Bring us the reaction first, please, from Western leaders that announcement tonight that President Putin is putting his strategic forces on high alert".

PO: *"Well, we've heard from Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, as well as the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, and amongst the measures that they said that they would be taking, we've heard that there will be further sanctions against Russia's banking sector, that there will be further individuals that will have their assets targeted within the European Union and we've also heard that RT, as well as Sputnik and all subsidiaries will be blocked from broadcasting within the European bloc".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"We are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We're proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered, and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to land in, take off, or overfly the territory of the European Union, and that includes the private jets of oligarchs too".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"Well, that was Ursula von der Leyen there confirming that airspace will also be closed to all Russian-owned, registered or controlled aircraft as well. Now it followed on from the announcement from Russian President, Vladimir Putin that he would be placing Russia's strategic deterrent forces, which include nuclear elements, on a state of high alert. Now it is being viewed as a major escalation by European countries, as well as those around the world. We heard from Washington, D. C. almost immediately after it was announced, in which they said that this was based on threats that do not exist and that the USA and NATO do not present a threat to Russia. And we also heard from the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, who described the move by Moscow as dangerous but said that NATO would continue to provide support to Ukraine".*

A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was then shown:

JS: *"This is dangerous rhetoric. That's the reason why we both provide support to Ukraine, but also why we, over the last weeks and months, have significantly increased the presence of NATO in the eastern part of the alliance".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"So we see further reactions from Europe as well as around the world as Moscow puts those strategic deterrence forces which, as we must point out, include nuclear forces on alert".*

Kevin Owen then introduced a live report from RT reporter Paula Slier about Western reaction to President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**Slier Report 6**"):

KO: *"Okay, right now, let's go to London. Paula Slier is there. Before Putin's announcement, there was also reaction from where you are, Paula".*

PSI: *"Yes, there certainly was. We have heard from the British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, who has said that she will support Britons who decide to go to Ukraine. Right now, this has raised a number of eyebrows because there's uncertainty as to the legality of*

going abroad to join a foreign war. We also heard from her saying that she will not disclose the number of refugees that Britain will accept. This follows an earlier debate and ferocious criticism at the government's lack of announcing that it will relax the visa requirements for people from Ukraine who want to come and seek refuge here in the UK. It also comes as the UK and 15 other NATO countries back a boost to send arms to Ukraine, and these are countries that have sent or are approving to send significant deliveries of military equipment. Now, with the Western allies' decision to impose sanctions on Russia and to not allow a significant number of banks, access to the SWIFT International Monetary Fund is something that Britain had already signed off on earlier and agreed to do. You now have countries like US, Canada and key European countries, including Germany, saying this and as I mentioned choosing selected Russian banks. But Britain has also admitted that they are prepared to take an economic hit in supporting such a move".

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now the Foreign Secretary has also said that she believes that sanctions will take a long time to be felt. But from her opinion, this war could go on for a long time. She also says she's putting a hit list together, a so-called hit list of Russian oligarchs who are closely associated to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and that they will have, to quote 'nowhere to run'. Their assets will be frozen and other sanctions imposed against them. And in the next few weeks they will, the UK were continuing adding names to that list. So, this comes against the backdrop of a number of marches happening here in various cities across the UK, in London, in Oxford and in Edinburgh. We'll keep you abreast of developments".*

KO: *"Absolutely, Thank you team, appreciated. Let's stay in Europe now for some more reaction. We're gonna go to Lisbon, waiting there for us political analyst Gilbert Doctorow. Hey there. Thanks for being on. First off, this is a very fluid situation, of course, but I suppose we should talk about us first, RT International. Um, your reaction to the news that the proposal is that it's taken off air in Europe".*

This was followed by a live interview with political analyst Gilbert Doctorow ("GD") about the latest developments in Ukraine ("**the Doctorow Interview**"):

GD: *"Well, that's very sad, because this was one of the few channels that Russia had to express its views and provide an alternative. One of many alternatives there needed to the party line that we heard from von der Leyen and we've heard from Washington. Uh, the public then is deprived of thinking matter. But the, I'm more concerned about the placing of the Russian, uh, nuclear and other strategic assets on full alert because*

this takes us to the level of danger that we experienced in 1962 in the midst of the Cuban missile crisis. This is not an unprecedented act for these systems to be activated. But it is a very worrisome development because it puts -"

KO: *"In practice, what does it actually mean?"*

GD: *"It actually means that our leaders or our pretended leaders in Europe and in Washington have collective amnesia. Either that or they never studied history because as the mistakes, every December 7th is celebrated as Pearl Harbor Day, and everyone weeps for the losses and forgets entirely how and why Pearl Harbor came about. It came about from circumstances not so very different from what we're seeing today. In, it was the result of economic boycott and economic pain inflicted on Japan, which became intolerable so that an economic war became a kinetic war. We are at that point today, and I think that it's time that people open their books of history and looked how one becomes the other. Biden said yesterday that he is imposing these economic pains on Russia to avoid World War Three. But as he's proceeding, he is about to cause World War Three, and he should pay attention if he has any advisors who know something about history now. Obviously, Mr Blinken is not one of those advisers. But there are, fortunately in Washington, one or two who know something about the way the world works. And Mr Burns, the Head of the CIA, is one of them. It would be very helpful if he stepped in".*

KO: *"Well, of course, the position is, the White House says Russia is reacting to a threat that doesn't exist. Why does Russia feel so threatened by NATO's expansion over the last few decades?"*

GD: *"I'm sorry, this discussion is for the children's sandbox. You don't understand how the world works or you believe in virtual worlds, which is, unfortunately what most of American elites are engaged in. They don't want to face the world as it is, and the world as it is, NATO is an offensive bloc that has kept together by hatred for Russia. It would lose its raison d'être if it should make any accommodation with Russia and create a new security architecture for Europe. These are sad facts so I can't go into a long explanation. There's no need for it. Either you understand that white is white and black is black or you don't want to face the facts".*

KO: *"There are talks hope to happen tonight on the Belarus border. Russian delegations going there, it's still in Belarus. What hope for any breakthrough? Or is it too early?"*

GD: *"Well, see, I think it's improbable. Mr Zelenskyy himself is reported to have said that he doesn't expect these to succeed and if anyone knows, he should know. But of course, it's preferable they talk than they not talk. However, this under no circumstances should hold up the denazification programme which the Russians have, uh, as their present objective and which is guiding their military actions on Ukrainian territory".*

KO: *"Okay, we'll leave it there for now. Political analyst Gilbert Doctorow. Thank you".*

GD: *"Thank you for having me".*

KO: *"Pleasure. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are travelling as mentioned to the Ukraine Belarus border for talks this evening when, after Kiev's authorities agreed at the last moment to attend negotiations with no preconditions, it's been reported. From Belarus next, Konstantin Rozhkov, our correspondent".*

This was followed by an edited version of the report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, as featured in the programme broadcast at 14:00 (**"Rozhkov Report 2"**):

KR: *"As of now, it seems that it's really going to happen. I mean, the Head of the Russian delegation here in Belarus, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that they were actually about to leave, but then all of a sudden, they received a message saying that the Ukrainian side is ready to negotiate and ready to come to Belarus. He also said that the Russian side is now headed to the Belarusian city of Gomel at the Belarus-Ukraine border. It's a three-hour drive from where we now".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, it's hard to tell what exactly caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told that he, even though he wants to have peace talks, he doesn't want to have them in Belarus. He suggested other European capitals like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest as well as Istanbul in Turkey and Baku in Azerbaijan. But now he actually phoned to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and he confirmed that the Ukrainian delegation wants to engage in peace talks in Belarus and that the Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, is on its way to the City of Gomel. Now. Now let's have a listen to what, uh, Mr Zelenskyy told".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from President Zelenskyy and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border near the Pripyat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all aeroplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks".

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"The Russian delegation in Belarus includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's Parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as an aide to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Medinsky, he is a former Minister of Culture in Russia, but now he was appointed as the head of this delegations in these peace talks in Belarus. He said, Mr Medinsky, he said that the Russian side did everything to ensure safe passage for the Ukrainians so that they could come from Kiev to the city of Gomel, on the border between Belarus, close to the border between Belarus and Ukraine, and understand that right now the Russian delegation is headed from Minsk too towards the city of Gomel and uh, we were told that there is also preparation, security preparations in place to make sure that both sides feel safe and ready to engage in dialogue there. But you know, I got to tell you, it's unclear at this point if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. I mean, we know from what the Russian President said earlier, uh, that the Russian military operation in Ukraine was put to a halt on February 25th when Mr Zelenskyy first told that he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. But then he changed his mind and the operation was resumed. So, this is not something that is going to happen right now.*

According to the spokesperson for the Russian President, President Dmitry Peskov, he said that even when these negotiations in Belarus are going to happen, it doesn't mean that the military operation by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine is going to be stopped. But maybe something will change after these talks. You know, we'll see about that".

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about fighting taking place in Kyiv:

KO: *"Indeed, we will. Other developments to tell you about on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict. With reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army, in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage, which they say shows Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city, Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. And in another eyewitness video in the Lugansk region, civilians can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including a tank, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and footage showing Kiev's forces firing from inside residential areas and using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers that their basements are full of children."*

The following text was displayed on-screen during the broadcast of footage of a female Luhansk resident ("LR"):

LR: [English subtitles] *"Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!"*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes. The local mayor in the video address says Ukrainian*

forces have repelled Russian attacks. And overnight unverified video in appeared from Kiev, apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. Around 25 kilometres from the capital, a reported explosion has caused a large fire at an oil depot. Unverified video shows the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. And also, in the suburbs of Kiev, Russia's defence ministry says the Ukrainian Army has used ammunition filled with phosphorus, as well as rockets internationally banned by the UN. Ukraine has not yet commented on the allegations. We'll bring you their response as soon as we get it".

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"The Ukrainian units, desperate to stop the Russian Army, have begun the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus in the suburbs of Kiev and near the Hostomel airfield. They have used 122-millimeter howitzer shells and rockets for Grad installations from Soviet times. The use of these munitions is prohibited by the third Protocol of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 ("**Kosarev Report 6**"):

KO: *"Well, a map now marked in red and blue. Here are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In other developments, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. And local authorities in both Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Meantime, a huge blaze has erupted at a fuel depot in the [LPR]. Local authorities say a Ukrainian missile attack caused the blast, with at least 200 tonnes of fuel catching fire. Several people have been reported injured there. The exact numbers are so far unclear, RT's Roman Kosarev reports from the Donbass region".*

RK: *The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been*

destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night”.

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *“What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God, at least I'm alive. God is looking out for me”.*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *“Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According, according to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well”.*

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: *“In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well”.*

US2: *“The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up”.*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *“It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield”.*

The programme then returned to the studio and Kevin Owen introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region (**"the Parampil Interview"**):

KO: *"Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site spoke to us earlier and told us that Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine at the moment".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who introduced a pre-recorded report about evacuees from RT reporter Maria Finoshina (**"the Finoshina Report"**):

KO: *"With Russian Air companies stopping flights to its regions close to Ukraine due to safety fears, our correspondent Maria Finoshina next shows how the only way to get to some of them now is the long way around, by train".*

MF: *"We arrived to Rostov in Russia's southwest. Usually it's a two hour relaxing flight from Moscow, but instead this time it took us more than 15 hours on a train. All major airports in the area bordering the conflict have been closed since the beginning of the operation. As you can see, security is tight even here, while it's more than 200 kilometres away from the fighting. Also remember, at her meeting with Russian counterpart, British Foreign Secretary said that Britain will never recognise Rostov and Veronese regions as Russian, mistaking them for Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, war- torn areas not far from here. That's here. Thousands of evacuees have escaped here in the last days fleeing the fighting. The border crossing is just a couple of hours drive away, and we are now taking the same trip but opposite direction".*

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about anti-war protests in Russia:

KO: *“People have taken to some of Russia's biggest cities to protest against the military operation. Hundreds take to the streets of central St Petersburg, chanting ‘no to war’. Footage shows some protesters being taken to police vans then. There are also reports that more than 300 people have been arrested in 32 cities across Russia. Similar demonstrations are being held all around the world. And that is the latest from Moscow so far this weekend. Thank you for watching this world news with me, Kevin Owen. RT.com has the latest for you 24/7. For now, from me and the team on duty here. Good evening”.*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 18:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Kevin Owen, who presented the programme's headlines:

KO: *"Tonight following a raft of aggressive NATO statements and huge new arms deliveries pledged by bloc members, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrent forces, including nuclear units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as a ban on RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the bloc. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on the way to the Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate, quote, 'without preconditions'. Residents of Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov film, what they say are Russian forces entering their city, as sporadic fighting is reported in the area.*

Good evening, this is RT International, live from Moscow. You're watching our World News at nine this Sunday, the 27th of February, my name is Kevin Owen. Just one very major story dominating, of course. Tonight, President Putin has reacted to aggressive language from NATO members and big new pledges of weaponry to Ukraine by putting Russia's strategic forces, which include nuclear weapons units, on high alert".

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector; I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

The programme returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who introduced a live report from RT reporter Caleb Maupin ("CM") about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**The Maupin Report**"):

KO: *"Russia's strategic forces include both nuclear and non-nuclear units, long range bombers, submarines, ships and jets. The high alert also connects missile warning systems and defenses against attacks from space. Live now to Caleb Maupin in New York and Peter Oliver in Berlin. Good evening, Caleb, first you. How is the White House reacting to tonight's developments?"*

CM: *"Sure. Well, we have quite a reaction from NATO, in response to Putin putting the deterrence forces of Russia onto high alert, this is what the NATO Chief had to say, in reaction to this announcement from Russia".*

A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was then shown:

JS: *"This is dangerous rhetoric. That's the reason why we both provide support Ukraine, but also why we, over the last weeks and months, have significantly increased the presence of NATO in the eastern part of the alliance".*

Caleb Maupin continued with his report:

CM: *"Now, the NATO Chief also said that NATO and the alliance has always supported a political solution to the problems in Ukraine, which is interesting as the Minsk agreement has not been implemented over the course of the last seven years. In the meantime, we understand that at this point NATO is delivering anti-tank and anti- aircraft systems of ammunition to Ukraine. In addition to that, NATO supports Ukraine's goal, it says, but it will require all the consensus of members before taking action. In the meantime, the United States has come forward and says that it's not threatening Russia. That's what the United States has said. White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, has gone as far as to say that Putin is putting the strategic deterrence forces on high alert based on, what she called, a manufactured threat. Now, the United States and Norway, among other countries, are calling for an emergency UN Security Council meeting that will be happening, that will be happening here in Manhattan at the UN Headquarters, just a few blocks from where I am now.*

We'll be covering that meeting and reporting on what happens when that meeting takes place. But it's interesting that the United States and the White House are claiming this is a made-up threat, because it's worth going over what NATO has announced it is sending to Ukraine. Germany is sending 1000 anti-tank weapons, 500 stringer missiles and 14 armed vehicles. The Netherlands is sending 50 anti-tank weapons, 400 missiles and 200 stringer missiles. Belgium is sending 2000 automatic rifles and 20,800 tonnes of fuel. We have Portugal sending 175 troopers and we have the United States promising \$600 million in military assistance. But apparently, according to the White House, all of those weapons and assistance that's being sent, that's all just a made-up threat. Russia is simply overreacting, and they've always wanted a political solution, even though the Minsk agreement hasn't been implemented in seven years. So, quite interesting words we're hearing from NATO countries, specifically here, from here in Washington".

KO: *"Caleb, when that Security Council meeting happens, we'll come back to you, keep across it. But let's go to our Europe correspondent now, Peter, what's the latest on Europe's sanctions? We heard what's been proposed coming in from Caleb just now, tell us more".*

This was followed by a live report from RT reporter Peter Oliver about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**Oliver Report 4**"):

PO: *"Well, Russia's decision to, or Vladimir Putin's decision to, place Russia's strategic deterrent forces, which includes nuclear elements on high alert and that was viewed as a major escalation in Europe, as it was expected to be viewed. We heard from Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, who said a taboo has gone and the European Union will now provide weapons into a conflict zone, that the EU will provide weapons to Ukraine and it isn't going to be the whole of the EU member states doing this. Hungary has said that they won't be providing weapons, however, countries that have never done this previously, have said that they will, including Sweden, have said that they will be providing arms to Ukraine right now. We also heard from EU leaders like Josep Borrell, EU Commission High, EU, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, saying that RT, Sputnik and all subsidiaries would be banned from broadcasting within the European Union".*

A clip of Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was then shown:

JB: *"Today, we are taking a crucial step, to turn off the tap for the Russians information manipulation, in Europe, by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union".*

Peter Oliver continued with his report:

PO: *"Well, we're also seeing the closure of EU airspace to all Russian owned, Russian registered or Russian controlled aircraft, as was announced by Ursula von der Leyen".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"We are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We're proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to land in, takeoff, or overfly the territory of the European Union, and that includes the private jets of oligarchs, too".*

Peter Oliver continued with his report:

PO: *"The European Union, continuing to take more sanctions against Russia, in retaliation for Russia's actions in Ukraine".*

KO: *"Alright, guys, come back to us later, for now, for now, Peter Oliver and Caleb Maupin, appreciated. Over in the UK, the government's not only been one of the toughest in terms of fresh sanctions on Russia and sending weapons to Ukraine, its Foreign Secretary has also even appeared to back Britons who go to fight for Kiev. Covering that, Paula Slier".*

This was followed by a report from RT reporter Paula Slier about Western reaction to President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 17:00 ("**Slier Report 6**"):

PSL: *"We have heard from the British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, who has said that she will support Britons who decide to go to Ukraine. Right now, this has raised a number of*

eyebrows because there's uncertainty as to the legality of going abroad to join a foreign war. We also heard from her saying that she will not disclose the number of refugees that Britain will accept. This follows an earlier debate and ferocious criticism at the government's lack of announcing that it will relax the visa requirements for people from Ukraine who want to come and seek refuge here in the UK. It also comes as the UK and 15 other NATO countries back a boost to send arms to Ukraine, and these are countries that have sent or are approving to send significant deliveries of military equipment. Now, with the Western allies' decision to impose sanctions on Russia and to not allow a significant number of banks, access to the SWIFT International Monetary Fund is something that Britain had already signed off on earlier and agreed to do. You now have countries like US, Canada and key European countries, including Germany, saying this and as I mentioned choosing selected Russian banks. But Britain has also admitted that they are prepared to take an economic hit in supporting such a move".

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now the Foreign Secretary has also said that she believes that sanctions will take a long time to be felt. But from her opinion, this war could go on for a long time. She also says she's putting a hit list together, a so-called hit list of Russian oligarchs who are closely associated to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and that they will have, to quote 'nowhere to run'. Their assets will be frozen and other sanctions imposed against them. And in the next few weeks they will, the UK were continuing adding names to that list. So, this comes against the backdrop of a number of marches happening here in various cities across the UK, in London, in Oxford and in Edinburgh. We'll keep you abreast of developments".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced a live interview with political science academic John Laughland ("JL") about the latest developments in Ukraine ("**the Laughland Interview**"):

KO: *"Yeah, more thoughts now, let's go live to John Laughland, lecturer in political science and history at SS, the Catholic institutes of the Vendée in western France. Hi there, often a guest on this programme, nice to see you tonight on this very difficult evening. Seeing Ursula von der Leyen and the European Commission President announcing that the EU, I'm just reading it, the quote, 'will ban Russian media outlets', that's RT and Sputnik, accusing us of spreading harmful disinformation. We try our best to put a balance across, you know, we're licensed by Ofcom in the UK and Europe. They've deemed us to be okay to licence. We're of course going to put the Russian point of view, what's wrong with that?"*

JL: *"Well, what's wrong with it is that it's totalitarian. You don't suppress media outlets, that's a basic principle. If the EU is going to suppress RT and Sputnik, that means European Union citizens will no longer be able to watch those channels. No one forces them to watch them, it is a measure that she has announced, which drastically reduces the liberties of EU citizens. I'm sure it doesn't make it the slightest bit of difference to Russia, but it does make a difference to people who want to watch RT and Sputnik.*

And I mean, we've got used to totalitarianism for two years now with all the Covid madness, but this is, this is, this is in the same category. In any case, what, what laws is she claiming to be operating under? The EU doesn't have that authority, any more than it has the authority, by the way, as far as I know, to close airspace, as you mentioned in your report. So-"

KO: *"We'll come to that in a minute. I mean, I suppose you can still watch us at RT.com, on the live section. You can watch the television feed, we'll be broadcasting to most of the rest of the world, but yeah. I mean, how soon do you think this is going to come in? It was expected".*

JL: *"Well, maybe it was, but I, I am, above all, I mean independently of the issue between Russia and NATO and Ukraine, I think anyone watching this, any European citizen watching this, should be deeply preoccupied by the assault on his own rights, his or her own rights. You mentioned, just now, in your report from London, about the seizure of assets belonging to Russian oligarchs in London. Well, what happened to due process? What happened to property rights? Are we really saying, that from one day to the next, somebody's property can be taken away, just because they are deemed to be politically close to Russia? This is literally dictatorship. I don't want to sound hysterical, but somebody has to, pull the alarm bell on this and say that these kinds of measures, undermine the very thing, which the British Government and other European governments claim to be standing for, namely the rule of law and democracy".*

KO: *"It's a horrific situation from everyone concerned in Ukraine, on all sides. The West, though, is talking about wanting peace to try and find diplomatic way forwards, at the same time, we're hearing a raft of new money and new arms coming in there. Is it going to calm things down or make it worse?"*

JL: *"Well, there's no sign at all, as you know, of any meaningful political dialogue, because on the contrary, as you've just said, the British and others, the European Union has promised to send more arms. It was interesting, by the way, that the Americans a day, a day ago, I think, yesterday said they were prepared to take Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian President, out of the country. That perhaps was in order to prevent him from meeting the Russians, as he is now going to do or at least his representatives are going to do, very soon".*

KO: *"Yeah, I mean, something is, there is a meeting penned, hopefully for later on this evening on the Belarus border. Do you think it's too soon for anything sensible to be broken here?"*

JL: *"No, I, I wouldn't say that. I, my strong hope is that they will, that it will lead to some kind of, uh, progress. I mean, you know, as you, as you know, and I'm sure your viewers know, Zelenskyy said, I think 24, 36 hours ago that he was prepared to meet even to discuss, even to discuss neutrality. If that were to prove true, then the war could be over, I'm sure, in a very short period. I don't know how he would manage to sell that when he gets back to Kiev, but he said it and now he seems to be going, or at least sending representatives. So that's a good sign. So I, but I don't want to predict anything".*

KO: *"The White House, the White House says tonight that Russia is reacting to a threat that doesn't exist".*

JL: *"Well, that's ridiculous. NATO is the most powerful military alliance in the history of humanity. Its expenditure dwarfs that of Russia. Its power dwarfs that of Russia. How can anyone say, after these decades of NATO's wars in Yugoslavia, in Libya, that it's not a threat to anyone, particularly when the British Foreign Secretary, Britain is one of the most important NATO powers, seems to imply that Moldova is part of NATO. Moldova is not part of NATO. She also says, we have to fight for Ukraine because otherwise we will be threatened. Well, NATO does not have to fight for Ukraine. NATO has to fight for its member states. It doesn't fight for other countries. It fights for its member states. So, everyone is losing their heads at the moment and therefore it's entirely understandable that Russia should be raising the stakes in this way. Because on the-".*

KO: *"Four days, four days of this hellish situation, final 30 seconds, what do you think is the next step?"*

JL: *"Well, as I say, I very much hope that there will be a meeting, whatever it is this evening or tomorrow, very soon, and that it will lead to some kind of de-escalation. But right now, I think it would be very foolish person who would predict anything, because I'm afraid we've entered very, very uncharted waters at the moment, where everything is, each piece of news is surprising us".*

KO: *"Political science lecturer John Laughland, thank you".*

JL: *"Thank you, Kevin".*

This was followed by an edited version of the report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, as featured in the programme broadcast at 14:00 (**"Rozhkov Report 2"**):

KR: *"As of now, it seems that it's really going to happen. I mean, the Head of the Russian delegation here in Belarus, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that they were actually about to leave, but then all of a sudden, they received a message saying that the Ukrainian side is ready to negotiate and ready to come to Belarus. He also said that the Russian side is now headed to the Belarusian city of Gomel at the Belarus-Ukraine border. It's a three-hour drive from where we now".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well, it's hard to tell what exactly caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told that he, even though he wants to have peace talks, he doesn't want to have them in Belarus. He suggested other European capitals like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest as well as Istanbul in Turkey and Baku in Azerbaijan. But now he actually phoned to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and he confirmed that the Ukrainian delegation wants to engage in peace talks in Belarus and that the Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, is on its way to the City of Gomel. Now. Now let's have a listen to what, uh, Mr Zelenskyy told".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from President Zelenskyy and was accompanied by an English voiceover:

"We agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet with the Russian delegation without preconditions on the Ukraine-Belarus border near the Pripjat River. Alexander Lukashenko has taken responsibility for ensuring that all aeroplanes, helicopters and missiles stationed on Belarusian territory remain grounded during the Ukrainian delegation's travel and talks".

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"The Russian delegation in Belarus includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's Parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as an aide to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Medinsky, he is a former Minister of Culture in Russia, but now he was appointed as the head of this delegations in these peace talks in Belarus. He said, Mr Medinsky, he said that the Russian side did everything to ensure safe passage for the Ukrainians so that they could come from Kiev to the city of Gomel, on the border between Belarus, close to the border between Belarus and Ukraine, and understand that right now the Russian delegation is headed from Minsk too towards the city of Gomel and uh, we were told that there is also preparation, security preparations in place to make sure that both sides feel safe and ready to engage in dialogue there. But you know, I got to tell you, it's unclear at this point if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. I mean, we know from what the Russian President said earlier, uh, that the Russian military operation in Ukraine was put to a halt on February 25th when Mr Zelenskyy first told that he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. But then he changed his mind and the*

operation was resumed. So, this is not something that is going to happen right now. According to the spokesperson for the Russian President, President Dmitry Peskov, he said that even when these negotiations in Belarus are going to happen, it doesn't mean that the military operation by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine is going to be stopped. But maybe something will change after these talks. You know, we'll see about that".

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about fighting taking place in Kyiv:

KO: *"Yeah, we brief, you know, if, if you will, on more the developments on the ground in Ukraine, today, on day four of this conflict. There's reports for advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army, in various parts of the country. Eyewitnesses have filmed this footage, which they say shows Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added, that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Meantime, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes. The local mayor, in a video address, says, Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attacks. And, overnight, unverified video came in, appearing from Kiev, apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital, close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. Around 25 kilometres from the capital, a reported explosion has caused a large fire at an oil depot, this unverified video shows the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. And then this, also in the suburbs of Kiev, Russia's defence ministry says, the Ukrainian Army has used ammunition filled with phosphorus, as well as rockets internationally banned by the UN. Ukraine has not commented on the allegations, we'll bring you their response as soon as we get it".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"Ukrainian units desperate to stop the Russian Army, have begun the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus in the suburbs of Kiev and near the Hostomel airfield. They have used 122-millimetre howitzer shells and rockets for Grad installations from Soviet times. The use of these munitions is prohibited by the Third Protocol of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons".*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"Let's bring up the map up next, masked in, marked in red and blue here, are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line. While Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In other developments, Ukrainian military units are now said to be retreating from the borders of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics. And local authorities in both Republics, claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks. Eyewitness video next, from Lugansk region, civilians there can be seen trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including an armoured personnel*

carrier, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and footage showing Kiev's forces firing from inside residential areas, as using civilian shields. In the video, a woman can be heard warning Ukraine soldiers that their basements are full of children".

The following text was displayed on-screen during the broadcast of footage:

LR: [English subtitles] *"Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!"*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 ("**Kosarev Report 6**"):

KO: *"And, staying in the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, next, RT's Roman Kosarev in the Donbass region, with the latest from there".*

RK: *The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence*

ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".

Clips of two unnamed soldiers were then shown, with an English voiceover:

US1: "In my personal opinion, we must get our territories back from these evil people, so there will be peace and everyone will sleep well".

US2: "The enemy is behaving in different ways. In most places they run, but sometimes they fight to the very end. But that's mainly those fighting for political reasons. Basically, everyone is running away and giving up".

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: "It's been a relatively quiet here in Donetsk this Sunday, as the fighting is moving further away from, from the city. Some of the most fierce fighting is taking place in the south of the republic near the city of Mariupol, which is currently encircled by the neo- Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been linked to war crimes by the United Nations. And reportedly they have placed their positions around civilians, using them as a human shield".

The programme then returned to the studio and Kevin Owen introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

KO: "Now, Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site told us earlier Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine now".

AP: "It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for

a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about anti-war protests in Russia:

KO: *"People have taken to some of Russia's biggest cities to protest against the military operation. Hundreds taken to the streets of central St Petersburg, chanting, no to war. Footage shows some protesters being taken to police vans. There are also reports that more than 300 people have been arrested in 32 cities across Russia. Similar demonstrations are being held across the world. And that is the latest from Moscow so far this weekend. Thank you for watching this World News edition with me, Kevin Owen. RT.com has the latest, 24/7, as this fluid situation as develops. For now, from me and the team here, good evening".*

RT News, RT, 27 February 2022, 19:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Kevin Owen, who presented the programme's headlines:

KO: *"Tonight following a raft of aggressive NATO statements and huge new arms deliveries pledged by bloc members, President Putin puts Russia's strategic deterrent forces, including nuclear units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"The EU announces the closure of its airspace to Russian flights as well as a ban on this channel RT, Sputnik and subsidiary companies from broadcasting in the bloc. Russian and Ukrainian delegations are on the way tonight to the Ukraine-Belarus border after Kiev agreed to negotiate, quote, 'without preconditions'. And as Russian troops continue to advance in the Donbass, Ukrainian forces are accused of escalating indiscriminate shelling of the area".*

A clip of two soldiers ("US3" and "US4") and a Mykolaivka resident ("MR") was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

US3: [English subtitles] *"How are you? Are you hurt?"*

MR: [English subtitles] *"No, no."*

US4: [English subtitles] *"Where did the missile fall?"*

MR: [English subtitles] *"They are shooting there..."*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *"Good evening, this is RT International, live from Moscow. You're watching our World News at ten this Sunday, the 27th of February, my name is Kevin Owen. Just one very major story dominating. Tonight, President Putin has reacted to aggressive language from NATO members and new big pledges of weaponry to Ukraine by putting Russia's strategic forces, which include nuclear weapons units, on high alert".*

A clip of President Putin was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VP: *"As you can see, Western countries are not only taking unfriendly actions towards our nation in the economic sector; I'm referring to the illegitimate sanctions that everyone is aware of. However, top officials of NATO member states are also using aggressive language towards our country. That's why I'm ordering the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff to put the Russian Army deterrent forces on special alert".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced an excerpt from the report from RT reporter Caleb Maupin about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 18:00 ("**Maupin Report 2**"):

KO: *"Russia's strategic forces include both nuclear and non-nuclear units, long range bombers, submarines, ships and jets. The high alert also connects missile warning systems and defences against attacks potentially from space. The West has already reacted to Russia's move and discussed it earlier with RT's Caleb Maupin".*

CM: *"NATO, in response to Putin putting the deterrence forces of Russia onto high alert, this is what the NATO Chief had to say, in reaction, to this announcement from Russia".*

A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was then shown:

JS: *"This is dangerous rhetoric. That's the reason why we both provide support Ukraine, but also why we, over the last weeks and months, have significantly increased the presence of NATO in the eastern part of the alliance".*

Caleb Maupin continued with his report:

CM: *"The NATO Chief also said that NATO and the alliance has always supported a political solution to the problems in Ukraine, which is interesting as the Minsk agreement has not been implemented over the course of the last seven years. In the meantime, we understand that at this point NATO is delivering anti-tank and anti-aircraft systems of ammunition to Ukraine. In addition to that, NATO supports Ukraine's goal, it says, but it will require all the consensus of members before taking action. In the meantime, the United States has come forward and says that it's not threatening Russia. That's what the United States has said. White House Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, has gone as far as to say that Putin is putting the strategic deterrence forces on high alert based on, what she called, a manufactured threat. Now, the United States and Norway, among other countries, are calling for an emergency UN Security Council meeting that will be happening, that will be happening here in Manhattan at the UN Headquarters, just a few blocks from where I am now. We'll be covering that meeting and reporting on what happens when that meeting takes place. But, it's interesting that the United States and the White House are claiming this is a made up threat, because it's worth going over what NATO has announced it is sending to Ukraine. Germany is sending 1000 anti-tank weapons, 500 stringer missiles and 14 armed vehicles. The Netherlands is sending 50 anti-tank weapons, 400 missiles and 200 stringer missiles. Belgium is sending 2000 automatic rifles and 20,800 tonnes of fuel. We have Portugal sending 175 troopers and we have the United States promising \$600 million in military assistance".*

The programme returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced a report from RT reporter Peter Oliver about President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert ("**Oliver Report 5**"):

KO: *"Peter, what's the latest on Europe's sanctions? We heard what's been proposed coming in from Caleb just now, tell us more".*

PO: *“Decision to place Russia's strategic deterrent forces, which includes nuclear elements on high alert and that was viewed as a major escalation in Europe, as it was expected to be viewed. We heard from Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, who said a taboo has gone and the European Union will now provide weapons into a conflict zone, that the EU will provide weapons to Ukraine and it isn't going to be the whole of the EU member states doing this. Hungary has said that they won't be providing weapons, however, countries that have never done this previously, have said that they will, including Sweden, have said that they will be providing arms to Ukraine right now. We also heard from EU leaders like Josep Borrell, EU Commission High, EU, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, saying that RT, Sputnik and all subsidiaries would be banned from broadcasting within the European Union”.*

A clip of Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was then shown:

JB: *“Today, we are taking a crucial step, to turn off the tap for the Russian's information manipulation, in Europe, by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union”.*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *“Well, we're also seeing the closure of EU airspace to all Russian-owned, Russian-registered or Russian-controlled aircraft, as was announced by Ursula von der Leyen”.*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“We are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We're proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian-registered and Russian-controlled aircraft. This aircraft will no more be able to land in, take off, or overfly the territory of the European Union, and that includes the private jets of oligarchs too”.*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *“The European Union, continuing to take more sanctions against Russia, in retaliation for Russia's actions in Ukraine”.*

Kevin Owen then introduced a report from RT reporter Paula Slier about Western reaction to President Putin's order to put Russian forces on high alert, as featured live in the programme broadcast at 17:00 (**“Slier Report 6”**):

KO: *“Over in the UK, the government's not only been one of the toughest in terms of fresh sanctions on Russia and sending weapons to Ukraine, its Foreign Secretary has also even appeared to back Britons who go to fight in Kiev for Kiev. RT's Paula Slier has the latest on that”.*

PSI: *“We have heard from the British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, who has said that she will support Britons who decide to go to Ukraine. Right now, this has raised a number of eyebrows because there's uncertainty as to the legality of going abroad to join a*

foreign war. We also heard from her saying that she will not disclose the number of refugees that Britain will accept. This follows an earlier debate and ferocious criticism at the government's lack of announcing that it will relax the visa requirements for people from Ukraine who want to come and seek refuge here in the UK. It also comes as the UK and 15 other NATO countries back a boost to send arms to Ukraine, and these are countries that have sent or are approving to send significant deliveries of military equipment. Now, with the Western allies' decision to impose sanctions on Russia and to not allow a significant number of banks, access to the SWIFT International Monetary Fund is something that Britain had already signed off on earlier and agreed to do. You now have countries like US, Canada and key European countries, including Germany, saying this and as I mentioned choosing selected Russian banks. But Britain has also admitted that they are prepared to take an economic hit in supporting such a move".

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Liz Truss, British Foreign Secretary, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"This long-running conflict is about freedom and democracy in Europe, because if we do not stop Putin in Ukraine, we are going to see others under threat. The Baltics, Poland, Moldova. It could end up in a conflict with NATO".

Paula Slier continued with her report:

PSI: *"Now the Foreign Secretary has also said that she believes that sanctions will take a long time to be felt. But from her opinion, this war could go on for a long time. She also says she's putting a hit list together, a so-called hit list of Russian oligarchs who are closely associated to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and that they will have, to quote 'nowhere to run'. Their assets will be frozen and other sanctions imposed against them. And in the next few weeks they will, the UK were continuing adding names to that list. So, this comes against the backdrop of a number of marches happening here in various cities across the UK, in London, in Oxford and in Edinburgh. We'll keep you abreast of developments".*

Kevin Owen then introduced an excerpt from the interview with political science academic John Laughland about the latest developments in Ukraine that had taken place in the programme broadcast at 18:00 ("**Laughland Interview 2**"):

KO: *"Political science lecturer, John Laughland, told me that Europe's ban of RT, now raises disturbing issues and questions NATO sabre rattling in countries outside the military bloc".*

JL: *"NATO is the most powerful military alliance in the history of humanity. Its expenditure dwarfs that of Russia. Its power dwarfs that of Russia. How can anyone say, after these decades of NATO's wars in Yugoslavia, in Libya, that it's not a threat to anyone, particularly when the British Foreign Secretary, Britain is one of the most important NATO powers, seems to imply that Moldova is part of NATO. Moldova is not part of NATO. She also says, we have to fight for Ukraine because otherwise we will be*

threatened. Well, NATO does not have to fight for Ukraine. NATO has to fight for its member states. It doesn't fight for other countries. It fights for its member states. So, everyone is losing their heads at the moment and therefore it's entirely understandable that Russia should be raising the stakes in this way."

KO: *"Seeing Ursula von Der Leyen and the European Commission President announcing that the EU, I'm just reading it, the quote, 'will ban Russian media outlets', that's RT and Sputnik, accusing us of spreading harmful disinformation. We try our best to put a balance across, you know, we're licensed by Ofcom in the UK and Europe. They've deemed us to be okay to licence. We're of course going to put the Russian point of view, what's wrong with that?"*

JL: *"Well, what's wrong with it is that it's totalitarian. You don't suppress media outlets, that's a basic principle. If the EU is going to suppress RT and Sputnik, that means European Union citizens will no longer be able to watch those channels. No one forces them to watch them, it is a measure that she has announced, which drastically reduces the liberties of EU citizens. I'm sure it doesn't make it the slightest bit of difference to Russia, but it does make a difference to people who want to watch RT and Sputnik. And I mean, we've got used to totalitarianism for two years now with all the Covid madness, but this is, this is, this is in the same category. In any case, what, what laws is she claiming to be operating under? The EU doesn't have that authority, any more than it has the authority, by the way, as far as I know, to close airspace, as you mentioned in your report. Above all, I mean independently of the issue between Russia and NATO and Ukraine, I think anyone watching this, any European citizen watching this, should be deeply preoccupied by the assault on his own rights, his or her own rights. You mentioned, just now, in your report from London, about the seizure of assets belonging to Russian oligarchs in London. Well, what happened to due process? What happened to property rights? Are we really saying, that from one day to the next, somebody's property can be taken away, just because they are deemed to be politically close to Russia? This is literally dictatorship. I don't want to sound hysterical, but somebody has to, pull the alarm bell on this and say that these kinds of measures, undermine the very thing, which the British Government and other European governments claim to be standing for, namely the rule of law and democracy".*

The programme returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced a live report from RT reporter Konstantin Rozhkov about potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine ("**Rozhkov Report 3**"):

KO: *"Another big development Tonight, Russia and Ukrainian delegations are travelling to the Ukraine-Belarus border for talks, after Kiev's authorities agreed at the last moment, to attend negotiations with no preconditions. Across this for us, in the Belarus town of Gomel, is our correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov. Hey there, if and when these talks happen imminently, an awful lot riding on them tonight yeah?"*

KR: *"Yeah, well, hello, Kevin. There's been a lot of back and forth, but it's safe to say now, the peace talks are happening. The Russian delegation is now in the Gomel region in Belarus, where the negotiations are expected to take place, and this is also where we now, the exact location is kept in secret for security reasons, but we understand that*

it's going to happen right on the border between Ukraine and Belarus, near the Pripjat river, perhaps at one of the border crossings. The media are not invited, obviously, but we expect a public statement from the Russian negotiators as soon as the meeting is over. Russia's chief negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky, said earlier that the two parties are now deciding on logistics and security arrangements, and also there's been a lot of reports in the Russian media, citing their sources within the Russian delegations, that the Ukrainian side asked to change the location for peace talk last minute. So, there's a lot going on right now and it looks like these peace talks are not going to start any time soon. But let's have a listen to what Mr Medinsky said earlier”.

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kyiv, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *“We have received information from the Ukrainian side that it agrees to negotiate. Talks will take place in the Gomel region as we proposed earlier. Now we are creating a path for the Ukrainian side to pass through safely. We are waiting here for the Ukrainian delegation”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“Well chances were initially low that these talks would happen. The Russian delegation came to Minsk earlier on Sunday, only to hear that Kiev has no desire to send its delegation to Belarus on the grounds that Minsk allegedly took active part in Russia's military operation in Ukraine. This is something that the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, vehemently denied. Then the Russians said, alright, we're going to wait until 3pm Moscow time and then we leave and as they were about to depart from Moscow, the Ukrainian President phoned his Belarusian counterpart and said he is ready to send his people and have negotiations. However, he said later on, that he doesn't have high hopes for the outcome of these talks”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from President Zelenskyy and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“To be honest, I do not believe in the outcome of this meeting, but let them try, so that not a single citizen of Ukraine has any doubts that I, as President, did not try to stop the war, when there was at least a small chance, but a chance nonetheless”.

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“It's hard to tell exactly what has caused this U-turn from the Ukrainian side. Earlier, the Ukrainian President suggested other European capitals for peace talks, like Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest, as well as Istanbul in Turkey and the capital of another former Soviet Republic, Azerbaijan, Baku. But, as the deadline set by the Russian side approached, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, all of a sudden changed his mind and confirmed the Ukrainian delegation, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister, is on its way towards the Belarus border. The Russian delegation in Belarus, includes a Deputy Foreign Minister, Deputy Minister of Defence, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia's parliament, Russia's envoy in Belarus, as well as Russian presidential aide Vladimir*

Medinsky, he is the Head of the of the Russian delegation. Now, it is unclear if President Zelenskyy is really seeking negotiations, or, perhaps he just wants to buy some time for his own military. We know from what the Russian President said earlier, that the Russian offensive was halted on February 25th, when Zelenskyy first mentioned he wants to talk and discuss a neutral status for Ukraine. Then, he changed his mind and the operation was resumed. It's also really hard to tell if the two sides can find common ground here. I mean, what Kiev and Moscow said publicly in the past couple of days, indicates that their positions are far apart. The Ukrainian side wants ceasefire, a ceasefire, while the Russian side insists that the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist militia units must lay down their arms and surrender”.

KO: *“For now, Konstantin Rozhkov live from Belarus, thank you. Let me brief you now on developments on the ground in Ukraine on day four of this conflict, with reports of advances by Russian troops and Donbass forces against the Ukrainian Army in various parts of the country, marked in red, let’s bring up the map and blue here, are the two Donbass Republics, according to the borders recently recognised by Russia. The Russian defence ministry has announced that Lugansk militia forces have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 52 kilometres beyond the previous front line. While Donetsk forces have advanced by 12 kilometres. In this video from the Lugansk region, is said to show civilians trying to force Ukrainian Army troops, including an armoured personnel carrier, away from homes and residential buildings. It comes amid multiple reports and other images, showing Kiev's forces firing from inside residential areas, where it's claimed they're using civilians as human shields. In the video, a woman is heard warning Ukrainian soldiers, that there are children in their basements”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen during the broadcast of footage:

LR: [English subtitles] *“Get out of here! Our basements are full of children!”*

Kevin Owen continued:

KO: *“Despite the Russian Army's advance, the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics claim that several towns were targeted in missile attacks, including in Mykolaivka where Russian military forces rescued this elderly woman”.*

A clip of two soldiers and a Mykolaivka resident was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

US3: [English subtitles] *“How are you? Are you hurt?”*

MR: [English subtitles] *“No, no.”*

US4: [English subtitles] *“Where did the missile fall?”*

MR: [English subtitles] *“They are shooting there...”*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Kevin Owen introduced an excerpt from the report from RT correspondent Roman Kosarev in Donetsk that had featured live in the programme broadcast at 10:00 (**"Kosarev Report 6"**):

KO: *"And, staying in the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, RT's Roman Kosarev is in the Donbass region with more".*

RK: *"The Ukrainian Army are retreating but they are destroying everything on their way, on this retreat. According to local officials, the Ukrainian Army are targeting civilian infrastructure and people's homes, and they're using so-called scorched earth policy against the civilians and not the military. Now, they added that Ukrainian military, the ones who are still fighting, are placing their positions near civilians' homes and schools and kindergartens and virtually turning civilians into human shields. Once again, that's according to local officials. And, of course, we can hear artillery strikes here in Donetsk where I am right now. Um, on Saturday a massive, massive artillery attack was heard throughout the city. Um, they were 152-millimetre howitzer shells that landed about five kilometres away from where I'm standing right now. And one civilian was reportedly killed during those attacks. Uh, the city of Donetsk suspended public transportation while the attack was lasting and, uh, many houses have been destroyed, apartment buildings. And here is one witness account from Saturday night".*

A pre-recorded clip of a male Donetsk resident was then played, with an English voiceover:

DR2: *"What can you do? You just can't do anything about it. Thank God. At least I'm alive. God is looking out for me".*

Roman Kosarev continued his report:

RK: *"Now the total number of civilians who were killed during the Ukrainian Army's attacks now stands at eight people. This only over the last 72 hours and scores of people have been injured as well. Like I said before, civilian infrastructure had been targeted here in Donetsk, as thousands and thousands of people now have no access to water or electricity. Now, over in [LPR], an oil depot, a fuel depot was struck by a ballistic missile, creating a huge fire. Apparently, the missile is called Tochka-U or it's a NATO classification SS-21 Scarab, and it is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That wasn't the case, um, in this instance, however, it weighs 2000 kilogrammes and a very, very frightful weapon. Uh, now people's militia reported that there had been no fatalities there in Lugansk. However, some people were wounded as a result of this ballistic missile attack. According to local officials and according to the Russian defence ministry, [DPM] and [LPM] are moving deeper and deeper into the territory formerly controlled by Ukraine, and both Republics report that they have liberated several settlements in Lugansk and in Donetsk as well. They're also reporting that some Ukrainian soldiers are actually surrendering and switching sides as they have been promised a safe passage back home and an amnesty from this war. Now the Head of the [DPR] Denis Pushilin said that this operation will last for a few more days. But he said it will not stop until the rest of [DPR] is liberated and that's statement is echoed by the soldiers on the ground as well".*

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The programme then returned to the studio and Kevin Owen introduced a pre-recorded interview with Anya Parampil, a journalist at *The Grayzone* news website, about the Donbas region ("**the Parampil Interview**"):

KO: *"Anya Parampil of The Grayzone independent news site told us earlier, in her view, Washington's influence is a major factor in the situation in Ukraine now".*

AP: *"It's been going on for eight years. Ukraine's sovereignty was initially violated in 2014, when the United States supported openly a coup in Kiev, installed a puppet government and then sparked off conflict in the country's east. The suffering of the people of Donbass, who have experienced shelling and artillery fire at the hands of the Ukrainian military over the past eight years, leading to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people, their story has been completely erased in US media. I think if you pulled the average American individual, US American individual, they wouldn't have even known that there was a war in Ukraine for these past eight years. President Biden just approved \$350 million in weapons to be released to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian Government. I wonder where those weapons will go, considering Russia has all but wiped out Ukraine's main military capacity. It's disturbing because just in recent weeks in the United States, reports surfaced in media showing that, and this is according to US officials, the United States has been covertly training Ukrainian forces in order to respond to a potential Russian entry into their country, creating the kind of pretext for a situation as we saw in Syria, where the US isn't officially working with the government or the military, but training paramilitary groups in order to destabilise Ukraine and embroil Russia in a prolonged conflict. I think that is the worst-case scenario we could see play out at this point".*

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about fighting taking place in Kyiv:

KO: *"More to show you, eyewitnesses have filmed this footage which they say shows Russian forces entering Ukraine's second city Kharkov, something also claimed by its mayor. He added that Russian troops are already in the city centre. Meanwhile, fighting is being reported in the suburbs of Kiev. Some buildings have caught fire amid the clashes. The local mayor there, in a video address, says Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attacks. Overnight unverified video came in, appearing from Kiev, apparently showing crossfire just kilometres from the heart of the capital, close to the Infrastructure Ministry building. Around 25 kilometres from the capital, a reported explosion has caused a large fire, at an oil depot, this unverified video shows the blaze with plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky. And also, in the suburbs of Kiev, Russia's defence ministry says, the Ukrainian Army has used ammunition filled with phosphorus, as well as rockets internationally banned by the UN. Ukraine has not commented on the allegations, we will bring you their response, if we get it".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov, Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

IK: *"Ukrainian units desperate to stop the Russian Army, have begun the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus in the suburbs of Kiev and near the Hostomel airfield. They have used 122-millimetre howitzer shells and rockets for Grad installations from Soviet times. The use of these munitions is prohibited by the Third Protocol of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons".*

The programme then returned to Kevin Owen in the studio, who spoke about anti-war protests in Russia:

KO: *"Some have taken to some of Russia's biggest cities to protest against the military operation. Hundreds on the streets of central St Petersburg, chanting, 'no to war'. Footage shows some protesters being taken to police vans. There are also reports that more than 300 people have been arrested in 32 cities across Russia. Similar demonstrations are being held around the world. One of the biggest is in the German capital, where more than 100,000 are taking part in the Ukraine solidarity march, according to the police. Some flew Ukrainian flags and wore masks in the country's blue and yellow colours. And that is the latest from Moscow so far this weekend. Thank you for watching this World News edition with me, Kevin Owen. RT.com has more as well for you, 24/7, in this serious and a fluid situation, as it develops. For now, from me and the team, good evening".*

Annex: Programme summaries

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RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 05:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Nikki Aaron ("NA"), who presented the programme's headlines:

- NA: *"The headlines this hour. Moscow says the US has violated its agreement as host of the United Nations by declaring 12 Russian UN diplomats persona non grata. Positions voiced with a plan to meet again. The Russian and Ukrainian delegations conclude their first round of negotiations in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border. The EU pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia. Towns in the Donetsk Republic are caught between front lines, and residents lose their homes as battles rage on. An RT correspondent talked with some of the residents".*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident ("Civilian 1") was then played, with an English voiceover:

- Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Nikki Aaron continued:

- NA: *"It's eight am on Tuesday, the first of March, and we're coming to you live from Moscow. Well, Moscow says the US has misused its privilege as host of the United Nations by expelling 12 Russian UN diplomats on the allegation that they're a threat to national security. Russia says the US should expect a reciprocal response".*

A clip of Vasily Nebenzya, Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was then shown:

- VN: *"Again, another, another demonstration of gross disrespect of the Host Country Agreement to the, to their commitments, as I said, within, within the framework of their, of their obligations under, both under the UN Charter, the Host Country Agreement and Vienna Conventions obviously".*

This was followed by a live report from Caleb Maupin in New York about the expulsion of Russian UN diplomats from the United States (**the Maupin Report**):

- CB: *"Now that's a big announcement, and it raises questions about the UN Treaty and the United States' obligation to enable member states to maintain their staff. Even countries the USA has no diplomatic relations with, countries like North Korea, countries like Venezuela at this point, have the right to maintain a UN mission as a UN member state. But it appears 12 UN staffers, 12 staffers of Russia's UN mission are being asked to leave the country. Now, that came during the press conference that we heard from Russian Ambassador Nebenzya. He's the permanent representative of Russia to the United Nations and he took questions from reporters and he made a lot of very important points. How can you say that there are Nazis in Ukraine when the*

Ukrainian President is Jewish? To which the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power”.

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *“He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, et cetera. This is what we heard from the UN Representative when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall”.*

A clip of Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian United Nations Ambassador, was then shown:

SK: *“Deadly air strikes dropped on civilian’s heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn't it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now it's also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked*

about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall”.

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *“First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there's been yet more confirmation by the country's leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now, the UN General Assembly includes all member states. It's not simply the members represented on the Security Council, and it's worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic. Nicaragua has recognised the People's Republics in Donbass. There's also been recognition from Venezuela, from Cuba, from Iran, and other forces around the world have granted recognition. Belarus has recognised the People's Republic, so it is not simply Russia that is standing alone here. Russia has allies around the world who recognise these Republics. Now, at this point, when looking over that meeting of the UN General Assembly, it was very clear there were stark differences. The allies of the United States hurled allegations at Russia, a lot of them very unfounded, based on internet rumours, based on debunked claims that have been circulating around Western media. But Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years. And it appears that, while there was a lot of podium pounding from the United States and its allies, this meeting of the General Assembly did not really accomplish anything. This was a lot of smoke and mirrors and theatrics by allies of the United States in their efforts to demonise Russia and obscure the real roots of the conflict”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a live report from RT correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov (“KR”) on peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus (**the Rozhkov Report**):

NA: *“Well, the first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine has ended in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border, with both sides saying they presented their positions. The peace talks were conducted amid an EU decision to supply lethal weaponry to Kiev. Let's go live now to our correspondents, Peter Oliver in Berlin and Konstantin Rozhkov in Minsk. First to you, Rozhkov if we can. What do we know about the results of these peace talks and, and what's expected to happen now?”*

KR: *“Yes, well, at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that they took place and that the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It's not much, but it's something that creates room for cautious optimism. There's going to be a second round and maybe it*

will bare more results. But for now, it's a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus”.

A clip of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see, Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“Members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of this meeting. The head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Now, let's listen to what the Russian delegation said about these talks”.*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *“Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and, most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas and cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons into Ukraine has reached alarming rates, EU and NATO countries sending thousands of anti-tank, anti-air systems, as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it's expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Poland is especially enthusiastic about this idea and could also provide its airfields. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in a spike of street violence and looting and situations where people just shoot each other. That's according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. So, Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a live report from RT correspondent Peter Oliver (“PO”) on EU support for Ukraine (**the Oliver Report**):

NA: *"Okay, Konstantin, thank you very much for that update. Let's cross live to our EU correspondent, our Europe correspondent now, Peter Oliver in Berlin. Peter, could you tell us more about the EU support for Ukraine?"*

PO: *"The European Union is stepping up the supply of lethal aid to Ukraine following Russia's invasion of the country. The High Representative of Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, has called on all member states to provide Ukraine with what it needs".*

A clip of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell was then shown:

JB: *"In this situation, our support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions, they need healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together by, with the member states".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"On Monday, Germany sent their first shipment of weapons. This marks a major policy shift from Berlin. It was prompted by Russia sending their troops into Ukraine, as I say, a huge shift in policy from the German government that they would send weapons into an ongoing conflict. They follow on with a number of other NATO countries and sending weapons and military aid into Ukraine. We're also seeing Denmark sending some 2700 anti-tank weapons into Ukraine. Nominally neutral Sweden as well sending 5000 anti-tank weapons, as well as over 100,000 field rations, thousands of helmets and other pieces of body armour to Ukraine as well. Now, Russia has been incredibly critical of these EU member states' decisions to send these supplies to Ukraine".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population".

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"The European Union has also expanded the list of people on their sanctions list, a list of Russians on their sanctions list, to include the CEOs of energy companies, airlines, as well as government ministers and the presidential spokesman".*

Nikki Aaron then gave a live update on the status of the conflict in Ukraine in general ("**The Aaron update**"):

NA: *"OK, Peter, thank you so much for that update. Well, there has been fierce fighting in Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkov. A large explosion has been reported in the area, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing*

battles. And next we'll show you another video from Ukraine's second city, but a warning you may find it disturbing. Missiles are hitting residential areas, but Russia says it's completely avoiding such zones and claims that Ukraine is putting forces in residential buildings and using civilians as human shields. This is something that Kiev though strongly denies. Alleged artillery shelling near a shopping center has been reported in the northern part of the city, claimed to have come from a nearby residential building. This map shows what's happening further east. The red dots highlight the cities where the Russian Army is currently fighting with the Ukrainian Army and nationalist formations. The Russian Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 62 kilometers beyond the front, previous front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced some 37 kilometers. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Now, in the capital Kiev, these are unverified images showing air defence systems actively operating. Kiev authorities said the city was surrounded, but then backed down from that claim and now says groups of Russian saboteurs are trying to bring chaos to the streets, although that's denied by Russia's military".

A clip of Igor Konashenkov, Russian Defence Ministry Spokesperson, was then shown with an English voiceover:

IK: *"Kiev is flooded with armed gangs of looters, robbers and radical nationalists. They were given guns in an unlawful decision by the authorities to hand out lethal weapons to anyone without checking. I'm addressing all residents of Kiev. Everyone can leave the capital freely by a designated road. This road is open and safe. I want to emphasise once again, the Russian Army is attacking only military targets. The civilian population is not under threat".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**the Gazdiev Report**"):

NA: *"Residents are trying to survive in the war-torn Donbass, as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Locals are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".*

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the*

Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued his report:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme then returned to Nikki Aaron in the studio who reported on coverage of the conflict in the Western media:

NA: *"Well, mainstream media coverage of the situation has shifted to the angle that Ukraine is not Iraq or Afghanistan, because this conflict is now in Europe".*

A series of clips of coverage by reporters from BMFTV, CBS News, the BBC and ITV then followed:

BFMTV : *"I am not talking about Syrians who are fleeing the Assad regime, supported by Vladimir Putin. I am talking about Europeans".*

CBS News: *"This isn't a place with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan".*

BBC: *"European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed, children being killed every day".*

ITV: *"This is not a developing third world nation. This is Europe".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced pre-recorded interviews with Daniel Lazare (DL), political analyst and journalist, and Albrecht Muller (AM), German economist and former politician ("**the Lazare/Muller Interview**"):

NA: *"We heard from political analyst and journalist Daniel Lazare, who says Russia is now facing the same allegations that the US has faced in its conflicts in recent decades".*

DL: *"The implication is that it's okay in a far off third world countries, that we're free to bomb them as much as we want, because they don't have blue eyes and blond hair. I mean, it's appalling. The American journalists enjoyed the show. They thought it was great fun, thought it was a wonderful display of US firepower. Now it's, now it's not so much fun because the fire power is being directed at a US ally. I don't support this invasion. Let me make that perfectly clear. But nonetheless, the US and NATO set the scene. You know, so, shock and awe is a lot of fun as long as you're not the one being*

shocked and awed. But when you're on the receiving end, it's terrible. This is really Western hypocrisy”.

NA: *“We also got comments from a veteran German politician who says media outlets are choosing sides and even exacerbating the tensions amid the conflict. He believes there should be a return to objective journalism ethics”.*

AM: *“The Suddeutsche Zeitung came out last weekend with a front-page article about the Putin enigma. There are three pages inside with pure aggression, even on the children's page. Putin is pictured there, and it says: Does he want war? And underneath it says: For weeks Putin has been sending tanks and soldiers to the border with Ukraine. The world is worried. That's what they're putting our children through there. You can see what all this agitation looks like. It's no longer controllable. Journalists obviously are controlling themselves anymore. That's something I couldn't imagine. I lived through the Cold War in the fifties. I lived through and participated in the detente policy, and we would have fallen over in a corner in the sixties if there had been such an awful media as the one there is today. Back then, Suddeutsche Zeitung helped make the detente policy. They knew how important it was for Germany to have peace, and they supported such things. Today they are stirring things up”.*

Nikki Aaron then closed the programme:

NA: *“Well, those are the latest headlines. We'll be back at the top of the hour”.*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 06:00

RT News presenter Nikki Aaron ("NA") opened the programme:

NA: *"The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day".*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident ("Civilian 1") was then played, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Nikki Aaron then provided an update a range of news items ("**Aaron Update 2**"):

NA *"Positions are voiced with a plan to meet again. Russian and Ukrainian delegation to conclude their first round of negotiations in Belarus near the Ukrainian border. The EU pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia. The US expels a dozen Russian UN Diplomats as threats to its national security, but Moscow says that's a violation of its agreement to host the UN. It's nine AM on Tuesday, the first of March, and we're coming to you live from Moscow. Fighting continues across Ukraine as the Russian military operation enters its sixth day. Moscow says its goal is to demilitarise Ukraine. Videos posted on social media shows cars destroyed in Kiev on the almost empty streets of the capital amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians. The Russian military is calling for residents to leave Kiev via a designated route heading southwest. A large explosion has been reported in Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. Russia says it isn't targeting civilian areas and has accused Ukraine of positioning forces in residential buildings. Kiev has adamantly denied that. This map shows what's happening further east, the red dots highlight the cities where the Russian Army is currently fighting with the Ukrainian Army and nationalist formations. The Russian Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia have retaken territory from the Ukrainian Army, 62 kilometers beyond the previous front line, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced some 37 kilometers. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict, RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".*

This was followed by a report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**Gazdiev Report**"):

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued his report:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued his report:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme returned to the studio with a live update from Nikki Aaron in which she discussed a range of news topics, including the conflict in the Ukraine in general and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia ("**Aaron Update 3**"):

NA: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. The first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine has ended in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border, with both sides saying they presented their positions. The peace talks were conducted amid an EU decision to supply lethal weaponry to Kiev. Let's go live now to our correspondents now Peter Oliver in Berlin and Konstantin Rozhkov in Minsk. Let's go to Konstantin first. What do we know about the results of these peace talks and can we have any hope here Konstantin?"*

This was followed by a live report from Konstantin Rozhkov ("KR") ("**Roshkov Report 2**"):

KR: *"Yes, well, at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that they took place and that the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It's not much, but it's something that*

creates room for cautious optimism. There's going to be a second round and maybe it will bare more results. But for now, it's a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus”.

A clip of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see, Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“The US state department said that it would discuss the first round of talks with Ukrainians. The members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of this meeting, the head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Let's listen to what the Russian delegation said about these talks”.*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *“Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and, most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *“As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas and cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons into Ukraine has reached alarming rates, EU and NATO countries sending thousands of anti-tank anti-air systems as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it's expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Poland is especially enthusiastic about this idea could also provide its airfields for Ukrainian pilots. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in a spike of street violence, and looting, and situations where people just shoot each other. That's according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. Kiev of course puts the blame for this on Russia for this but nonetheless Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless”.*

Nikki Aaron introduced a live report from RT correspondent Peter Oliver (“PO”) on EU support for Ukraine (“**the Oliver Report 2**”):

NA: *“Many thanks for the update. That’s Konstantin Rozhkov there. Let’s go to Europe now and to our correspondent Peter Oliver in Berlin. Peter Could you give us an update about the EU support for Ukraine?”*

PO: *“The European Union has stepped up the supplies of lethal aid following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU, Josep Borrell, has said that all member states need to pull together to give Ukraine what they need”.*

A clip of Josep Borrell was then shown:

JB: *“In this situation, our support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions, they need healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together by, with the member states”.*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *“On Monday, Germany sent its first delivery of weapons to Ukraine. This marks a major policy shift from Berlin. The first time they are sending weapons to a conflict zone. Germany had said previously that they weren’t going to send weapons into the Ukrainian conflict, weren’t going to send weapons to Ukraine. The advancement of Russian troops into Ukraine, that changed everything on that front. Those weapons now coming from Germany into the country. Denmark have followed suit as well sending some 2700 anti-tank weapons into Ukraine, Sweden as well, a neutral country of course Sweden, they are getting on board, sending weapons to Ukraine as well, sending 5000 anti-tank weapons also over 100,000 field supplies in order for troops to be able to have food as well as helmets and body armour being sent there from Sweden as well. What we’ve heard from Russia though is they are far from happy from these deliveries arriving from the European side”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population”.

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"The European Union has also expanded the sanctions list, targeting the Russian cabinet members as well as the CEOs of energy companies, airlines and the Kremlin's spokesperson"*

A clip of Vasily Nebenzya, Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was then shown:

VN: *"Again another demonstration of gross disrespect of the Host Country Agreement to the to their commitments, as I said, within the framework of their of their obligations both under the UN Charter, the Host Country Agreement and Vienna Conventions obviously".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Caleb Maupin ("CB") in New York (**"the Maupin Report"**):

CB: *"Now that's a big announcement, and it raises questions about the UN Treaty and the United States' obligation to enable member states to maintain their staff. Even countries the USA has no diplomatic relations with, countries like North Korea, countries like Venezuela at this point, have the right to maintain a UN mission as a UN member state. But it appears 12 UN staffers, 12 staffers of Russia's UN mission are being asked to leave the country. Now, that came during the press conference that we heard from Russian Ambassador Nebenzya. He's the permanent representative of Russia to the United Nations and he took questions from reporters and he made a lot of very important points. How can you say that there are Nazis in Ukraine when the Ukrainian President is Jewish? To which the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power".*

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *"He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the*

representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, et cetera. This is what we heard from the UN Representative when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall”.

A clip of Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian United Nations Ambassador, was then shown:

SK: *“Deadly air strikes dropped on civilian’s heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine’s borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn’t it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now it’s also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall”.*

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *“First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there’s been yet more confirmation by the country’s leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now, the UN General Assembly includes all member states. It’s not simply the members represented on the Security Council, and it’s worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic. Nicaragua has recognised the People’s Republics in Donbass. There’s also been recognition from Venezuela, from Cuba, from Iran, and other forces around the world have granted recognition. Belarus has recognised the People’s Republic, so it is not simply Russia that is standing alone here. Russia has allies around the world who recognise these Republics. Now, at this point, when looking over that meeting of the UN General Assembly, it was very clear there were stark differences. The allies of the United States hurled allegations at Russia, a lot of*

them very unfounded, based on internet rumours, based on debunked claims that have been circulating around Western media. But Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years. And it appears that, while there was a lot of podium pounding from the United States and its allies, this meeting of the General Assembly did not really accomplish anything. This was a lot of smoke and mirrors and theatrics by allies of the United States in their efforts to demonise Russia and obscure the real roots of the conflict”.

The programme then returned to Nikki Aaron in the Studio who reported on coverage of the conflict in the Western media:

NA: *“Well, mainstream media coverage of the situation has shifted to the angle that Ukraine is not Iraq or Afghanistan, because this conflict is now in Europe”.*

A series of clips of coverage by reporters from BMFTV, CBS News, the BBC and ITV then followed:

BFMTV: *“I am not talking about Syrians who are fleeing the Assad regime, supported by Vladimir Putin. I am talking about Europeans”.*

CBS News: *“This isn't a place with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan”.*

BBC: *“European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed, children being killed every day”.*

ITV: *“This is not a developing third world nation. This is Europe”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced pre-recorded interviews with Daniel Lazare (“DL”), political analyst and journalist, and Albrecht Muller (“AM”), German economist and former politician (**“the Lazare/Muller Interview”**):

NA: *“We heard from political analyst and journalist Daniel Lazare, who says Russia is now facing the same allegations that the US has faced in its conflicts in recent decades”.*

DL: *“The implication is that it's okay in a far off third world countries, that we're free to bomb them as much as we want, because they don't have blue eyes and blond hair. I mean, it's appalling. The American journalists enjoyed the show. They thought it was great fun, thought it was a wonderful display of US firepower. Now it's, now it's not so much fun because the fire power is being directed at a US ally. I don't support this invasion. Let me make that perfectly clear. But nonetheless, the US and NATO set the scene. You know, so, shock and awe is a lot of fun as long as you're not the one being shocked and awed. But when you're on the receiving end, it's terrible. This is really Western hypocrisy”.*

NA: *“We also got comments from a veteran German politician who says media outlets are choosing sides and even exacerbating the tensions amid the conflict. He believes there should be a return to objective journalism ethics”.*

AM: *“The Suddeutsche Zeitung came out last weekend with a front-page article about the Putin enigma. There are three pages inside with pure aggression, even on the children's page. Putin is pictured there, and it says: Does he want war? And underneath it says: For weeks Putin has been sending tanks and soldiers to the border with Ukraine. The world is worried. That's what they're putting our children through there. You can see what all this agitation looks like. It's no longer controllable. Journalists obviously are controlling themselves anymore. That's something I couldn't imagine. I lived through the Cold War in the fifties. I lived through and participated in the detente policy, and we would have fallen over in a corner in the sixties if there had been such an awful media as the one there is today. Back then, Suddeutsche Zeitung helped make the detente policy. They knew how important it was for Germany to have peace, and they supported such things. Today they are stirring things up”.*

Nikki Aaron then closed the programme:

NA: *“We're back with the latest in half an hour”.*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 07:00

RT News presenter Nikki Aaron ("NA") opened the programme:

NA: *"The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Nikki Aaron then provided an update on a range of news items ("**Aaron Update 4**"):

NA: *"Positions are voiced with a plan to meet again. Russian and Ukrainian delegation to conclude their first round of negotiations in Belarus near the Ukrainian border. The EU pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia. The US expels a dozen Russian UN Diplomats as threats to its national security, but Moscow says that's a violation of its agreement to host the UN. It's 10 am on Tuesday, the first of March, and we're coming to you live from Moscow. Fighting continues across Ukraine as the Russian military operation enters its sixth day. Moscow says its goal is to demilitarise Ukraine. Videos posted on social media shows cars destroyed in Kiev on the almost empty streets of the capital amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians. The Russian military is calling for residents to leave Kiev via a designated route heading southwest. A large explosion has been reported in Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. And next we'll show you another video from Kharkov, but a warning you may find it disturbing. Missiles are hitting residential areas. But Russia has denied responsibility, saying it wouldn't target civilians, and instead claims that Ukraine is positioning forces in apartment buildings to use civilians as human shields. An accusation that Kiev has strongly denied. After artillery shelling near a shopping center has been reported in a northern part of the city, claimed to have come from a nearby residential building. Well, this map shows what's been happening. The red dots highlighting these cities where Russian forces are currently fighting against the Ukrainian Army. Russia's Defence Ministry says the Lugansk militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometers beyond Monday's frontline. While Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced 16 kilometers. People from various parts of Ukraine are fleeing the ongoing conflict. Almost 400,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Poland. These images show Ukrainians at a railway station in the western city of Love, hoping to get a train across the border. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around*

5000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with 30 Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on, local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. RT Correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".

This was followed by a report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**Gazdiev Report**"):

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] “Yes”.

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *“In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already”.*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

Civilian 4: *“They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up”.*

Civilian 5: *“Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now”.*

Civilian 6: *“My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell”.*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *“On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov (“KR”) (**Rozhkov Report 2**):

NA: *“The first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine has ended in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border, with both sides saying they presented their positions. RT's Konstantin Rozhkov reports”.*

KR: *“well, at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that these talks took place and that the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It's not much, but it's something that creates room for cautious optimism. There's going to be a second round and maybe it will bare more results. But for now, it's a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus”.*

A clip of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see, Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *“The US state department said that it would discuss the first round of talks with Ukrainians. The members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of this meeting, the head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Let's listen to what the Russian delegation said about these talks”.*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *“Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and, most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *“As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas and cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons into Ukraine has reached alarming rates, EU and NATO countries sending thousands of anti-tank anti-air systems as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it's expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Poland is especially enthusiastic about this idea could also provide its airfields for Ukrainian pilots. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in a spike of street violence, and looting, and situations where people just shoot each other. That's according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. Kiev of course puts the blame for this on Russia for this but nonetheless Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced re-broadcast of a report from RT correspondent Peter Oliver (“PO”) (**“Oliver Report 3”**):

NA: *“EU member states are sending weapons to Ukraine as well as ammunition and medical supplies as the EU has added another 26 people to its sanctions list imposed against Russia over the conflict, with more on that his correspondent Peter Oliver”.*

PO: *“The European Union has stepped up the deliveries of lethal aid following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the European Union, Josep Borrell, says that all member states need to step up and provide Ukraine with what they need”.*

A clip of Josep Borrell was then shown:

JB: *“In this situation, our support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions, they need healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together by, with the member states”.*

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *“Germany provided its first delivery of weapons on Monday. That marked a major policy shift from Berlin. They previously said that they wouldn’t be sending weapons into the conflict. The arrival of Russian troops in Ukraine, well that changed everything as far as Berlin was concerned. Denmark has also sent deliveries as well. 2700 anti-tank weapons have been sent from Copenhagen. Sweden, as well have been sending weapons, neutral Sweden it’s worth pointing out, 5000 anti-tank weapons coming from them, as well as field rations, helmets and body armour. Russia has been extremely critical of the actions of Europe when it comes to these deliveries”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population”.

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *“The European Union has also expanded its sanctions list against a number of Russian figures. These include CEOs of energy companies and airlines as well as government officials, including the Kremlin’s spokesperson”.*

The programme returned to Nikki Aaron in the studio, who introduced a re-broadcast of report recorded at an earlier point in the day from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov (“IZ”) on Western sanctions on Russia (**“the Zhdanov report”**):

NA: *“Well sanctions have taken a heavy toll on Russia's economy, causing the national ruble currency to plummet and stirring panic throughout the country, with Russians queuing up at cash machines to withdraw their savings. People are worried that the new Western sanctions will trigger cash shortages and disrupt payments as some Russian banks are to be cut off from the swift global payment system and central bank assets to be frozen. The EU has also banned Russian flights into its territory, exacerbating concerns about Russia becoming isolated. Moscow's central bank has stepped in to stop the flight of foreign capital abroad. More on that from RT's Igor Zhdanov”.*

IZ: *“First and foremost Vladimir Putin signed a document, according to which Russian companies and Russian nationals are no longer allowed to send their dollars and store them, deposit them in foreign accounts. So basically, all foreign currency like dollars, for example, they have that has to stay inside country and within the Russian economy. On top of that, Russian tax residents like companies that will receive some of their income in dollars. They will have to sell 80% of that income and exchange it for rubles. This is done, of course, to support the Russian national currency, which it was again, it was falling quite heavily. It surpassed the 100 rubles per dollar mark, so it was worth less than a cent. In fact, one Russian ruble was worth less than a cent. But following these measures, following the announcement of these measures, it kind of backtracked and recovered at least a little bit. And now it is, well, it's, the official rate, basically is not, it is not reaching just below just under 100 rubles per dollar. On top of that, the Bank of Russia has hiked massively the key rate, so now it's 20% and that's more than double compared to what it was just yesterday. So that is done, of course, also to support the national currency. Now, of course, some Russian, some big Russian, you know, businessmen. They have criticised this because of course, with this, with the key rate so high, money is so expensive. Borrowing money is so expensive for the companies. But well, the Russian government says it has to be done. But again, unfortunately for the Russian economy, the West is saying, this could be that there's more where that came from so they might impose more sanctions and they have this intention”.*

This was followed by a report from Nikki Aaron on the repercussions of sanctions on EU markets, which featured pre-recorded interviews with former Austrian diplomat Karin Kneissl (“KK”) and economist Eike Hamer (“EH”) (**“the Kneissl/Hamer Interview”**):

NA: *“Europe's largest operator of energy networks has rejected demands to shut down the Nord Stream One gas pipeline as part of sanctions against Russia over the conflict in Ukraine. Local media have reported that the operator, Germany E.ON, has refused to decommission the pipeline, as Poland has demanded. But the newly built Nord Stream Two certification process remains frozen. E.ON reportedly says that stopping the pipeline would have serious economic consequences as it has accounted for 37% of the*

total natural gas imported into Germany by Russia since 2011. Meanwhile, the sanctions against Russia have caused a dip in other European markets, with financial institutions bearing the brunt of it. The pan European and the UK stock industries have fallen by more than 1% with French and German stocks giving up about 3% reduction. Meanwhile, crude oil prices have increased about 5%. Major investment firm Goldman Sachs expects overall price inflation in Europe to reach 5% this year. We heard from former Austrian top diplomat Karin Kneissl and economist Eike Hamer, who have expressed concerns about the sanctions repercussions on EU markets”.

KK: *“The prices went up because the markets are always a bit fragile and vulnerable in particular when it comes to such strategic commodities like oil and gas, and so the price hikes are there. This heats up inflation. This cuts down purchase power of people. If no natural gas is transported to the existing Nord Stream first and second tube, well, this will have an impact. Even so, some voices claim the heating season is nearly over. We are close to spring, but let us recall that this gas is not only for heating, it's really also for production of electricity”.*

EH: *“If you take all these sanctions who they set into place, it means that Germany is paying a higher price for its gas and its oil and everything, and Russia can sell the gas and the oil wherever they want in the world. In China and India, everybody takes it so it doesn't hurt Russia primarily. It hurts primarily Germany, and this is what we see all the time already. The only thing is that the Americans wanted to prohibit the Europeans to look eastwards towards Russia. They don't want the Europeans to work together with Russia because it would make them independent on raw materials from outside”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Caleb Maupin (“CB”) in New York (**“the Maupin Report”**):

NA: *““The US has expelled 12 Russian UN diplomats saying they're a threat to national security. But Moscow says that's a violation of the U. S agreement to host the UN and is threatening a reciprocal response”.*

A clip of Vasily Nebenzya, Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was then shown:

VN: *“Again another demonstration of gross disrespect of the Host Country Agreement to the to their commitments, as I said, within the framework of their of their obligations both under the UN Charter, the Host Country Agreement and Vienna Conventions obviously”.*

This was followed by the Maupin Report:

CB: *“Now that's a big announcement, and it raises questions about the UN Treaty and the United States' obligation to enable member states to maintain their staff. Even countries the USA has no diplomatic relations with, countries like North Korea, countries like Venezuela at this point, have the right to maintain a UN mission as a UN member state. But it appears 12 UN staffers, 12 staffers of Russia's UN mission are being asked to leave the country. Now, that came during the press conference that we*

heard from Russian Ambassador Nebenzya. He's the permanent representative of Russia to the United Nations and he took questions from reporters and he made a lot of very important points. How can you say that there are Nazis in Ukraine when the Ukrainian President is Jewish? To which the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power".

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *"He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, et cetera. This is what we heard from the UN Representative when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall".*

A clip of Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukrainian United Nations Ambassador, was then shown:

SK: *"Deadly air strikes dropped on civilian's heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn't it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"Now it's also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame*

on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall”.

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *“First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there's been yet more confirmation by the country's leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now, the UN General Assembly includes all member states. It's not simply the members represented on the Security Council, and it's worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic. Nicaragua has recognised the People's Republics in Donbass. There's also been recognition from Venezuela, from Cuba, from Iran, and other forces around the world have granted recognition. Belarus has recognised the People's Republic, so it is not simply Russia that is standing alone here. Russia has allies around the world who recognise these Republics. Now, at this point, when looking over that meeting of the UN General Assembly, it was very clear there were stark differences. The allies of the United States hurled allegations at Russia, a lot of them very unfounded, based on internet rumours, based on debunked claims that have been circulating around Western media. But Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years. And it appears that, while there was a lot of podium pounding from the United States and its allies, this meeting of the General Assembly did not really accomplish anything. This was a lot of smoke and mirrors and theatrics by allies of the United States in their efforts to demonise Russia and obscure the real roots of the conflict”.*

The programme then returned to Nikki Aaron in the Studio who reported on coverage of the conflict in the Western media:

NA: *“Well, mainstream media coverage of the situation has shifted to the angle that Ukraine is not Iraq or Afghanistan, because this conflict is now in Europe”.*

A series of clips of coverage by reporters from BMFTV, CBS News, the BBC and ITV then followed:

BFMTV: *“I am not talking about Syrians who are fleeing the Assad regime, supported by Vladimir Putin. I am talking about Europeans”.*

CBS News: *"This isn't a place with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan".*

BBC: *"European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed, children being killed every day".*

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Nikki Aaron then introduced pre-recorded interviews with Daniel Lazare ("DL"), political analyst and journalist, and Albrecht Muller ("AM"), German economist and former politician ("**the Lazare/Muller Interview**"):

NA: *"We heard from political analyst and journalist Daniel Lazare, who says Russia is now facing the same allegations that the US has faced in its conflicts in recent decades".*

DL: *"The implication is that it's okay in a far off third world countries, that we're free to bomb them as much as we want, because they don't have blue eyes and blond hair. I mean, it's appalling. The American journalists enjoyed the show. They thought it was great fun, thought it was a wonderful display of US firepower. Now it's, now it's not so much fun because the fire power is being directed at a US ally. I don't support this invasion. Let me make that perfectly clear. But nonetheless, the US and NATO set the scene. You know, so, shock and awe is a lot of fun as long as you're not the one being shocked and awed. But when you're on the receiving end, it's terrible. This is really Western hypocrisy".*

NA: *"We also got comments from a veteran German politician who says media outlets are choosing sides and even exacerbating the tensions amid the conflict. He believes there should be a return to objective journalism ethics".*

AM: *"The Suddeutsche Zeitung came out last weekend with a front-page article about the Putin enigma. There are three pages inside with pure aggression, even on the children's page. Putin is pictured there, and it says: Does he want war? And underneath it says: For weeks Putin has been sending tanks and soldiers to the border with Ukraine. The world is worried. That's what they're putting our children through there. You can see what all this agitation looks like. It's no longer controllable. Journalists obviously are controlling themselves anymore. That's something I couldn't imagine. I lived through the Cold War in the fifties. I lived through and participated in the detente policy, and we would have fallen over in a corner in the sixties if there had been such an awful media as the one there is today. Back then, Suddeutsche Zeitung helped make the detente policy. They knew how important it was for Germany to have peace, and they supported such things. Today they are stirring things up".*

Nikki Aaron then closed the programme:

NA: *"We're back at the top of the hour".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 08:00

RT News presenter Nikki Aaron ("NA") opened the programme:

NA: *"The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Nikki Aaron then provided an update on a range of news items ("**Aaron Update 5**"):

NA: *"More than half a million people have fled Ukraine since last week, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries Poland, Moldova, Romania and Russia. Positions voiced with a plan to meet again, Russian and Ukrainian delegations conclude their first round of negotiations in Belarus near the Ukrainian border. The EU pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia".*

It's eleven AM on Tuesday, the first of March, and we're coming to you live from Moscow. Fighting continues across Ukraine as the Russian military operation enters its sixth day. Videos posted on social media shows cars destroyed in Kiev on the almost empty streets of the capital amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians. The Russian military is calling for residents to leave Kiev via a designated route heading southwest. This video shows smoke over Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, off with a massive explosion reportedly caused by a projectile in the city center near the regional administration building. Local authorities are blaming Russia, but media reports say there were no Russian forces within the vicinity. Here's other footage from the city and a warning, you might find this disturbing. Explosions were reported in the city on Monday, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. Russia has denied responsibility, saying it wouldn't target civilians and instead claims that Ukraine is positioning forces in apartment buildings to use civilians as human shields, an accusation that Kiev has strongly denied. This map shows what's been happening, the red dots highlight the cities where the Russian forces are currently fighting against the Ukrainian Army. Russian's Defence Ministry says that Lugansk militia has advanced against the Ukrainian army by another three kilometers beyond Monday's frontline. While Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced 16 kilometers. People from various parts of Ukraine are fleeing the ongoing conflict. Almost 400,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Poland. These images show Ukrainians at a railway station in the western city of Lvov hoping to get a train across the border,

according to the UN More than half a million people have fled Ukraine since last week, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Romania, Moldova and Russia. Other countries in Europe have also announced their willingness to help the refugees with charities collecting donations for humanitarian aid. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it has been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict, RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".

This was followed by a report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**Gazdiev Report**"):

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov ("KR") (**Rozhkov Report 2**):

NA: *"The first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine has ended in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border, with both sides saying they presented their positions. RT's Konstantin Rozhkov reports".*

KR *"Well, at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that these talks took place and that the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It's not much, but it's something that creates room for cautious optimism. There's going to be a second round and maybe it will bare more results. But for now, it's a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus".*

A clip of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"While we do not have the result we would like to see, Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *"The US state department said that it would discuss the first round of talks with Ukrainians. The members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of this meeting, the head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Let's listen to what the Russian delegation said about these talks".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and, most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *"As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas and cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons into Ukraine has reached alarming rates, EU and NATO countries sending thousands of anti-tank anti-air systems as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it's expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Poland is especially enthusiastic about this idea could also provide its airfields for Ukrainian pilots. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in a spike of street violence, and looting, and*

situations where people just shoot each other. That's according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. Kiev of course puts the blame for this on Russia for this but nonetheless Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless".

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Peter Oliver ("PO") (**Oliver Report 3**):

NA: *"EU member states are sending weapons to Ukraine as well as ammunition and medical supplies as the EU has added another 26 people to its sanctions list imposed against Russia over the conflict, with more on that his correspondent Peter Oliver".*

PO: *"The European Union has stepped up the deliveries of lethal aid following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the European Union, Josep Borrell, says that all member states need to step up and provide Ukraine with what they need".*

A clip of Josep Borrell ("JB") was then shown:

JB: *"In this situation, our support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions, they need healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together by, with the member states".*

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"Germany provided its first delivery of weapons on Monday. That marked a major policy shift from Berlin. They previously said that they wouldn't be sending weapons into the conflict. The arrival of Russian troops in Ukraine, well that changed everything as far as Berlin was concerned. Denmark has also sent deliveries as well. 2700 anti-tank weapons have been sent from Copenhagen. Sweden, as well have been sending weapons, neutral Sweden it's worth pointing out, 5000 anti-tank weapons coming from them, as well as field rations, helmets and body armour. Russia has been extremely critical of the actions of Europe when it comes to these deliveries".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population".

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"The European Union has also expanded its sanctions list against a number of Russian figures. These include CEOs of energy companies and airlines as well as government officials, including the Kremlin's spokesperson".*

The programme returned to Nikki Aaron in the studio, who introduced a report from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov (“IZ”) on Western sanctions on Russia (“**the Zhdanov report**”):

NA: *“Well sanctions have taken a heavy toll on Russia's economy, causing the national ruble currency to plummet and stirring panic throughout the country, with Russians queuing up at cash machines to withdraw their savings. People are worried that the new Western sanctions will trigger cash shortages and disrupt payments as some Russian banks are to be cut off from the swift global payment system and central bank assets to be frozen. The EU has also banned Russian flights into its territory, exacerbating concerns about Russia becoming isolated. Moscow's central bank has stepped in to stop the flight of foreign capital abroad. More on that from RT's Igor Zhdanov”.*

IZ: *“First and foremost Vladimir Putin signed a document, according to which Russian companies and Russian nationals are no longer allowed to send their dollars and store them, deposit them in foreign accounts. So basically, all foreign currency like dollars, for example, they have that has to stay inside country and within the Russian economy. On top of that, Russian tax residents like companies that will receive some of their income in dollars. They will have to sell 80% of that income and exchange it for rubles. This is done, of course, to support the Russian national currency, which it was again, it was falling quite heavily. It surpassed the 100 rubles per dollar mark, so it was worth less than a cent. In fact, one Russian ruble was worth less than a cent. But following these measures, following the announcement of these measures, it kind of backtracked and recovered at least a little bit. And now it is, well, it's, the official rate, basically is not, it is not reaching just below just under 100 rubles per dollar. On top of that, the Bank of Russia has hiked massively the key rate, so now it's 20% and that's more than double compared to what it was just yesterday. So that is done, of course, also to support the national currency. Now, of course, some Russian, some big Russian, you know, businessmen. They have criticised this because of course, with this, with the key rate so high, money is so expensive. Borrowing money is so expensive for the companies. But well, the Russian Government says it has to be done. But again, unfortunately for the Russian economy, the West is saying, this could be that there's more where that came from so they might impose more sanctions and they have this intention”.*

This was followed by a report from Nikki Aaron on the repercussions of sanctions on EU markets, which featured pre-recorded interviews with former Austrian diplomat Karin Kneissl (“KK”) and economist Eike Hamer (“EH”) (“**the Kneissl/Hamer Interview**”):

NA: *“Europe's largest operator of energy networks has rejected demands to shut down the Nord Stream One gas pipeline as part of sanctions against Russia over the conflict in Ukraine. Local media have reported that the operator, Germany E.ON, has refused to decommission the pipeline, as Poland has demanded. But the newly built Nord Stream Two certification process remains frozen. E.ON reportedly says that stopping the pipeline would have serious economic consequences as it has accounted for 37% of the total natural gas imported into Germany by Russia since 2011. Meanwhile, the*

sanctions against Russia have caused a dip in other European markets, with financial institutions bearing the brunt of it. The pan European and the UK stock industries have fallen by more than 1% with French and German stocks giving up about 3% reduction. Meanwhile, crude oil prices have increased about 5%. Major investment firm Goldman Sachs expects overall price inflation in Europe to reach 5% this year. We heard from former Austrian top diplomat Karin Kneissl and economist Eike Hamer, who have expressed concerns about the sanctions repercussions on EU markets”.

KK: *“The prices went up because the markets are always a bit fragile and vulnerable in particular when it comes to such strategic commodities like oil and gas, and so the price hikes are there. This heats up inflation. This cuts down purchase power of people. If no natural gas is transported to the existing Nord Stream first and second tube, well, this will have an impact. Even so, some voices claim the heating season is nearly over. We are close to spring but let us recall that this gas is not only for heating, it's really also for production of electricity”.*

EH: *“If you take all these sanctions who they set into place, it means that Germany is paying a higher price for its gas and its oil and everything, and Russia can sell the gas and the oil wherever they want in the world. In China and India, everybody takes it so it doesn't hurt Russia primarily. It hurts primarily Germany, and this is what we see all the time already. The only thing is that the Americans wanted to prohibit the Europeans to look eastwards towards Russia. They don't want the Europeans to work together with Russia because it would make them independent on raw materials from outside”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Caleb Maupin (“CB”) in New York (“**the Maupin Report**”):

NA: *“The US has expelled 12 Russian UN diplomats saying they're a threat to national security. But Moscow says that's a violation of the US agreement to host the UN and is threatening a reciprocal response”.*

A clip of Vasily Nebenzya, Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was then shown:

VN: *“Again another demonstration of gross disrespect of the Host Country Agreement to the to their commitments, as I said, within the framework of their of their obligations both under the UN Charter, the Host Country Agreement and Vienna Conventions obviously”.*

This was followed by the Maupin Report:

CB: *“Now that's a big announcement, and it raises questions about the UN Treaty and the United States' obligation to enable member states to maintain their staff. Even countries the USA has no diplomatic relations with, countries like North Korea, countries like Venezuela at this point, have the right to maintain a UN mission as a UN member state. But it appears 12 UN staffers, 12 staffers of Russia's UN mission are being asked to leave the country. Now, that came during the press conference that we heard from Russian Ambassador Nebenzya. He's the permanent representative of*

Russia to the United Nations and he took questions from reporters and he made a lot of very important points. How can you say that there are Nazis in Ukraine when the Ukrainian President is Jewish? To which the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power”.

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *“He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine”.*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, et cetera. This is what we heard from the UN Representative when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall”.*

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Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *“Now it's also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk*

and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall”.

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DL: *"The implication is that it's okay in a far off third world countries, that we're free to bomb them as much as we want, because they don't have blue eyes and blond hair. I mean, it's appalling. The American journalists enjoyed the show. They thought it was great fun, thought it was a wonderful display of US firepower. Now it's, now it's not so much fun because the fire power is being directed at a US ally. I don't support this invasion. Let me make that perfectly clear. But nonetheless, the US and NATO set the scene. You know, so, shock and awe is a lot of fun as long as you're not the one being shocked and awed. But when you're on the receiving end, it's terrible. This is really Western hypocrisy".*

NA: *"We also got comments from a veteran German politician who says media outlets are choosing sides and even exacerbating the tensions amid the conflict. He believes there should be a return to objective journalism ethics".*

AM: *"The Suddeutsche Zeitung came out last weekend with a front-page article about the Putin enigma. There are three pages inside with pure aggression, even on the children's page. Putin is pictured there, and it says: Does he want war? And underneath it says: For weeks Putin has been sending tanks and soldiers to the border with Ukraine. The world is worried. That's what they're putting our children through there. You can see what all this agitation looks like. It's no longer controllable. Journalists obviously are controlling themselves anymore. That's something I couldn't imagine. I lived through the Cold War in the fifties. I lived through and participated in the detente policy, and we would have fallen over in a corner in the sixties if there had been such an awful media as the one there is today. Back then, Suddeutsche Zeitung helped make the detente policy. They knew how important it was for Germany to have peace, and they supported such things. Today they are stirring things up".*

Nikki Aaron then closed the programme:

NA: *"We'll be back with more at the top of the hour. And we would like to say that our thoughts are with everybody caught up in this conflict at this very difficult time".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 09:00

RT News presenter Nikki Aaron (“NA”) opened the programme:

NA: *“The sixth day of violence in Ukraine, with civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

This was followed by pre-recorded clips of two Donetsk residents with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back”.*

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Nikki Aaron then provided an update on a range of news items (“**Aaron Update 6”**):

NA: *“Half a million people have fled Ukraine since last week, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries Poland, Moldova, Romania and Russia. Positions voiced with a plan to meet again. Russian and Ukrainian delegations conclude their first round of negotiations in Belarus near the Ukrainian border. The EU pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weaponry. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia. It's midday on Tuesday, the first of March, and we're coming to you live from Moscow. Fighting continues across Ukraine as the Russian military operation enters its sixth day. Video posted on social media shows cars destroyed in Kiev on the almost empty streets of the capital, amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians. The Russian military is calling for residents to leave Kiev via a designated route headed southwest. This video shows smoke over Ukraine's second largest city Kharkov with a massive explosion reportedly caused by a projectile in the city center near the regional administration building. Local authorities are blaming Russia, but media reports say there were no Russian forces in the area where projectile reportedly came from. We're waiting for comments from the Russian military officials. Here's other footage from the city and a warning you might, you might find it disturbing. Explosions have been reported in the city on Monday, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. Russia has denied responsibility, saying it wouldn't target civilians and instead claims that Ukraine is positioning forces in apartment buildings to use civilians as human shields. It's an accusation that Kiev has strongly denied. This map shows what's been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's Defence Ministry says the Lugansk militia has advanced against the Ukrainian army by another three kilometers beyond Monday's frontline, while Donetsk forces have reportedly advanced 16 kilometers. People from various parts of Ukraine are fleeing the ongoing conflict. Almost 400,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Poland.*

These images show Ukrainians at a railway station in the western city of Lvov, hoping to get a train across the border. According to the UN, more than half a million people have fled Ukraine since last week, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Romania, Moldova and Russia. Other countries in Europe have also announced their willingness to help the refugees, with charities collecting donations for humanitarian aid. Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes the claims without disclosing concrete figures and says it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Here's the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with homes and lives lost every day amid the conflict. Here's our senior correspondent, Murad Gazdiev".

This was followed by a report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**Gazdiev Report**"):

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov ("KR"), (**Rozhkov Report 2**):

NA: *"The first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine has ended in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border, with both sides saying they presented their positions. RT's Konstantin Rozhkov reports".*

KR: *"well, at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that these talks took place and that the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It's not much, but it's something that creates room for cautious optimism. There's going to be a second round and maybe it will bare more results. But for now, it's a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus".*

A clip of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"While we do not have the result we would like to see, Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *"The US state department said that it would discuss the first round of talks with Ukrainians. The members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of this meeting, the head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Let's listen to what the Russian delegation said about these talks".*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky ("VM"), head of the Russian delegation was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *"Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and, most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border".*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued:

KR: *"As the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas and cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev of using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware right next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons into Ukraine has reached alarming rates, EU and NATO countries sending thousands of anti-tank anti-air systems as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it's expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Poland is especially enthusiastic about this idea*

could also provide its airfields for Ukrainian pilots. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in a spike of street violence, and looting, and situations where people just shoot each other. That's according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. Kiev of course puts the blame for this on Russia for this but nonetheless Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless".

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Peter Oliver ("PO"), (**Oliver Report 3**):

NA: *"EU member states are sending weapons to Ukraine as well as ammunition and medical supplies as the EU has added another 26 people to its sanctions list imposed against Russia over the conflict, with more on that his correspondent Peter Oliver".*

PO: *"The European Union has stepped up the deliveries of lethal aid following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the European Union, Josep Borrell, says that all member states need to step up and provide Ukraine with what they need".*

A clip of Josep Borrell ("JB") was then shown:

JB: *"In this situation, our support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions, they need healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind and we are going to provide them together by, with the member states".*

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"Germany provided its first delivery of weapons on Monday. That marked a major policy shift from Berlin. They previously said that they wouldn't be sending weapons into the conflict. The arrival of Russian troops in Ukraine, well that changed everything as far as Berlin was concerned. Denmark has also sent deliveries as well. 2700 anti-tank weapons have been sent from Copenhagen. Sweden, as well have been sending weapons, neutral Sweden it's worth pointing out, 5000 anti-tank weapons coming from them, as well as field rations, helmets and body armour. Russia has been extremely critical of the actions of Europe when it comes to these deliveries".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population".

Peter Oliver continued:

PO: *"The European Union has also expanded its sanctions list against a number of Russian figures. These include CEOs of energy companies and airlines as well as government officials, including the Kremlin's spokesperson".*

The programme returned to Nikki Aaron in the studio, who introduced a report from RT correspondent Igor Zhdanov ("IZ") on Western sanctions on Russia (**the Zhdanov report**):

NA: *"Well sanctions have taken a heavy toll on Russia's economy, causing the national ruble currency to plummet and stirring panic throughout the country, with Russians queuing up at cash machines to withdraw their savings. People are worried that the new Western sanctions will trigger cash shortages and disrupt payments as some Russian banks are to be cut off from the swift global payment system and central bank assets to be frozen. The EU has also banned Russian flights into its territory, exacerbating concerns about Russia becoming isolated. Moscow's central bank has stepped in to stop the flight of foreign capital abroad. More on that from RT's Igor Zhdanov".*

IZ: *"First and foremost Vladimir Putin signed a document, according to which Russian companies and Russian nationals are no longer allowed to send their dollars and store them, deposit them in foreign accounts. So basically, all foreign currency like dollars, for example, they have that has to stay inside country and within the Russian economy. On top of that, Russian tax residents like companies that will receive some of their income in dollars. They will have to sell 80% of that income and exchange it for rubles. This is done, of course, to support the Russian national currency, which it was again, it was falling quite heavily. It surpassed the 100 rubles per dollar mark, so it was worth less than a cent. In fact, one Russian ruble was worth less than a cent. But following these measures, following the announcement of these measures, it kind of backtracked and recovered at least a little bit. And now it is, well, it's, the official rate, basically is not, it is not reaching just below just under 100 rubles per dollar. On top of that, the Bank of Russia has hiked massively the key rate, so now it's 20% and that's more than double compared to what it was just yesterday. So that is done, of course, also to support the national currency. Now, of course, some Russian, some big Russian, you know, businessmen. They have criticised this because of course, with this, with the key rate so high, money is so expensive. Borrowing money is so expensive for the companies. But well, the Russian government says it has to be done. But again, unfortunately for the Russian economy, the West is saying, this could be that there's more where that came from so they might impose more sanctions and they have this intention".*

This was followed by a report from Nikki Aaron on the repercussions of sanctions on EU markets, which featured pre-recorded interviews with former Austrian diplomat Karin Kneissl ("KK") and economist Eike Hamer ("EH") (**the Kneissl/Hamer Interview**):

NA: *"Europe's largest operator of energy networks has rejected demands to shut down the Nord Stream One gas pipeline as part of sanctions against Russia over the conflict in Ukraine. Local media have reported that the operator, Germany E.ON, has refused to decommission the pipeline, as Poland has demanded. But the newly built Nord Stream*

Two certification process remains frozen. E.ON reportedly says that stopping the pipeline would have serious economic consequences as it has accounted for 37% of the total natural gas imported into Germany by Russia since 2011. Meanwhile, the sanctions against Russia have caused a dip in other European markets, with financial institutions bearing the brunt of it. The pan European and the UK stock industries have fallen by more than 1% with French and German stocks giving up about 3% reduction. Meanwhile, crude oil prices have increased about 5%. Major investment firm Goldman Sachs expects overall price inflation in Europe to reach 5% this year. We heard from former Austrian top diplomat Karin Kneissl and economist Eike Hamer, who have expressed concerns about the sanctions repercussions on EU markets”.

KK: *“The prices went up because the markets are always a bit fragile and vulnerable in particular when it comes to such strategic commodities like oil and gas, and so the price hikes are there. This heats up inflation. This cuts down purchase power of people. If no natural gas is transported to the existing Nord Stream first and second tube, well, this will have an impact. Even so, some voices claim the heating season is nearly over. We are close to spring, but let us recall that this gas is not only for heating, it's really also for production of electricity”.*

EH: *“If you take all these sanctions who they set into place, it means that Germany is paying a higher price for its gas and its oil and everything, and Russia can sell the gas and the oil wherever they want in the world. In China and India, everybody takes it so it doesn't hurt Russia primarily. It hurts primarily Germany, and this is what we see all the time already. The only thing is that the Americans wanted to prohibit the Europeans to look eastwards towards Russia. They don't want the Europeans to work together with Russia because it would make them independent on raw materials from outside”.*

Nikki Aaron then introduced a report from RT correspondent Caleb Maupin (“CB”) in New York (“**the Maupin Report**”):

NA: *“The US has expelled 12 Russian UN diplomats saying they're a threat to national security. But Moscow says that's a violation of the U. S agreement to host the UN and is threatening a reciprocal response”.*

A clip of Vasily Nebenzya (“VN”), Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was then shown:

VN: *“Again another demonstration of gross disrespect of the Host Country Agreement to the to their commitments, as I said, within the framework of their of their obligations both under the UN Charter, the Host Country Agreement and Vienna Conventions obviously”.*

This was followed by the Maupin Report:

CB: *“Now that's a big announcement, and it raises questions about the UN Treaty and the United States' obligation to enable member states to maintain their staff. Even countries the USA has no diplomatic relations with, countries like North Korea,*

countries like Venezuela at this point, have the right to maintain a UN mission as a UN member state. But it appears 12 UN staffers, 12 staffers of Russia's UN mission are being asked to leave the country. Now, that came during the press conference that we heard from Russian Ambassador Nebenzya. He's the permanent representative of Russia to the United Nations and he took questions from reporters and he made a lot of very important points. How can you say that there are Nazis in Ukraine when the Ukrainian President is Jewish? To which the Russian Ambassador pointed out that the Ukrainian President doesn't seem to have the real power in the country. He took power on a platform of peace and bringing the country back together. However, at this point, the Ukrainian President, he has proved himself, he's proved himself to be weak and have no real power".

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *"He demonstrated that he is weak, that he has no political will and power in, in the circumstances he found himself in to resist, to resist those radicals who, who are the main, main political driving force in current, in today's Ukraine".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"He went on when confronted with allegations that Russia had bombed civilian areas. He told the reporters asking those questions to verify the reports because there's quite a bit of fake news going around and there's quite a few videos, videos that have come from places like Syria or Libya, videos from even video games, that are being circulated and claimed and passed off as showing Russian atrocities. He went on to say that Russia did not bomb civilian areas in Kiev. He made that point. So that's, that's the Russian Ambassador, speaking to reporters in the UN press briefing room. Now, this comes after debate that took place at the UN General Assembly Hall. At the UN General Assembly, the United States and its allies put forward a resolution before the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia. Now, when that resolution was put forward, we first heard from the UN Secretary General. After that, we then heard from, from the representative of Ukraine, who thundered and made heated allegations against Russia, compared it to World War Two, et cetera. This is what we heard from the UN Representative when he spoke at the General Assembly Hall".*

A clip of Sergiy Kyslytsya ("SK"), Ukrainian United Nations Ambassador, was then shown:

SK: *"Deadly air strikes dropped on civilian's heads across the entire country, and the Russian troops cross Ukraine's borders from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donbass and Crimea. Does it remind you of something, doesn't it? Indeed. Very clear parallels could be drawn with the beginning of the second World War too. It was chosen by someone who is right now sitting in the bunker. We know what happened with the person who sat in the bunker in Berlin in May 1945".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"Now it's also important to note that, in the UN General Assembly Hall, Nebenzya, the Russian Ambassador, had the opportunity to dissect some of these allegations. He got up and he talked about the need for negotiations. He talked about how this resolution that was put forward was not a pro-Ukrainian resolution, as it does not put any blame on the forces that instigated this conflict with their shelling and attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk. And as well as that, you know, their continued escalation, threats of Ukraine to join NATO, piling lethal weapons into Ukraine. And from there, he talked about the need to not believe everything circulating throughout mainstream media. A lot of the reports coming out of Ukraine, widely circulated in American media, have been debunked. He pointed out that, at this point, what is needed is negotiation. This is what Nebenzya said when speaking to the UN General Assembly Hall".*

A further clip of Vasily Nebenzya was then shown:

VN: *"First of all, direct dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass was needed. However, there's been yet more confirmation by the country's leadership that Ukraine is not ready for such dialogue, for taking steps to grant Donbass special status as provided for by the Minsk agreements. In the end, this convinced us that we simply have no right to make the residents of Donbass suffer further".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"Now, the UN General Assembly includes all member states. It's not simply the members represented on the Security Council, and it's worth noting that a number of UN member states have granted recognition to the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic. Nicaragua has recognised the People's Republics in Donbass. There's also been recognition from Venezuela, from Cuba, from Iran, and other forces around the world have granted recognition. Belarus has recognised the People's Republic, so it is not simply Russia that is standing alone here. Russia has allies around the world who recognise these Republics. Now, at this point, when looking over that meeting of the UN General Assembly, it was very clear there were stark differences. The allies of the United States hurled allegations at Russia, a lot of them very unfounded, based on internet rumours, based on debunked claims that have been circulating around Western media. But Russia stood firm, stood for the truth, called for a de-escalation, highlighted the suffering of the people of Donbass and Lugansk and what they've been through for the past eight years. And it appears that, while there was a lot of podium pounding from the United States and its allies, this meeting of the General Assembly did not really accomplish anything. This was a lot of smoke and mirrors and theatrics by allies of the United States in their efforts to demonise Russia and obscure the real roots of the conflict".*

The programme then returned to Nikki Aaron in the Studio who reported on coverage of the conflict in the Western media:

NA: *"Well, mainstream media coverage of the situation has shifted to the angle that Ukraine is not Iraq or Afghanistan, because this conflict is now in Europe".*

A series of clips of coverage by reporters from BMFTV, CBS News, the BBC and ITV then followed:

BFMTV: *"I am not talking about Syrians who are fleeing the Assad regime, supported by Vladimir Putin. I am talking about Europeans".*

CBS News: *"This isn't a place with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan".*

BBC: *"European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed, children being killed every day".*

ITV: *"This is not a developing third world nation. This is Europe".*

Nikki Aaron then introduced pre-recorded interviews with Daniel Lazare ("DL"), political analyst and journalist, and Albrecht Muller ("AM"), German economist and former politician ("**the Lazare/Muller Interview**"):

NA: *"We heard from political analyst and journalist Daniel Lazare, who says Russia is now facing the same allegations that the US has faced in its conflicts in recent decades".*

DL: *"The implication is that it's okay in a far off third world countries, that we're free to bomb them as much as we want, because they don't have blue eyes and blond hair. I mean, it's appalling. The American journalists enjoyed the show. They thought it was great fun, thought it was a wonderful display of US firepower. Now it's, now it's not so much fun because the fire power is being directed at a US ally. I don't support this invasion. Let me make that perfectly clear. But nonetheless, the US and NATO set the scene. You know, so, shock and awe is a lot of fun as long as you're not the one being shocked and awed. But when you're on the receiving end, it's terrible. This is really Western hypocrisy".*

NA: *"We also got comments from a veteran German politician who says media outlets are choosing sides and even exacerbating the tensions amid the conflict. He believes there should be a return to objective journalism ethics".*

AM: *"The Suddeutsche Zeitung came out last weekend with a front-page article about the Putin enigma. There are three pages inside with pure aggression, even on the children's page. Putin is pictured there, and it says: Does he want war? And underneath it says: For weeks Putin has been sending tanks and soldiers to the border with Ukraine. The world is worried. That's what they're putting our children through there. You can see what all this agitation looks like. It's no longer controllable. Journalists obviously are controlling themselves anymore. That's something I couldn't imagine. I lived through the Cold War in the fifties. I lived through and participated in the detente policy, and we would have fallen over in a corner in the sixties if there had been such an awful media as the one there is today. Back then, Suddeutsche Zeitung helped make the detente policy. They knew how important it was for Germany to have peace, and they supported such things. Today they are stirring things up".*

Nikki Aaron then closed the programme:

NA: *"We'll be back after this very short break. Stay with us".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 12:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Donald Courter (“DC”) who presented the programme’s headlines:

DC: *“The West is destroying the very rules it created. That's according to Russia's top diplomat as he addressed the UN officials about nuclear non-proliferation and human rights. Day six of the violence in Ukraine. Civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the war-torn Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are being lost every day”.*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of two Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door. Like animals. I’m not crying for myself, I’m crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn’t come back”.*

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *“Over half a million people have fled Ukraine since last week. They have been seeking refuge in neighbouring countries such as Poland, Moldova, Romania and Russia. The European Union pledges support for Ukraine, including ammunition, medical supplies and weapons. Even traditionally neutral Switzerland has joined European sanctions against Russia”.*

This was followed by a live report with RT reporter Ilya Petrenko (“IP”) on statements made by Sergey Lavrov (“SV”), the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine (**“the Petrenko Report”**);

DC: *“Hello and welcome to our international special coverage of the war in Ukraine. I'm your host. Donald Courter. Now Russia's top diplomat, has addressed UN officials on nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine. He spoke remotely because several European countries blocked his plane from flying to Geneva. To get more now we're going to go live to our RTs Ilya Petrenko. Thanks a lot for joining us, Ilya. So, there were two speeches in two hours. What were Lavrov's main points? And what was the specific context?”*

IP: *“John hi again. Well, enormous concerns voiced by the Russian top diplomat and also some very serious demands and one of them, perhaps the most important is Europe without American nuclear weapons and also infrastructure for their potential deployment, take a listen”.*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *"It's unacceptable for us that in violation of basic provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there are still US nuclear weapons on the territory of several European countries. The misguided practice of joint nuclear missions involving non-nuclear NATO states is continuing. Such missions develop scenarios for using nuclear weapons against Russia. It's time to return US nuclear weapons to their origin country and dismantle all the infrastructure for those weapons in Europe. Now, as in the past, we believe there would be no winner in a nuclear war, and it must never start".*

Ilya Petrenko continued his report:

IP: *"Well, I guess it's fair to say that Mr. Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this uh anti-terrorist operation so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region. Now, Sergey Lavrov also spoke of the unilateral sanctions that are currently being imposed by plenty of European countries and the countries across the Atlantic as well, calling them illegal. And here's what else the foreign minister said about that".*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *"The West has clearly lost its self-control in trying to vent its anger against Russia. It's destroying all the institutions and rules it itself created, including the inviolability of property rights. The West's arrogant philosophy, based on its own feeling of superiority, exceptionalism and impunity must come to an end".*

IP: *"Shortly after we heard from the Russian top diplomat, we also heard a few things from the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, who was taking questions from journalists. Now a few important points that he made, let me just go through the accusations against Russia. According to the Kremlin the accusations of war crimes are nonsense. That's something Dmitry Peskov said. Besides this, Russia continues to consider Volodymyr Zelensky, the President of Ukraine, and another message for the Ukrainian leadership that came from Dmitry Peskov was that if Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as the leader of Ukraine, agrees to lay down arms in that case there will be no victims on either side. Plus, we also heard from the Kremlin's press secretary that the accusations against Russia that Russia could be using cluster bombs or vacuum bombs is also complete lies".*

DC: *"RT's Ilya Petrenko, thanks a lot for bringing us those updates".*

This was followed by a report about a joint news conference held by Jens Stoltenberg ("JS"), NATO's general secretary, and Andrzej Duda the Polish President, about Poland's support of Ukrainian refugees (**"the Stoltenberg Conference"**):

DC: *"Now NATO's general secretary, has just finished his joint news conference with Poland's President, thanking Poland, which neighbours Ukraine, for its support for Ukrainian refugees. He also condemned Russia's actions in the conflict, but cautioned that NATO is not looking to fight Russia".*

○ A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ("JS") was then shown:

JS: *"President Putin has shattered peace in Europe. Allies condemn the unjustified and brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Russian assault is totally unacceptable, unacceptable. NATO is a defensive alliance. We do not seek conflict with Russia. Russia must immediately stop the war, pull out all its forces from Ukraine and engage in good faith in diplomatic efforts. The world stands with Ukraine in calling for peace".*

The programme returned to the studio, where Donald Courter introduced a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Peter Oliver on EU support for Ukraine (**Oliver Report 3**):

DC: *"European Union member states are sending weapons to Ukraine along with ammunition and medical supplies Says the EU has added another 26 people to its sanctions list imposed against Russia over the conflict. Now Meanwhile, the decree signed by Ukraine's President to allow foreigners to enter the country without a visa to fight for Ukraine against Russia has come into force. RT's correspondent Peter Oliver reports".*

PO: *"The European Union has stepped up deliveries of lethal aid to Ukraine following Russia's invasion of the country. The High Representative for Foreign affairs of the European Union. Josep Borrell says that all member states need to step up and provide Ukraine with what it needs".*

A clip of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was then shown:

JB: *"In this situation of a support for the Ukrainian armed forces is crucial, crucial. They need ammunitions to new healthcare material. They need the defensive purpose arms of any kind, and we are going to provide them together by with the member states".*

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *"Germany provided its first delivery of weapons on Monday, that marked a major policy shift for Berlin. They previously said that they wouldn't be sending weapons into the conflict. The arrival of Russian troops in Ukraine well that changed everything as far as Berlin was concerned, Denmark has also sent deliveries as well. 2700 anti-tank weapons have been sent from Copenhagen. Sweden as well have been sending weapons. Neutral Sweden it's worth pointing out. 5000 anti-tank weapons coming*

from them, as well as field rations, helmets and body armour. Russia has been extremely critical of the actions of Europe when it comes to these deliveries”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Foreign Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Now the masks are off. The EU is revealing its true self with the decision on February 27 to send lethal weapons to Ukraine This means the end of European integration as a pacifist project to bring European nations together after World War Two. The EU has definitely taken the side of the Ukrainian regime, which has committed genocide against part of its own population”.

Peter Oliver continued his report:

PO: *“The European Union has also expanded its sanctions list against a number of Russian figures. These include the CEOs of energy companies and airlines as well as government officials, including the Kremlin spokesperson”.*

Donald Courter then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Konstantin Rozhkov on peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Belarus (**“Rozhkov Report 2”**):

DC: *“Now the first round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine have concluded in Belarus, near the Ukrainian border. Now, with both sides saying they have also presented their positions. RT’s Konstantin Rozhkov reports”.*

KR: *“Well at this point, the main outcome of these talks is that these talks took place and the two sides agreed to continue dialogue. It’s not much, but it’s something that creates room for cautious optimism. There’s going to be a second round, maybe it will bear more results, but for now it’s a wait and see approach. This is what the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, said about the wrapped-up talks in Belarus”.*

VZ: *“While we do not have the result we would like to see; Russia has stated its position and we have voiced counterpoints to end the war”.*

KR: *“The U. S. State Department said it would discuss the first round of talks with the Ukrainians. Now the members of the Russian delegation were also cautious talking about the outcome of the meeting, the head of the Russian delegation reported to Vladimir Putin yesterday and the Russian President already gave instructions so that the necessary work can be done before round two. Let’s listen to what the Russian delegation said about the talks”.*

A clip of Vladimir Medinsky, head of the Russian delegation for peace talks with Kiev, was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VM: *“Negotiations with the Ukrainian side have concluded. They lasted around five hours. During the talks, we went through all the details on the agenda, found some points on which common positions can be foreseen and most importantly, agreed to continue the negotiation process. The next meeting will take place in the coming days on the Poland Belarus border”.*

Konstantin Rozhkov continued his report:

KR: *"Well as the two sides negotiate, the military situation on the ground remains tense. Kiev accuses Russian troops of shelling residential areas in cities across Ukraine. Moscow says it specifically instructed its military not to do so. Russia's Ministry of Defence blamed Kiev for using civilians as a human shield by placing military hardware next to residential buildings, provoking the Russian military to respond and hit these areas. At the same time, the shipment of lethal weapons since Ukraine has reached alarming rates. EU and NATO countries send in thousands of anti-tank and anti-air systems as well as ammunition. There's also been a lot of talks about providing Kiev with fighter jets. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said it is expecting up to 70 fighter jets from Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. Bulgaria has already denied it, but Poland seems to be on board and could even provide its airfields for Ukrainian pilots. Ukraine's authorities released prisoners with a military background and hand out weapons to civilians without any supervision. This has already resulted in the spike of street violence and looting, according to Russia's Ministry of Defence. Kiev of course puts the blame on Russia for this. But nonetheless Moscow thinks that sending more and more military equipment into Ukraine in this situation is reckless".*

This was followed by a live report from Donald Courter on fighting across Ukraine, including in the Donbass region (**"the Courter Report"**):

DC: *"Fighting continues across Ukraine as the Russian military operation enters day six. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out weapons to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is now calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest. You can see on your screen now plumes of smoke over Ukraine's second largest city, called Kharkov, with a massive explosion reportedly caused by a projectile in the city centre near the regional administration building. Local authorities are blaming Russia, but media reports say there were not even Russian forces in the area from which the projectile reportedly came from. We are still waiting for comment from the Russian military about it. Here's other footage from the city and a warning you may find it disturbing. Explosions were reported in the city also on Monday, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. Russia has denied responsibility, saying it is not targeting civilians and instead claiming that Ukraine is positioning its forces in apartment buildings to use civilians as human shields. This is a claim that Kiev has strongly denied. Now you can see this map here. It shows what's been happening with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's Defence Ministry says the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's frontline. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres. People from various parts of Ukraine are fleeing the ongoing conflict. Almost 400,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Poland and these images show Ukrainians at a railway station in the western city of Lvov, all hoping to get a train across the border. According to the UN more than half a million people have fled*

Ukraine since last week, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries such as Romania, Moldova and Russia. Other countries in Europe have also announced their willingness to help the refugees with charities collecting donations for humanitarian aid. Now Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and has said it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. All members of the OSCE special monetary monitoring mission in the Donetsk People's Republic are on their way out. The mission used to monitor and report violations of a ceasefire agreement between Kiev and militia forces. The mission said on Sunday that it would relocate staff due to deteriorating security conditions".

Donald Courter then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk (**Gazdiev Report**):

DC: *"Now we've here got the latest footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the two front lines, with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, and people's lives and homes are being lost every day amid this conflict. RT's correspondent Murad Gazdiev has more".*

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov Sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and from a distance wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery the battles here, just just west of Donetsk, still still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. The Ukrainian positions were east of here, towards Donetsk. When this battle began, the offensive Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here and were met with a firestorm of artillery, which which devastated this village, there were many people here there now, much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house and other family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they they hid in the basement right right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived. Wounded amid the shelling, he ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger. The onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course, it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, If I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly*

died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.

The programme then returned to Donald Courter in the studio with a report on social media outlets’ restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU, including a live interview with political analyst Nikola Mirkovic (“NM”) (**“the Mirkovic Interview”**):

DC: *“Social media giants, including YouTube, TikTok and Meta, have announced today that they plan to restrict access to Russian media outlets RT and Sputnik in the EU”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Nick Clegg, VP Global Affairs at Meta’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“We have received requests from a number of governments and the EU to take further steps in relation to Russian state-controlled media. Given the exceptional nature of the current situation, we will be restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU at this time”.

Donald Courter continued his report:

DC: *“Now if you're wondering what this means, RT and Sputnik will no longer be accessible on the platforms within the European Union. Twitter has also said it would put warnings on tweets sharing links to RT and take steps to significantly reduce the circulation of that content. Microsoft has also taken measures in recent days to restrict RT from making money from ads on its platforms. Meanwhile, amid the European Union's massive clampdown on RT, the network encourages viewers to continue watching on the online platform Odysee where the content remains available”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from RT:

“Facebook & Instagram have blocked RT and Google has just announced it will be censoring our channel on YouTube – but we are alive and kicking on Odysee’s free speech video platform, continuing to promote freedom over censorship, truth over narrative”.

Donald Courter continued his report:

DC: *“Online platforms have been under severe pressure to shut down RT following an announcement by the EU Commission's President to ban RT from broadcasting in the European Union”.*

A clip of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell (“JB”) was then shown:

JB: *“Taking a crucial step to turn off the tap for the Russians information manipulation in Europe by banning Russia Today and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union”.*

- DC: *"Now Polish and Estonian regulators have already banned Russian television broadcasters while the UK is reviewing its policy regarding RT. But to get more on that, we're going to go live now to Nicola Markovich, a political analyst, thanks for joining us on the programme. The first question I have is why are these media companies basically Meta, YouTube, TikTok? Why are they blocking RT and Sputnik on their platforms in the EU?"*
- NM: *"Because they're working hand in hand with, I would say that the governments and the European Union, especially the head of the European Union Ursula von der Leyen, who is putting a lot of pressure on these companies to close down freedom of speech. And I think that's that's the objective. We see that they are very close to none of them are resisting when you have a platform which is supposed to be based on freedom of speech and that everybody is supposed to have access. Why, what sort of societies are we living in the West when government figures ask social media platforms to stop giving access to some media? So, I think it's unfortunate that they work hand in hand, and they show that there is control of the information by politicians in Western Europe in the West globally. And, uh, and it's sad because this is not only an attack on freedom of speech and it's an attack on reasoning on intelligence. How can we have access to to understand what's going on if we can't have access to all the information?"*
- DC: *"Well it's kind of interesting that RT is being singled out here. I mean, we're not the only media outlet that's ever been accused of bias. Why do you think that is?"*
- NM: *"This is because all of a sudden there's big pressure. I think what this is is what is hurting them. What they don't like is that a lot of people are going to get their information now. They want to understand. It's quite positive, actually, and this is normal. People want to know what is going on, and they're going to Russia RT because and even if they know, if, uh if it's Russian backed media because they want to understand. I am analysing the situation every day. I'm going to see what's being said in Russia. I want to know what's being said in Ukraine. I want to know what's being said in the US. In different countries, and a lot of people are doing this. The problem is that people are getting different news in Western countries compared to what they're getting on mainstream media, and that's why they want to shut down I would say our RT and Sputnik, because the mainstream media are all peddling information, which is going into one direction. There's not a lot of space for a plurality of opinions for discussions, debates people from different political horizons with different analysis on the situation. You don't see a lot of that on, on mainstream media, so people go to media like RT and Sputnik because they want to have another, another opinion. That doesn't mean that they're going to follow blindly everything which is said. They're gonna, they're gonna swallow everything easily that they that's the version, the official version. But they want to compare. And when they compare what they're seeing on mainstream media and when they compare what they're seeing on, your channel is saying, well, there's something wrong because this this doesn't doesn't fit out. So, this is pushing people to want to have more information, and that's scaring politicians in the West".*

DC: *"Well, something Vladimir Putin said recently is actually connected to this subject. He called the West an empire of lies. What do you think about that?"*

NM: *"That's a that's a tough statement, but we can't say that it's entirely false. Uh, look at how come we don't have access to different points of views on mainstream media in the West, and this is not only concerning the war today. This is also concerning vaccine mandates. This is concerning the social uh, I would say issues or social issues on, on unions, on retirement, on so many issues. We have a tendency in the West to only have, uh, media, which is more or less telling and getting that the information from the government. And there's not a lot of room for debates and discussions, and and this is something which is extremely scary. And if you take a look at the wars waged by the West these past years and Colin Powell saying that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. How many people died in Iraq because of that lie? How many people died in Yugoslavia and Kosovo because William Walker said that there was a massacre in Racak and there was there wasn't any? How many people have died alone across the world because of UK and NATO military intervention, and nobody is saying anything about that? So, I think that unfortunately, the lies and the fact that we're not having access to the truth or we can't debate freely is really undermining the Western societies. Aren't we supposed to be exporting democracy? Freedom of speech? Aren't we supposed to be spreading to the rest of the world how societies work? And then all of a sudden, we find out that we're lying, we're lying to ourselves and we're lying to other countries. And this is I think this is why he said that unfortunately, some of that is true".*

DC: *"Well, Nikola Mirkovic, thanks a lot for joining us on the programme. Thank you".*

NM: *"Thank you".*

Donald Courter provided a live update about reports of an explosion in Taganrog:

DC: *"Now, this is news just in. The sound of an explosion has rung out in the Russian city of Taganrog, near the border with the Donetsk Republic. Our crew was there, heard it themselves. And of course, we'll bring you any updates as we get them".*

Donald Courter then closed the programme:

DC: *"Well, that's the end of our special coverage about the war in Ukraine for right now but join us again in just about 30 minutes for more details".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 15:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Donald Courter ("DC") who presented the programme's headlines:

DC: *"The West is destroying the very rules it created. That's according to Russia's top diplomat, as he addressed U. N officials about nuclear non-proliferation and human rights. Day six of the special operation in Ukraine. Civilians caught between the front lines We report from the war-torn Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost every day, eight years since Ukraine began shelling".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today that we're all showing that a union with us would be stronger and without you Ukraine would be alone".*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"Ukraine's President makes an impassioned plea to the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances. However, the EU pledges support for Ukraine including ammunition, medical supplies and weapons with even traditionally neutral Switzerland joining European sanctions against Russia".*

This was followed by a live update from Donald Courter, which included a statement from the Russian Defence Ministry and information about residents fleeing Kiev ("**the Russian Defence Ministry Statement**"):

DC: *"Hello and welcome to RT International special coverage of the war in Ukraine. I'm your host Donald Courter. And we start with breaking news from Ukraine, Russia's Defence Ministry has announced that it is ready to hit Ukrainian security services and information and psychological operations centre facilities in Kiev with high precision weapons, in order to suppress information attacks against Russia. And while Moscow say's it does everything it can to avoid hitting civilian areas, it's advising all citizens to leave the area".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"Since the beginning of the special military operation, the number of information attacks on various state institutions of the Russian Federation has increased many times over. Calls are constantly made to Russian citizens with threats of physical elimination, as well as about mining schools, kindergartens, railway stations and other

social infrastructure facilities. Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations in Kiev will be hit with high precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs to leave their homes”.

Donald Courter then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Ilya Petrenko (“IP”) on statements made by Sergey Lavrov (“SV”), the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine (**“the Petrenko Report”**);

DC: *“This right here on your screen is unverified footage of people in Kiev at the train station trying to flee. It comes as Russia's Defence Ministry calls for civilians around key military sites in the Ukrainian capital to leave their homes. Russia's top diplomat has addressed U. N officials on nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the Ukrainian conflict. He spoke remotely because European countries blocked his plane from flying to Geneva and Ilya Petrenko has the details on Sergey Lavrov's speech”.*

IP: *“Enormous concerns voiced by the Russian top diplomat and also some very serious demands and one of them, perhaps the most important is Europe without American nuclear weapons and also infrastructure for their potential deployment. Take a listen”.*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *“Let us pray. It's unacceptable for us that in violation of basic provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there are still U. S nuclear weapons on the territory of several European countries. The misguided practise of joint nuclear missions involving non-nuclear NATO states is continuing. Such missions develop scenarios for using nuclear weapons against Russia. It's time to return US nuclear weapons to their origin country and dismantle all the infrastructure for those weapons in Europe. Now, as in the past. We believe there would be no winner in a nuclear war, and it must never start”.*

IP: *“Well, I guess it's fair to say that Mr. Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists the officials how after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language, how the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years and we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this, a terrorist operation so called in the regions of Donetsk and Donbass in the*

Donbass region. Now, Sergey Lavrov also spoke of the unilateral sanctions that are currently being imposed by plenty of European countries and the countries across the Atlantic as well, calling them illegal and here's what else, the foreign minister said about that".

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *"The West has clearly lost its self-control in trying to vent its anger against Russia. It's destroying all the institutions and rules it itself created, including the inviolability of property rights. The West arrogant philosophy, based on its own feeling of superiority, exceptionalism and impunity must come to an end".*

IP: *"Shortly after we heard from the Russian top diplomat, we also heard a few things from the Kremlin. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov was taking questions from journalists. Now a few important points that he made. Let me just go through the accusations against Russia, According to the Kremlin. The accusations of war crimes are nonsense. That's something Dmitry Peskov said. Besides this, Russia continues to consider Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine. Another message for the Ukrainian leadership that came from Dmitry Peskov was that if Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as the leader of Ukraine, agrees to lay down arms in that case there will be no victims on either side. Plus, we also heard from the Kremlin's press secretary that the accusations against Russia that Russia could be using cluster bombs or vacuum bombs is also complete lies".*

The programme then returned to Donald Courter in the studio, who spoke about fighting across Ukraine ("**Courter Report 2**"):

DC: *"Now across Ukraine fighting continues on day six of the Russian military operation. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk as shelling continues there. The number of victims is not yet known. However, the city mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the liberated settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammunition intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out weapons to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military has called on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest. Now you should be able to see on your screen right now plumes of smoke rising over Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkov with a massive explosion reportedly caused by a projectile in the city centre near the regional administration building. Local authorities are blaming Russia, but media reports have said that there are not even Russian forces in the area from where the projectile reportedly came. We're waiting for comments from Kremlin officials as well as the military on the situation. We can now show you other footage from the city, but a warning you may find it disturbing. Explosions were reported in the city also on Monday, with locals filming huge plumes of smoke amid what they described as ongoing battles. Russia has denied responsibility, saying it is not targeting civilians and*

instead claiming that Ukraine is positioning forces in apartment buildings to use civilians as human shields. Kiev has strongly denied that accusation. We heard from a local woman who is currently hiding in a shelter”.

This was followed by a clip of a female Donetsk resident with an English voiceover:

Civilian 7: *“It is already the fifth day we are here in the basement. We are worried very much and it is very scary. We have small Children, elderly people and frankly speaking, it is very frightening. It is a nightmare, and it seizes you from the inside very strongly. This cannot be explained with words”.*

Donald Courter then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev (“MG”) from Donetsk (“**Gazdiev Report**”):

DC: *“And this map on your screen right now shows what's been happening with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's defence ministry says the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they've reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. Now here you can see footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are desperately trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles continuing to rage on. Local residents are simply terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the war erupted. RT's correspondent Mura Gazdiev reports”.*

MG: *“The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov Sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and from a distance wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery the battles here, just, just west of Donetsk, still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. The Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began, the offensive, Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People 's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery, which, which devastated this village. There were many people here there now, much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house and other family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they they hid in the basement, right rise outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of full of blood images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help”.*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger. The onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course, it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, If I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly*

died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee”.

The programme then returned to a live report from Donald Courter in the studio which included a range of clips of various political leaders giving statements about a range of topics related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine in general (“**Courter Report 3**”):

DC: *“Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes these claims. While not disclosing concrete figures, it says it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Ukraine's President has also made an impassioned plea to join the EU at an EU parliamentary meeting. Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was stressing Kiev's willingness in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc. European Union lawmakers and officials gave a standing ovation, but it is important to note that they have not given any assurances”.*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven we're at least the same as you. Prove you aren't letting us go, prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness”.*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *“A Ukrainian journalist has also made an emotional plea to Britain's Prime Minister as he held a news conference in Poland. Boris Johnson was asked to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine, but he refused, warning it would lead to the UK entering into open combat with Russia”.*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and a Ukrainian journalist (“UJ”) at a press conference:

UJ: *“Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. We are asking for the no-fly zone. So you're coming to Poland. You're not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister, you're not coming to Lvov, because you're afraid. Because NATO is not willing to defend, because NATO is afraid of the World War Three, but it is already started. And these Ukrainian Children who are there - taking the hit. I see that my family members, that my team members, I say that we are crying, we don't know where to run. This is what is happening Prime Minister”.*

BJ: *“Well, thank you. Thank you very much for, for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone as I said to Volodymyr Zelenskyy I, I think a couple of times. Unfortunately, the implication of that is that the, uh, the UK and will be engaged in*

shooting down uh Russian planes will be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do all that we've that we've envisaged".

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"Meanwhile, the EU also fears the sanctions tit for tat will hurt Europeans. The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has admitted that restrictions against Russia will hit EU economies hard. Meanwhile, the German MP has heavily criticised the West for provoking the current situation in Ukraine. The Alternative for Germany party lawmaker added that Moscow had spent two decades trying to get its message across".*

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel ("AW") speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"All members of the OSCE special monitoring mission, mission in the Donetsk People's Republics are on their way out. The mission used to monitor and report violations of a ceasefire agreement between Kiev and militia forces. The mission said on Sunday that it would relocate staff during due to deteriorating security conditions. Social media giants including YouTube, TikTok and Meta have announced that they plan to restrict access to Russian media outlets RT and Sputnik in the European Union".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from Nick Clegg, VP Global Affairs at Meta's Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"We have received requests from a number of governments and the EU to take further steps in relation to Russian state-controlled media. Given the exceptional nature of the current situation, we will be restricting access to RT and Sputnik across the EU at this time".

Donald Courter continued:

DC: *"What does this mean? RT and Sputnik will no longer be accessible on the platforms within the bloc. Twitter has also said it would put warnings on tweets sharing links to RT and take steps to significantly reduce the circulation of that content. Microsoft has also taken measures in recent days to restrict RT from making money from ads on its platforms. Online platforms have been under severe pressure to shut down RT following an announcement by the EU Commission president to ban this channel from broadcasting".*

A clip of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell ("JB") was then shown:

JB: *"That taking a crucial step to turn off the tap for the Russians information manipulation in Europe by banning RT and Sputnik from broadcasting in the European Union".*

Donald Courter then interrupted the clip of Josep Borrell with a live update about reports of an attack on a TV tower in Kiev:

DC: *"Well, we interrupt our programme right now for some breaking news from Ukraine we're receiving an unverified video of key of a TV tower in Kiev that's been taking fire. You could see a cloud of black smoke is being seen as seen there. That's after Russia's defence ministry has announced that it is ready to hit Ukrainian security forces as well as informational and psychological operations centre facilities in Kiev with high precision weapons. This is in order to suppress information attacks against Russia that have been happening for some time now. And while Moscow says it does everything it can to avoid hitting civilian areas, it has advised citizens to urge to leave the area and just to remind our viewers here, this is not confirmed footage, but of course we will let you know as soon as possible when we get word if this is legitimate or not".*

This was followed by a live report from Oksana Boyko ("OB") about attacks on Ukraine's information services, specifically a TV tower in Kiev, in which she and Donald Courter discussed media coverage of the wider conflict in Ukraine ("**the Boyko Report**").

DC: *"Well, joining me now in the studio is Oksana Boyko to discuss the information war that's going on right now. I mean, it seems like there are a lot of fake videos and fake information going on in the mainstream media, and yet we're the ones being blocked everywhere. Why is that?"*

OB: *"Well, because we are part uh right in the middle of a major information war. And, uh, I have to tell you that NATO analysts and people who work for NATO for a number of years now have been talking about the so-called cognitive warfare, which they saw as an alternative to a full kinetic warfare and many of the recommendations that they have been producing and now used by the Ukrainians. I mean, you heard that warning by the Russian Defence Ministry of the impending attack on the Information and Psychological Centre in Kiev. That centre has been responsible for an avalanche of phone terrorism here in Russia, because over the last couple of days we've been there's been a huge wave of, uh, various alerts of various building social infrastructure supposedly being bombed. You know, we are, uh, with the bombs planted there. We are talking about shopping malls, kindergartens, schools, et cetera. And it's not just a campaign of fakes. It's a very organised. It looks like chaos, but it's not. It's a, it's an organised, deliberate information campaign, and there's actually a precise definition of cognitive warfare that NATO has been committed to. It is defined as the use of public opinion by foreign forces, with the goal of applying influence on other nations and destabilising the population there. And I have to say that the United States has a long history of psychological operations the American Army established its first centre back in the 1960's. And it's, I think, well established now that the Ukrainians not only use the recommendations of various agencies but actually have, uh, specialists, uh, NATO specialist on the ground. In fact, today, Russia's Foreign Ministry said that behind this*

avalanche of fakes and you know, phone calls about impending terror attacks are special forces of NATO countries”.

DC: *“And why do you think it got to this point? Because, of course, there's, there's, there's been wars in the past that have been connected to Russia, but we've never seen this degree of censorship in the Western world before”.*

OB: *“Well, I think we need to keep it in perspective. There is a degree of censorship against a certain degree of censorship against our channel against our agencies, which are actually producing verified information about what at least people here in Moscow think about it. That is being blocked so the access of European and American citizens, people who are citizens of the world actually, to that kind of information is blocked. Meantime, we have a huge operation to infiltrate Russian airwaves, to affect the public opinion in this country through the use of, you know, various platforms through the use of various media, which don't even bother to verify the information. I don't know if you or if our viewers have seen that, but, for example, BBC the other day they ran the footage shot in Donetsk. You know, uh, sustained because of the Ukrainian artillery. And they present, they presented it as, uh, as a damage to the houses in Kharkov uh, supposedly done by the Russian Special Forces. And there are many, many, many, many, many, many examples of that. So obviously, uh, there is a deliberate effort to make sure that the Russian government crumbles, the under the pressure from its, its own population. That's, that's actually the goal of this cognitive warfare”.*

DC: *“Right, and it's, it's good that you mentioned that because in the West we're actually being accused of doing that kind of stuff. Let's show our viewers, uh, a statement connected to Facebook in Germany right now”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from Corrective, a German media outlet, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“You are not independent media. You are a state agency of the Russian government under the jurisdiction of Putin responsible for war crimes. You do not publish independent reports about the statements of Putin's politicians. You are a state integrated power propaganda tool that is published in the West with the intention of broadcasting the will of the Putin government in our country. You are permanently opposed to the foundations of the German press code. You can't have any claims against us”.

DC: *“So as you can see there, that's some pretty strong rhetoric. What can you talk about? What can you tell us about in terms of how tech giants have been part of this drive to censor alternative opinions?”*

OB: *“Well, it's not even an alternative opinion. It's, you know, it's an opinion from another side in a war. You know, you have to have access to it. I saw the YouTube logo there, and I want to tell you that you know, I have a kid eight years old and he watches YouTube under, you know, certain parental control settings. But even under those settings, he gets all that stream of Ukraine sponsored media about, you know, the*

Russians attacking Ukraine, killing civilians there. It's under the parental control settings, so it suggests that nothing is off limits. Even kids. I mean, the YouTube wasn't a huge controversy a few years back about targeting kids and how it, you know, operates, runs its children's operations. Now Russian kids are allowed to be the target of this campaign. While legitimate news sources like ourselves, we cannot even reach the adults we have banned from reaching the adults. But the Ukrainian propaganda and verified Ukrainian propaganda can be poured onto the Russian kids. Now, that's if that's if that's okay. I don't know what it's not".

DC: *"Okay, well, that certainly sounds like a double standard when".*

OB: *"Well, that was really well, we've long passed double standards. But if I can mention one example that I think needs to show, can show the link between all this avalanche of fakes and official politics, um, I think it was yesterday that the official android, official representative of Ukraine to the United Nations from the party, um of the United Nations demonstrated, uh, some fake, uh, supposed communication between, uh, an alleged Russian soldier and his mum. It took what appeared on some anonymous telegram channel in Ukraine, and it took only four hours between, you know, the appearance of that fake to, uh, the android presenting it from the podium of the United Nations. That's how fast it takes to disseminate this kind of information disease".*

Donald Courter then closed the programme:

DC: *"Oksana Boyko. Thanks a lot for joining us on the programme. Well, for more news, join us again in just about 30 minutes".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 16:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Donald Courter (“DC”) who presented the programme’s headlines:

DC: *“Breaking news. Ukrainian TV channel stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev’s network tower, according to unverified reports. On day six of Russia’s special operation, the Ukrainian army’s indiscriminate bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between front lines. We report from the Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of Ukrainian bombings”.*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person normally anymore. They buried them by the front door. Like animals”.*

Donald Courter continued with headline news about the wider conflict in Ukraine:

DC: *“The West is destroying the very rules that created. That’s according to Russia’s top diplomat as he addressed the UN officials about nuclear non-proliferation and human rights”.*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe, I believe today we’re all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone”.*

Donald Courter then introduced a live report from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina (“MF”) about an explosion at a TV tower in Kyiv (**“the Finoshina Report”**):

DC: *“Ukraine’s President makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances. Hello and welcome to our international special coverage of the war in Ukraine. I’m your host, Donald Courter. We start with breaking news. Ukrainian TV channels have stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev’s network tower, and that’s according to unverified reports. But now we’re going to go live to RT’s Maria Finoshina to get more details. She’s right now in Lugansk, People’s Republic. Hi, Maria! So what more do we know about the alleged Kiev TV tower incident?”*

MF: *“Yeah, good evening to you, Don. We hear just now from Ukraine’s Interior Ministry that the control room of the broadcaster on Kiev’s TV tower has been hit. This information is yet, hard to be verified, but there are reports that they were two strikes, and we are now receiving many still unverified video show in Kiev, TV tower and black smoke coming out from the building next to it. And also, one strike was caught again on the video that we cannot unfortunately so far verify. And we hear information that some Ukrainian TV channel stopped broadcasting and they’re talking about preparing like generators or other methods to restore their broadcasting. All that comes shortly*

after, earlier today, Russia's defence ministry issued the official warning saying is going to strike technological objects of Ukraine's security service and telecommunications facilities. Um, and calling on local residents, especially those living nearby near relay stations, to leave their houses. Here is the official statement”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations of the Ukrainian armed forces, as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine, using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations in Kiev will be hit with high precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia, as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs to leave their homes”.

Maria Finoshina continued:

MF: *“Shortly after that, we started receiving unverified videos from Kiev, especially from the city's railroad stations, showing people with no bags, with little bags, with backpacks or suitcases, with kids with no kids trying to get on a train and running in fear and panic. Since the beginning of it, special military operations in Ukraine Moscow has been always stressing that Moscow has no plans to occupy Ukraine and that it is not going to target residential areas. But of course, people are afraid and people since last week have been trying to flee to escape Ukraine. And now we hear from U N. that it could be possible that around four million people have already left Ukraine back to you”.*

DC: *“That's RT's Maria Finoshina, thanks for bringing us those details”.*

The programme then returned to Donald Courter in the studio with a report on fighting taking place across Ukraine (**“Courter Report 4”**):

DC: *“Now, this is all happening as fighting continues across Ukraine on day six of the Russian military operation. This map you're seeing on your screen now shows what's been happening with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported, Russia's defence ministry says the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's frontline and as for the Donetsk people's militia, they've reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. This is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region amid shelling by the Ukrainian Army. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the liberated settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply*

left the military vehicle with all of its equipment and ammunition intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital is nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city, as the government is said to be handing out weapons to civilians and released prisoners alike. Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest”.

Donald Courter then introduced a report from Murad Gazdiev (“MG”) from Donetsk (**“the Gazdiev Report”**):

DC: *“Now here's some footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of some shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles continuing to rage on. Local residents are absolutely terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost, eight years after Ukraine invaded and began indiscriminately bombing Donbass RT's correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

MG: *“The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov Sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and from a distance wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be until a week ago, a, a village well beyond the front lines. The Ukrainian positions were east of here, towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk people's public began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery, which, which devastated this village. There were many people here there now, much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house and other family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and try as they might not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of, blood, images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help”.*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

Donald Courter then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Ilya Petrenko ("IP") on statements made by Sergey Lavrov ("SV"), the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine ("**the Petrenko Report**"):

DC: *"Russia's top diplomat has addressed U. N officials on nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine. He spoke remotely because European countries blocked his plane from flying to Geneva. Ilya Petrenko has the details on Sergei Lavrov speech".*

IP: *"Enormous concerns voiced by the Russian top diplomat and also some very serious demands, and one of them, perhaps the most important is Europe. Without American nuclear weapons and also infrastructure for their potential deployment. Take a listen".*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *"It's unacceptable for us that in violation of basic provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there are still US nuclear weapons on the territory of several European countries. The misguided practice of joint nuclear missions involving non-nuclear NATO states is continuing. Such missions develop scenarios for using nuclear weapons against Russia. It's time to return US nuclear weapons to their origin country and dismantle all the infrastructure for those weapons in Europe. Now, as in the past, we believe there would be no winners in a nuclear war, and it must never start".*

IP: *"Well, I guess it's fair to say that Mr Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media, to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now, Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists, the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this, uh, anti-terrorist operations so called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region. Now, Sergey Lavrov also spoke of the unilateral sanctions that are currently being imposed by plenty of European countries and the countries across the Atlantic as well, calling them illegal. And here's what else, the foreign minister said about that".*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *"The West has clearly lost its self-control in trying to vent its anger against Russia. It's destroying all the institutions and rules it itself created, including the inviolability of property rights. The West's arrogant philosophy, based on its own feeling of superiority, exceptionalism and impunity must come to an end".*

IP: *"Shortly after we heard from the Russian top diplomat, we also heard a few things from the Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov was taking questions from journalists. Now a few important points that he made. Let me just go through the accusations against Russia, according to the Kremlin. The accusations of war crimes are nonsense, that's something Dmitry Peskov said. Besides this, Russia continues to consider*

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine. Another message for the Ukrainian leadership that came from Dmitry Peskov was that if Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as the leader of Ukraine, agrees to lay down arms in that case there will be no victims on either sides. Plus, we also heard from the Kremlin's press secretary that the accusations against Russia that Russia could be using cluster bombs or vacuum bombs is also complete lies".

The programme then returned to a report by Donald Courter in the studio, which included a clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the European Parliament:

DC: *"Now, Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow, however, refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and says it's been making major advances against the Ukrainian military. Ukraine's President has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union. At a special session of the EU parliament, Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed Kiev's willingness to accede in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven were at least the same as you. Prove you aren't letting us go. Prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness".*

DC: *"There might have been loud applause there, but European lawmakers and officials have not actually given any direct response to the Zelenskyy's plea. Referencing quote: 'sensitivities within the EU on enlargement'".*

Donald Courter then introduced a live report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders ("**the Dubenskij Report**"):

DC: *"But for more on this, we're actually going to go live now to our correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij in Paris. Hi there, Charlotte. So there have been a lot of pleas and statements made during the last few days. What have we heard from the EU session today?"*

CD: *"Well, that's right. I mean, the EU views this war in Ukraine from very different eyes to how it is being seen in Moscow. We know the EU is said to be preparing even more sanctions against Russia in the wake of this war, this invasion, as they describe it in you in Ukraine. And they say that the sanctions have already had a massive impact on the Russian economy know that the ruble has tanked in the last few days and that there are many people trying to get hold of their savings at banks and saying that they can't do that. However, the Europeans have also warned that the sanctions while they*

are hitting Russia right now, there will be a sense of them also hitting here in Europe as well. This is what Ursula von der Leyen had to say”.

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen (“UvdL”), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *“I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy too, I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic, and we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment, and this is the cost we are willing to pay because freedom is priceless honourable members, this is our principal. Freedom is priceless”.*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *“Well, just to give you a sense of what the EU is doing right now, it is sending arms to Ukraine some €450 to €500 million worth of weapons that are coming from countries that have previously been neutral. For example, Finland. We also know that Switzerland has decided that it will support the sanctions that have been laid out by the EU so far against Russia against companies and individuals. Now, just to give you a sense that the UK, who has also, which has also been sanctioning Russia and originally closed its airspace to Russia prior to the EU doing this, we know that the British Prime Minister was in Warsaw today in the capital of Poland. And he was questioned about the situation. A rather emotional question coming from a Ukrainian journalist who wondered why Boris Johnson, first of all, they said, we know why you're not in Kiev today, but also wondering why that there was going to be a no airspace drawn against Russian forces in Ukraine”.*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson (“BJ”) and a Ukrainian journalist (“UJ”) at a press conference:

UJ: *“Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. So you're coming to Poland. You're not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister, you're not coming to Lvov because you're afraid. I see that my family members, that my team members are saying that we are crying. We don't know where to run. This is what is happening Prime Minister”.*

BJ: *“Well, thank you, thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone. Unfortunately, the implication of that is that the U. K. and, will be engaged in, in shooting down uh Russian planes will be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do or that we've envisaged”.*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *“The EU and the UK treading a very fine line here. Now, there have been even more reports today coming out of Ukraine of civilians being killed in air strikes that are reportedly coming from the Russian side. And earlier today, Ukraine's President, as you mentioned there, had called once again for Ukraine to have this emergency ascension*

to the European Union. Ukraine has been asking for many years to become part of the European Union, and earlier on Tuesday, President Zelenskyy once again said Let's make this happen essentially. Now the EU's council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international, the democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack and he said this is geopolitical terrorism pure and simple and he also accused Russia of violating international law with this invasion in Ukraine. However, despite that being the majority view at least here in Europe there are some dissenting voices who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war".

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership as a red line for Russia The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

CD: *"Of course. The first set of talks were held on the border with Belarus between Ukraine and Russia on Monday, and there is a suggestion that those talks will continue. And that is what pretty much everybody wants to see at this at this stage, for both countries to be sat down and to be able to engage in talks to find a way out of this crisis, out of this war".*

DC: *"RT's Charlotte Dubenskij, Thanks a lot for giving us those updates".*

This was followed by a live report with Gregory Copley ("GC"), President of the International Strategic Studies Association, about the EU sanctions and their impact, and restrictions against RT and Sputnik (**"the Copley Report"**):

DC: *"Now we're going to cross live to Gregory Copley, President of the International Strategic Studies Association and the author of the new book The New Total War of the 21st Century. Thanks a lot for joining us, Gregory. So the first question I have for you is basically about these EU officials that are admitting that Europeans will suffer from sanctions against Russia. Do you think they're going to regret imposing them?"*

GC *"Absolutely. And I think this is the price they're paying for the relationship with the United States. The United States has literally controlled this situation over the last year or so, but particularly over the last couple of months, and the imposition of sanctions is going to definitely hurt the European Union states as well as possibly Russia. But it will also eventually hurt the US economy. The US has offered to compensate by increasing energy supplies to Germany, for example. But this is a very short-term measure and is not going to be helpful. Sanctions are in fact, a very, very precarious weapon to use. They can be used selectively but generally are used only to bolster public opinion in the imposing country rather than in the target country. Makes the country's feel good as though they've done something short of war. But the reality is that they have unintended consequences. And Russia has already after years of experiencing*

sanctions, particularly from Democratic Party government in the United States has found ways around that and has actually strengthened its economy as a result of these sanctions”.

DC: *“What we've seen the members of the EU parliament giving the standing ovation for the Ukrainian President's plea to join the bloc. Do you think a decision on that has already been made, been made or do you think reality is going to turn out to be more complicated?”*

GC: *“Well, the decision has been made already because of the rules of the European Union itself. There's an accession process which requires candidates states to go through economic restructuring so that they conform to EU ideals. And the Ukraine has had several years, many years, actually to prepare for this if it really wished to do so. But it has done nothing to harmonise its economic situation, its rules and regulations, and its corruption in particular so that Ukraine could be a viable candidate of the European Union. So really, candidacy in the European Union is not something which could happen quickly. It's probably not something which could have ever happened at all, given Ukraine's reluctance to conform to Western standards and in any event, it's looking to be a member of a union, which is of declining relevance, declining strategic importance and declining viability”.*

DC: *“Well, I want to bring the discussion towards the exchange of information between East and West. Why are social media companies like Meta, YouTube and TikTok blocking RT and Sputnik? Do you think on their platforms in the EU?”*

GC: *“Well, I think we've seen for the last few years, particularly with the Covid 19 crisis, that the social media platforms are very populist in their approach. They tend to follow the dictates of the, for example, the Democratic Party in the United States. They are very, very populist left wing, and this means that they are really following whatever the Biden administration wants at this stage. So it's no surprise at all. Frankly, I thought that there would have been even more severe, uh, constraints on the social media, by the social media against Russian, Russia voicing its opinions”.*

DC: *“Well, I mean staying on this topic. Other media outlets have been accused of bias, of course. Why do you think RT of all of the outlets there are in the world, is being singled out?”*

GC: *“Because RT is the most visible and the most successful. It has a high degree of credibility, and I have faced these questions in the last few days myself as to, uh, RT's position. And RT has endeavoured to be, to provide a far more balanced point of view than most propaganda stations. Which Voice of America, for example, has become I mean, so they've lost credibility. RT has credibility and therefore penetration of markets because of the way it presents news. Okay, you can find instances where certain news items might appear to be more pro-Russian than pro US. For example, that's a normal sort of journalistic stance. Every journalist has their own bias, but RT has high credibility. It's really an authoritative voice for reason coming from Moscow.*

So naturally it's going to be regarded as a threat by the Biden administration in particular and certainly in Western Europe”.

DC: *“Gregory Copley, President of the International Strategic Studies Association and author of the book The New Total War of the 21st Century. Thanks a lot for joining us”.*

GC: *“Thank you”.*

Donald Courter then closed the programme:

DC: *“Well, if you want to see more of our special coverage on the war in Ukraine, make sure to stick around in just about 30 minutes”.*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 17:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott (“PS”), who presented the programme’s headlines:

PS: *“Breaking news this hour on RT. Ukrainian TV channels stop broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev’s network tower. That’s according to unverified reports. On day six of Russia’s military intervention, the Ukrainian Army’s alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People’s Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost eight years after the conflict started”.*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *“This is too much. They don’t even let you bury a person normally anymore. They buried them by the front door. Like animals”.*

Peter Scott continued with headline news about the wider conflict in Ukraine (“**Scott Report**”):

PS: *“The West is destroying the very rules it’s created. That’s according to Russia’s top diplomat, as he addressed UN officials about nuclear non-proliferation and human rights”.*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (“VZ”) was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *“We’re fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we’re all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone”.*

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *“Ukraine’s President makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances. You’re watching RT International and wherever you’re joining us from, welcome to the programme. And we start with breaking news this hour. Ukrainian TV channels have stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev’s network tower. That’s according to unverified reports. Let’s get more details from RT’s Maria Finoshina who is in the Lugansk Republic. Maria, what more do we know about this alleged Kiev TV tower incident?”*

This was followed by a live report from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina (“MF”) about an explosion at a TV tower in Kyiv (“**Finoshina Report 2**”):

MF: *“Yeah, hi, we now hear from Ukrainian Interior Ministry that the control room of the broadcaster on Kiev’s TV tower has been hit. We also hear reports that we cannot yet verify to this moment that there were two strikes, and we are now receiving many, yet unverified, videos showing Kiev’s TV tower and black smoke, heavy smoke coming out from the building next to the tower, and one strike was caught on the video too. But again, we cannot verify those videos so far. We also hear that several Ukrainian*

channels have stopped their broadcasting and they are talking about preparing backup methods, backup generators to restore their work. We cannot verify the information on casualties, but we heard again from Ukraine's Culture Minister that no one was killed during this attack. All this came shortly after, earlier today, Russia's Defence Ministry issued the official warning, saying that their forces are going to strike telecommunication objects and technological objects of Ukraine's Security Service and relay stations. And also, in this warning, they called on all local residents living nearby to leave their homes. This is the official statement”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations of the Ukrainian armed forces as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine, using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations in Kiev will be hit with high-precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia, as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs, to leave their homes”.

Maria Finoshina continued:

MF: *“Shortly after the, shortly after this warning was issued, we started receiving unverified videos showing people in Kiev, especially railroad stations of the city, running in panic and fear trying to escape, trying to leave the city. Some of them were with bags, some of them with no bags at all, with pets, with children. So, it's clear that people got scared following these warnings. But since the beginning of its special operation in Ukraine, Moscow has always been stressing that Russia has no plans of occupying Ukraine and has no plans to target residential areas or affect ordinary people, innocent civilian population. But still, it's clear that people are afraid, and we now hear from UN, they say that around four million people have possibly already left Ukraine. Back to you”.*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about fighting across Ukraine, including the Donbass region (“**Scott Report 2**”):

PS: *“Thank you very much for that update, Maria, on that developing situation. RT's Maria Finoshina reporting live from the Lugansk Republic. That's as fighting continues across Ukraine on day six of the Russian military intervention. This map shows what's been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's Defence Ministry says Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond the previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential*

buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned there may be still victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its ammunition and equipment intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest”.

This was followed by a live interview with Vladimir Chizhov (“VC”), the Permanent Russian Representative to the EU (“**Chizhov Interview**”):

- PS: *“And we can cross live now to Vladimir Chizhov, who is the permanent Russian representative to the EU. Vladimir Chizhov, welcome to the programme. Now, the first question, I guess, is, is the level of pressure by the EU unprecedented? Has it surprised many people, or is it proportionate? Is it a proportionate response?”*
- VC: *“Of course it is unprecedented. Russia-EU relations have seen their ups and downs over the years. But what we witnessed today, it's certainly beyond any comprehension. Why, uh, is it so? One can only guess. Perhaps the European Union wants to prove its relevance in the situation, that it is able to produce some influence on what is happening. But your guess would be as good as mine”.*
- PS: *“Well, talking about EU responses, RT, this channel, has been banned from the airwaves in the EU, and YouTube has also banned our online channel. What do you make of this response and what sort of precedent do you think it sets for free speech?”*
- VC: *“It sets a very bad precedent because this is a trend that has been witnessed, not only in the European Union, but on a global scale. There is a politicised approach to the media and to the freedom of speech. Actually, if you look at Ukraine where the conflict is unfolding, a number of TV channels have been banned in the recent weeks and months by the Kiev authorities. So, nothing unusual. Of course, RT is, I would say, a beloved target for, um, Western regulators and Western governments. It is not even regarded as a member of the world media but is portrayed as a propaganda channel. Though I believe it's, uh, beyond just the current crisis, I believe it's a case of unfair competition from those who find themselves lagging behind in terms of popularity, uh, of lagging behind RT”.*
- PS: *“Now, what do you make of a recent comment by the French Finance Minister saying that Europe is going to wage a financial war on Russia?”*
- VC: *“Well, it sounds quite unusual for a finance minister to speak in terms of war and peace. Uh, financial war might drag other countries, if Russia proceeds to certain countermeasures, along that track. And it doesn't help anyone in the end”.*

- PS: *"And well, as part of this financial war being waged, Vladimir Putin himself and other top officials have been sanctioned. How unprecedented is this move, and what do you think it could lead to?"*
- VC: *"Well, it is certainly unprecedented. It is also illogical and difficult even to explain and to understand because, if the aim of these sanctions is to influence Russian state policy and the views of the Russian President, that is irrational because that aim will not be achieved by these symbolic sanctions. And trying to locate non-existent assets of President Putin in Europe or elsewhere in the world, uh, is just ridiculous".*
- PS: *"And talking of sanctions as well, EU officials insist that Russian people who are not responsible for the current crisis aren't the ones targeted by these sanctions. But aren't they the ones that will suffer? I mean, one could also say that they are already feeling some of these sanctions already".*
- VC: *"Yes, indeed. And as you phrased it yourself in one of your previous questions, uh, the French Finance Minister was speaking about a financial war, and financial war has an impact on, not only on governments, but on the public opinion, on the ordinary people as well. And when representatives of the European Union are talking in such wording as, as putting as a target, uh, degrading Russian economy, what would that mean for the average Russian consumer?"*
- PS: *"And looking to the future now, and I know that the situation is extremely fluid and is still developing. But do you think that Russia will ever be able to restore its relations with the EU? Or have we gone past the point of no return?"*
- VC: *"Well, I am a born optimist. Otherwise, I wouldn't have chosen this job. Uh, as I said, in the beginning, our relations with the European Union have seen their ups and downs. We are now well down. But certainly, I hope, and I look forward to the time when those relations will, uh, return to their normal state".*
- PS: *"Well, don't we all? Vladimir Chizhov, thank you very much for your insights into this crisis and for your time. That's Vladimir Chizhov, permanent Russian representative to the EU, the UN, sorry the EU".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk (**Gazdiev Report**):

- PS: *"Well, here's footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".*
- MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist*

battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my*

grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, if I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme then returned to a report by Peter Scott in the studio, which included a clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's ("VZ") address to the European Parliament ("**Scott Report 3**"):

PS: *"Well, Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and says it's been making major advances against Ukrainian military. Ukraine's President has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union. At a special session of the EU Parliament, Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed Kiev's willingness to accede in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven where at least the same as you. Prove you aren't letting us go, prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders ("**Dubenskij Report 2**"):

PS: *"But despite the loud applause, European lawmakers and officials have not given any direct response to Zelenskyy's plea referencing, quote, sensitivities within the EU on enlargement. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"The EU views this war in Ukraine from very different eyes to how it is being seen in Moscow. We know the EU is said to be preparing even more sanctions against Russia in the wake of this war, this invasion, as they describe it in Ukraine. And they say that the sanctions have already had a massive impact on the Russian economy. We know that the ruble has tanked in the last few days and that there are many people trying to get hold of their savings at banks and saying that they can't do that. However, the Europeans have also warned that the sanctions, while they are hitting Russia right now, there will be a sense of them also hitting here in Europe as well. This is what Ursula von der Leyen had to say".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen ("UvdL"), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy too. I know this and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic and we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price, but this is a defining moment, and this is the cost we are willing to pay because freedom is priceless, honourable members. This is our principle. Freedom is priceless".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Well, just to give you a sense of what the EU is doing right now, it is sending arms to Ukraine, some €450 to 500 million worth of weapons that are coming from countries that have previously been neutral, for example Finland. We also know that Switzerland has decided that it will support the sanctions that have been laid out by the EU so far against Russia, against companies and individuals. Now, just to give you a sense that the UK, who has also, which has also been sanctioning Russia and originally closed its airspace to Russia prior to the EU doing this. We know that the British Prime Minister was in Warsaw today, in the capital of Poland, and he was questioned about the situation, a rather emotional question coming from a Ukrainian journalist".*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson ("BJ") and a Ukrainian journalist ("UJ") at a press conference:

UJ: *"And Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. So, you're coming to Poland. You're not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister. You're not coming to Lvov. Because you're afraid. I see that my family members, that my team members are saying that we are crying, we don't have anywhere to run. This is what is happening, Prime Minister".*

BJ: *"Well, thank you. Thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone, unfortunately, the implication of that is that the, the UK would be*

engaged in shooting down Russian planes, will be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do or that we've envisaged".

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rules-based international order, democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack. And he said, this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple. However, despite that being the majority view, at least here in Europe, there are some dissenting voices who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war".*

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel ("AW") speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Of course, the first set of talks were held on the border with Belarus between Ukraine and Russia on Monday, and there is a suggestion that those talks will continue and that is what pretty much everybody wants to see at this stage, for both countries to be sat down and to be able to engage in talks to find a way out of this crisis, out of this war".*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *"Well, that's all for this hour. My name is Peter Scott, and I'll be back again in just over 30 minutes with all the latest developments on that unfolding Ukraine crisis. Thank you for watching".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 18:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott, who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Ukrainian TV channels stop broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower. That's according to unverified reports. On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door. Like animals".*

Peter Scott continued with headline news about the wider conflict in Ukraine ("**Scott Report 4**"):

PS: *"The West is destroying the very rules it created. That's according to Russia's top diplomat, as he addressed UN officials about non-nuclear proliferation and human rights".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger, and without you, Ukraine will be alone".*

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"Ukraine's President makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina ("**Finoshina Report 2**"):

PS: *"You're watching RT International live from Moscow. My name is Peter Scott and, wherever you're joining us from, welcome to the programme. We start with breaking news this hour. Ukrainian TV channels have stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower. That's according to unverified reports. With more details, here's RT's Maria Finoshina".*

MF: *"We now hear from Ukrainian Interior Ministry that the control room of the broadcaster on Kiev's TV tower has been hit. We also hear reports that we cannot yet verify to this moment that there were two strikes, and we are now receiving many yet unverified videos showing Kiev's TV tower and black smoke, heavy smoke coming out from the building next to the tower, and one strike was caught on the video too. But again, we cannot verify those videos so far. We also hear that several Ukrainian channels have stopped their broadcasting and they are talking about preparing, um,*

uh, backup methods, backup generators to restore their work. We, we cannot verify the information on casualties, but we heard again from Ukraine's Culture Minister that no one was killed during this attack. All this came shortly after, earlier today, Russia's Defence Ministry issued the official warning, saying that their forces are going to strike telecommunication objects and technological objects of Ukraine's Security Service and relay stations. Uh, and also in this warning, they called on all local residents living nearby to leave their homes. This is the official statement”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations of the Ukrainian armed forces as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine, using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations in Kiev will be hit with high-precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia, as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs, to leave their homes”.

Maria Finoshina continued:

MF: *“Shortly after this warning was issued, we started receiving unverified videos showing people in Kiev, especially in railroad stations of the city, running in panic and fear, trying to escape, trying to leave the city. Uh, some of them were with bags, some of them with no bags at all, with pets, with children. Uh, so it's clear that people got scared following these warnings. But since the beginning of its special operation in Ukraine, Moscow has always been stressing that, uh, Russia has no plans of occupying Ukraine and has no plans to target residential areas or affect ordinary people, innocent civilian population. But still, it's clear that people are afraid, and we now hear from UN, they say that around four million people have possibly already left Ukraine”.*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about fighting across Ukraine, including the Donbass region (“**Scott Report 5**”):

PS: *“That’s as fighting continues across Ukraine on day six of the Russian military intervention. This map shows what's been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting has been reported. Russia's Defence Ministry claims the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble. That's as the rescue operation continues. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of*

Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the military vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city, as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest”.

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev (“MG”) from Donetsk (“**Gazdiev Report**”):

PS: *“And here is footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of an apparent shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after Ukraine invaded and beginning indiscriminately bombing the Donbass. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

MG: *“The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov Sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here, just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev. And that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery, which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help”.*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of, of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door. Like animals. I'm not crying for myself, I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, 'if I leave here, where will I go?' No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme then returned to a report by Peter Scott in the studio, which included a clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the European Parliament ("**Scott Report 6**"):

PS: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Now Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and claims it's been making major advances against Ukrainian military. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union. At a special session of the EU Parliament, Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed Kiev's willingness to accede in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger, and without you Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven we're at least the same as you. Prove you aren't letting us go. Prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders ("**Dubenskij Report 2**")

PS: *"But despite the loud applause, European lawmakers and officials have not given any direct response to Zelenskyy's plea, referencing, quote, sensitivities within the EU on enlargement. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"The EU views this war in Ukraine from very different eyes to how it is being seen in Moscow. We know the EU is said to be preparing even more sanctions against Russia in the wake of this war, this invasion as they describe it, in, in Ukraine. And they say that the sanctions have already had a massive impact on the Russian economy. We know that the ruble has tanked in the last few days and that there are many people trying to get hold of their savings out of banks and saying that they can't do that. However, the Europeans have also warned that the sanctions, while they are hitting Russia right now, there will be a sense of them also hitting here in Europe as well. This is what Ursula von der Leyen had to say".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen ("UvdL"), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy too. I know this and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic and we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment, and this is the cost we are willing to pay because freedom is priceless, honourable members. This is our principle. Freedom is priceless".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Well, just to give you a sense of what the EU is doing right now, it is sending arms to Ukraine. Some €450 to €500 million worth of weapons that are coming from countries that have previously been neutral, for example Finland. We also know that Switzerland has decided that it will support the sanctions that have been laid out by the EU so far against Russia, against companies and individuals. Now, just to give you a sense that the UK, who has also, which has also been sanctioning Russia and originally closed its airspace to Russia prior to the EU doing this, we know that the British Prime Minister was in Warsaw today, in the capital of Poland, and he was questioned about the situation, a rather emotional question coming from a Ukrainian journalist".*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson ("BJ") and a Ukrainian journalist ("UJ") at a press conference:

UJ: *"And Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. So, you are coming to Poland, you are not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister, you are not coming to Lvov, because you're afraid. I see that my family members, that my team members are saying that we are crying. We don't have anywhere to run. This is what is happening, Prime Minister".*

BJ: *"Well, thank you. Thank you very much for, for your questions and when you talk about the no-fly zone. Unfortunately, the implication of that is that the UK and, will be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, will be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do or that we've, that we've envisaged".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes as geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rules-based international order, democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack. And he said this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple. However, despite that being the majority view at least here in Europe, there are some dissenting voices, who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war".*

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Of course, the first set of talks were held on the border with Belarus between Ukraine and Russia on Monday, and there is a suggestion that those talks will continue. And that is what pretty much everybody wants to see at this stage, for both countries to be sat down and to be able to engage in talks to find a way out of this crisis, out of this war".*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio and a live interview with Martin Summers ("MS") an independent journalist, about EU support of Ukraine ("**the Summers Interview**"):

PS: *"Well, for more on this, we can cross live now to Martin Summers, independent journalist and writer on Eastern Europe. Welcome to the programme, Martin. How do you think the West's mass new pledges of arms will shift the conflict in Ukraine?"*

MS: *"Well, it's entirely symbolic. Um, in a sense, it's, it doesn't achieve anything at all. The military situation is pretty clear. The Russian Federation has got all the forces it needs to conquer the Ukraine. The question is, what, what will they do if they did? There's talk of having an insurgency if such a conquest took place. I suppose the insurgency in Afghanistan in the 1980s is the kind of thing that people are thinking of. Um, it's entirely destructive and for no, for no military purpose".*

PS: *"I mean, what do you think the alternative would be, then?"*

MS: *"Well, um, the discussion of sanctions by the EU makes more sense, but it makes, but it's still silly, in my view. We really need for the Western powers to take responsibility for what led up to this crisis. The coup in 2014 in Ukraine was carried out with violence, including the murder of demonstrators, which court cases Kiev have shown were carried out by a NATO-backed death squad. Now, Russian public opinion knows these facts. Western public opinion, if you were to ask any of these people on the screen now, do they know that the demonstrators in Maidan Square in 2014 were killed by a NATO death squad, I'm sure they would look at you blankly. But there has already been a court case which has proved exactly that. The Western powers have provoked this all along and have now worked themselves up into a frenzy of, uh, outrage about the whole situation. I think it's possible that people in Ukraine have got a more realistic understanding of what's required to bring this fighting to an end and find a solution which will work for everybody".*

PS: *"We heard the EU parliamentarians loudly applauding the Ukrainian President and his plea to join the bloc. Now, despite those loud applause, do you think it's realistic that the Ukraine would join the EU?"*

MS: *"Not really. If you think about it, and I used to work in Eastern Europe in the nineties, and we used to talk about the *acquis communautaire*, the fact that, if you wanted to join the EU, you've got to accept all the EU rules and regulations as already put together. Now, some countries in the Balkans have not been allowed to join because they haven't reached the *acquis communautaire*. Kosovo, for example, which incidentally became independent on the back of a 78 day bombing campaign by NATO that killed thousands of people, including civilians, and attacked infrastructure, including the Belgrade TV station, because it was supposedly a nest of lies and therefore the journalists were fair game. Now, there's such a lot of hypocrisy here. I don't know where to begin, and that doesn't mean that I'm at all happy about the terrible situation that we find ourselves in".*

PS: *"Now, our channel RT has been blocked by social media companies. Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Sputnik as well. Why, in your opinion, do you think they've done that? And what precedent do you think it sets for free speech?"*

MS: *"Well, they've done it because it's another, it's another knee jerk reaction. I mean, Keir Starmer called for the banning of RT in the Parliament here in Britain, and then the government went along with that. It's not clear whether they want to do, well they can do it, I mean, they could, but by doing it, you're basically saying 'we don't want to hear what the other side have got to say'. Um, and that's all very well, but that's, that's a move on the chessboard. And therefore, anybody who wants to know an alternative view will know where they've got to go. It's like banning the Sex Pistols or the Rolling Stones, isn't it? Wasn't necessarily a very effective strategy by those who didn't want to hear the music".*

PS: *"No, it certainly wasn't. And the talks, the peace talks so far have yielded little to no success. How do you rate their chances over the next couple of days or so?"*

MS: *"I don't rate them very highly, but I'm very glad that they are taking place, because if people carry on talking, even while fighting continues, it means that, at some point, common ground will be found. I think the only reason that Zelenskyy is talking to Russia and talking to the Donbass separatists is because of the violence that's been going on. They've had eight years to settle this, and they've been put, they've been put under no pressure, particularly by the French and the Germans, who are the guarantors of the Minsk agreement, they have been put under no pressure to negotiate. That's what should have been happening and if they'd been put under pressure to negotiate, this could all have been resolved years ago. And Zelenskyy was actually elected on a peace platform that he would negotiate. And then pressure was put on him, not only by the far right in the Ukraine but also by the Western powers, not to negotiate, because there is a faction within the West that wants a confrontation with Russia for its own reasons. No doubt the oil and gas industry in the US are now very pleased that Nord Stream Two has finally been cancelled. So, from their point of view, all of this is good. And, as you saw earlier with, with Boris Johnson, in actual fact, they've never had any intention of fighting for the Ukraine. And that should have been made clear to the Ukrainians from the get-go".*

PS: *"Martin Summers, I'm afraid that's all we have time for now. Martin Summers, independent journalist. Thank you very much for your time and insight".*

MS: *"Thank you".*

This was followed by a report from Peter Scott on anti-war rallies in Russia ("**Scott Report 7**"):

PS: *"And now to Russia's northern capital, where people have gathered for a sixth day of anti-war rallies. Local media report that some 150 people took to the central streets of St Petersburg. At least 50 have been taken into custody, with some being knocked over during the detentions. People have been heard chanting 'no war', demanding an end to Russia's special operation in Ukraine. That's what President Putin calls it".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Ilya Petrenko (“IP”) on statements made by Sergey Lavrov (“SV”), the Russian Foreign Minister, about nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine (**the Petrenko Report**):

PS: *“Russia's top diplomat has addressed UN officials on nuclear disarmament and human rights with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine. He spoke remotely because European countries blocked his plane from flying to Geneva. RT's Ilya Petrenko has the details on Sergey Lavrov's speech”.*

IP: *“Enormous concerns voiced by the Russian top diplomat and also some very serious demands. And one of them, perhaps the most important, is Europe without American nuclear weapons, and also infrastructure for their potential deployment. Take a listen”.*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *“It is unacceptable for us that, in violation of basic provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there are still US nuclear weapons on the territory of several European countries. The misguided practise of joint nuclear missions involving non-nuclear NATO states is continuing. Such missions develop scenarios for using nuclear weapons against Russia. It's time to return US nuclear weapons to their origin country and dismantle all the infrastructure for those weapons in Europe. Now, as in the past, we believe there would be no winner in a nuclear war, and it must never start”.*

IP: *“Well, I guess it's fair to say that Mr Lavrov's second statement was mostly a response to the Western media, to American and European officials who keep saying that the military action on the Ukrainian territory that is now underway by the Russian military forces was unprovoked. Now, Mr Lavrov kept reminding the journalists, the officials how, after the 2014 coup in Kiev, the rights of the Russian speaking population, the rights of the pro-Russian majority in the eastern parts of the country were constantly violated. How there were restrictions when it comes to the use of Russian language. How the operation, the so-called anti-terrorist operation by the Kiev forces, went on for almost eight years. And we do remember that more than 13,000 civilians were killed as a result of this, uh, anti-terrorist operations so-called in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region. Now, Sergey Lavrov also spoke of the unilateral sanctions that are currently being imposed by plenty of European countries and the countries across the Atlantic as well, calling them illegal. Here's what else the Foreign Minister said about that”.*

A clip of Sergey Lavrov was then shown, with an English voiceover:

SL: *“The West has clearly lost its self-control in trying to vent its anger against Russia. It's destroying all the institutions and rules it itself created, including the inviolability of property rights. The West's arrogant philosophy, based on its own feeling of superiority, exceptionalism and impunity must come to an end”.*

IP: *“Shortly after we heard from the Russian top diplomat, we also heard a few things from the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, who was taking questions from*

journalists. Now, a few important points that he made, let me just go through. The accusations against Russia, according to the Kremlin, the accusations of war crimes are nonsense, that's something Dmitry Peskov said. Besides this, Russia continues to consider Volodymyr Zelenskyy the President of Ukraine, another message for the Ukrainian leadership that came from Dmitry Peskov was that, if Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as the leader of Ukraine, agrees to lay down arms, in that case, there will be no victims on either side. Plus, we also heard from the Kremlin's Press Secretary that the accusations against Russia that Russia could be using cluster bombs or vacuum bombs is also complete lies".

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *"Well, that's a wrap for this hour. For any more on those stories and the unfolding Ukraine crisis, head over to RT.com. My name is Peter Scott. I'm going to be back again in just around 30 minutes".*

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 19:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott ("PS"), who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Ukrainian TV channels stop broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower, that's according to unverified reports. On day six of Russia's military incursion the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict".*

This was followed by pre-recorded a clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They buried them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"I believe today we're all showing that the union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone".*

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"Ukraine's President makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina ("MF") about an explosion at a TV tower in Kyiv ("**Finoshina Report 2**"):

PS: *"It's just gone ten PM here in the Russian capital, and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to 30 minutes of news here on RT International. And we start with breaking news. Ukrainian TV channels have stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower. That's according to unverified report. With more details here's RT's Maria Finoshina".*

MF: *"We now hear from Ukrainian Interior Ministry that the control room of the broadcaster of Kiev's TV Tower has been hit. We also hear reports that we cannot yet verify at this moment that there were two strikes, and we are now receiving many, yet unverified, videos showing Kiev's TV tower and black smoke, heavy smoke, coming out from the building next to the tower, and one strike was caught on the video too. But again, we cannot verify those videos so far. We also hear that several Ukrainian channels have stopped their broadcasting and they are talking about preparing backup methods, backup generators to restore their work. We heard again from Ukraine's Culture Minister that no one was killed during this attack. This came shortly after earlier today, Russia's defence ministry issued the official warning, saying that their*

forces are going to strike technological objects of Ukraine's security service and relay stations. This is the official statement”.

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine, using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd main centre of information and psychological operations in Kiev will be hit with high precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs to leave their homes”.

Maria Finoshina continued:

MF: *“Shortly after this warning was issued, we started receiving unverified videos showing people in Kiev, especially railroad stations of the city, running in panic and fear trying to escape, trying to leave the city. Some of them were with bags, some of them with no bags at all, with pets, with children. So, it's clear that people got scared following these warnings. But since the beginning of its special operation in Ukraine, Moscow has always been stressing that Russia has no plans of occupying Ukraine and has no plans to target residential areas or affect ordinary people, innocent civilian population. But still, it's clear that people are afraid, and we now hear from UN, they say that around four million people have possibly already left Ukraine”.*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about fighting across Ukraine, including the Donbass region (“**Scott Report 8**”):

PS: *“Well that’s as fighting continues across Ukraine on day six of the Russian military intervention. This map shows what's been happening with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported, Russia’s defence ministry claims the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned that there may be still victims under the rubble as rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the vehicle with all its equipment and ammo intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The*

Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest”.

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev (“MG”) from Donetsk (“**Gazdiev Report**”):

PS: *And here’s footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified with people’s lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports”.*

MG: *“The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here just west of Donetsk still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there, they moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev, and that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk people’s republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery which, which devastated this village. There were many people here though now, much fewer. We’ve heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It’s a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don’t want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help”.*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *“His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived”.*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *“The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn’t eat or leave the shelter”.*

MG: [English subtitles] *“So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?”*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *“Yes”.*

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka in a school basement underground people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door, like animals. I'm not crying for myself. I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, If I leave here, where will I go? No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

MG: *"On the outskirts one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme then returned to a report by Peter Scott in the studio, which included a clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the European Parliament ("**Scott Report 9**"):

PS: *"Kiev accuses Moscow of aggression and says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and says its been making major advances against Ukrainian military. Ukraine's president has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union at a special session of the EU parliament Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed Kiev's willingness to accede as in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the block".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger and without you, Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength proven where at least the same as you prove you aren't letting us go, prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders ("**Dubenskij Report 2**"):

PS: *"But despite the loud applause, European lawmakers and officials have not given any direct response to Zelensky's plea referencing quote: sensitivities within the EU on enlargement. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"The EU views this war in Ukraine from very different eyes to how it is being seen in Moscow. We know the EU is said to be preparing even more sanctions against Russia in the wake of this war, this invasion, as they describe it in Ukraine. And they say that the sanctions have already had a massive impact on the Russian economy. We know that the ruble has tanked in the last few days and that there are many people trying to get hold of their savings at banks and saying that they can't do that. However, the Europeans have also warned that the sanctions, while they are hitting Russia right now, there will be a sense of them also hitting here in Europe as well. This is what Ursula von der Leyen had to say".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen ("UvdL"), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy too. I know this and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic and we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price, but this is a defining moment and this is the cost we are willing to pay because freedom is priceless, honourable members. This is our principal. Freedom is priceless".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Well, just to give you a sense of what the EU is doing right now, it is sending arms to Ukraine, some 450 to 500 million euros worth of weapons that are coming from countries that have previously been neutral. For example, Finland. We also know that Switzerland has decided that it will support the sanctions that have been laid out by the EU so far against Russia, against companies and individuals. Now, just to give you a sense that the UK, which has also which has also been sanctioning Russia and originally closed its airspace to Russia prior to the EU doing this. We know that the British Prime Minister was in Warsaw today in the capital of Poland and he was questioned about the situation. A rather emotional question coming from a Ukrainian journalist".*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson ("BJ") and a Ukrainian journalist ("UJ") at a press conference:

UJ: *"And Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. So, you're coming to Poland. You're not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister. You're not coming to Lvov. Because you're afraid. I see that my family members that my team members are saying that we are crying, we don't have anywhere to run. This is what is happening, Prime Minister".*

BJ: *"Well, thank you. Thank you very much for your questions. And when you talk about the no-fly zone, unfortunately, the implication of that is that the, the UK would be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, would be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do, that we've envisaged".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes a geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rule based international democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel are also under attack. And he said, this is geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple. However, despite that being the majority view, at least here in Europe there are some dissenting voices who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war".*

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel ("AW") speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership as a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Of course the first set of talks were held on the border with Belarus between Ukraine and Russia on Monday, and there is a suggestion that those talks will continue and that is what pretty much everybody wants to see at this stage for both countries to be sat down and to be able to engage in talks to find a way out of this crisis, out of this war".*

This was followed by a live interview with Alfred de Zayas ("AdZ"), a former UN independent expert ("**the de Zayas Interview**");

PS: *"Well, to further discuss this ongoing war in Ukraine, we are joined live now by Alfred de Zayas, who is a former UN independent expert on the promotion of democratic and equitable international order. Welcome to RT International".*

AdZ: *"Good evening".*

PS: *"Good evening. Now, do you think this conflict was inevitable? And what do you think could have been done to avoid it?"*

AdZ: *"Well, it was certainly not inevitable, and there were plenty of opportunities to reach a sensible compromise. I mean, the Russian Government has made implementable pragmatic proposals which, unfortunately, my secretary, uh of State Anthony Blinken has simply dismissed. As also, the leadership of NATO has dismissed. We remember about 10 days ago, Jen Stoltenberg in Munich, saying that if Russia doesn't want to have NATO at its doorstep, well, it's going to get more NATO, not less. Now this is stoking the tension. This is throwing fuel on the fire. This is provoking. Now the United Nations Charter, which is the world constitution, obviously prohibits the use of force. So, the aggression on Ukraine is illegal. On the other hand, it also prohibits the threat of the use of force. And, uh, NATO has been provoking again and again and again and also violating Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that prohibits propaganda for war. I mean, NATO wants this. It's, uh, I think that it would have been super easy for, uh, the Western powers to accept that the best solution would be to have a declaration of neutrality for Ukraine. And then Ukraine could have the best relations, commercial and otherwise, with the West and with the East. But we have here a problem of an information war in which the level of lying, the level of fake news and fake history and fake law has reached such points that people cannot talk to each other".*

PS: *"It's very tricky, isn't it, Alfred, at the moment to figure out exactly what is going on. I apologise for interrupting you. Now talking about the West role in this conflict. What do you make of the weapons that are being supplied to Ukraine? You can certainly understand if you were the Ukrainian side facing such a force, you would appreciate some backup".*

AdZ: *"Certainly. On the other hand, it's not wise on the part of NATO because you want to stop the fighting. You want to stop this war. The only way to stop this war is to reach a compromise. Now, back in 1962 Cuban missile crisis, there was a quid pro quo. The Soviets took the missiles away from Cuba. The Americans took the missiles away from Turkey. Now Russia says: look, you made assurances in 1989, 90 and 91. They're down in the minutes. We can confirm them. You're not supposed to expand eastwards. Now NATO started already around 1997 expanding eastwards. There were warnings. Our best diplomat at the time, George Frost Kennan alerted that this was a needless provocation. The last American Ambassador in the Soviet Union, that was Jack Matlock. He explained that it was really irresponsible, unprofessional of, uh, the United States and NATO to do this. And the responsibility goes to Bill Clinton goes, to George W. Bush goes to Barak Obama. Now many other experts have already indicated that there are what may be termed precedents of permissibility when NATO destroys the*

territorial integrity of Yugoslavia in 1999, violates the UN Charter, aggresses Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria without any approval by the United Nations. And gets away with it. NATO commits war crimes, crimes against humanity, gets away with it. Well, obviously, the authority of the UN Charter, the authority of the United Nations, has been weakened. Similarly, when you have the Helsinki Final Act, that would prohibit all of this that was happening. When you have the Minsk Agreement, Article 11, and then neither Poroshenko, nor Zelenskyy want to implement the Minsk agreement. The organisation of security and cooperation in Europe does nothing. The Normandy group does nothing. Well, I mean, that was asking for trouble and trouble we have”.

PS: *“I’m afraid I’ve got time for one more question. You mentioned a series of interventions there and previous conflicts. Given the way this one is shaping out, do you see their chance of becoming a protracted conflict, not dissimilar to Afghanistan?”*

AdZ: *“Well, it won’t be like Afghanistan, because this, after all, is Europe. But, I don’t see the use of nuclear weapons in Europe. I don’t see a third World War. What I do see the possibility of a protracted, uh, conflict. My hope would be that the negotiators in Belarus tomorrow will realise that someone has to give here, and the other one has to do something there. So, uh, some sort of commitment that Ukraine will not enter NATO. That might be enough to stop the fighting”.*

PS: *“Well, I think everyone is keeping their fingers crossed for a breakthrough in those talks. Alfred De Zayas, thank you very much for your time and your insight. That’s Alfred De Zayas, Former UN independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order. Thank you”.*

This was followed by a report from Peter Scott related to a Donbass resort and a recent change in Facebook’s policy to posts about Ukraine’s Azov Battalion (**“Scott Report 10”**):

PS: *“We’ve received exclusive video from what used to be a Donbass resort on the Sea of Azov, which appears to show its complete destruction by Ukrainian militants. It used to be a base for Ukraine’s far right Azov battalion, before being reclaimed on Monday by Donetsk People’s Republic Forces. Now, in a disturbing U-turn, Facebook will now let users praise a neo-Nazi military unit previously banned along with Islamic State and the Ku Klux Klan. Facebook is banning RT in the EU but is promoting the far-right Azov battalion, which we’ve just mentioned, in a bid to improve coverage of the Ukrainian Army”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from a Meta spokesperson and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“For the time being we are making a narrow exception for praise of the Azov Battalion strictly in the context of defending Ukraine or in their role as part of the Ukraine National Guard”.

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"The policy tweak though still forbids quote any praise of violence committed by the extremist group. The battalion emerged as an anti-Russia militia in Ukraine and join the Ukrainian National Guard back in 2014. It is infamous for its neo-Nazi ideology and usage of associated symbols. The UN accused the Azov battalion of torture and rape with the US Congress blocking military aides to Azov on the grounds of its ideological propensity. Now the battalion has again made all the wrong headlines after Ukraine's Army tweeted a video showing a soldier from the neo-Nazi regiment dipping bullets in pig fat as part of a threat to kill Russian Muslims. Now we've requested Facebook for their comments on this, and we'll let you know if and when they get back to us".*

This was followed by a live interview with independent journalist Benjamin Norton ("BN") on a recent change in Facebook policy to allow praise of the Azov Battalion in their role as part of the Ukrainian National Guard ("**the Norton Interview**"):

PS: *We are joined live now by independent journalist Benjamin Norton. Benjamin. Welcome to RT International. What do you make of Facebook's reversal of these harsh restrictions? And now the ability to back this neo-Nazi group?"*

BN: *"Well, it clearly shows the political hypocrisy of Facebook and its parent company, Meta. Facebook, let's not forget, or Meta, has numerous contracts with the US government, including the Pentagon, so this is an organisation that has a kind of revolving door with the US Government. In fact, many of the people on Facebook security team are former US Government officials, including people from the White House. So the reality is that Facebook in many ways serves the political interests of the United States. And we see this so clearly with Facebook allowing users to praise a neo-Nazi group. Azov is explicitly neo-Nazi. It uses the neo-Nazi German Wolfsangel symbol. This is a symbol that was used by Nazi Germany. It preaches a white supremacist ideology that portrays Russians as Asiatic and portrays Ukrainians as a pure white race. This group is explicitly fascist, and the reality is that this group has also been armed and supported by the United States. You did mention that after several years, the US Congress did eventually take action against Azov. But early on, when the US backed a coup in Ukraine in 2014 in which Azov played an important role and after that, when Azov was incorporated, these neo-Nazis were incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard, the US Military, and also the Canadian military sent officers to Ukraine to train members of Azov. And there are actually photos that we have of US and Canadian military personnel in their uniforms, with the patches of the US and Canadian flags meeting and posing with these neo-Nazis. So this group is not just some isolated neo-Nazi militia. This is directly part of the Ukrainian state and it unfortunately has received support from Western governments".*

PS: *"Although your article on this neo-Nazi battalion was recently censored by Instagram, though, what do you think was behind that move?"*

BN: *"Well, it's quite ironic because Meta, which owns Instagram and also Facebook, said that it would allow posts of people who praised Azov. I wrote an article at my independent news website Multipolarista about this tweet of, rather, excuse me, the National Guard, the official verified Twitter account of the Ukrainian National Guard*

sharing a video of a neo-Nazi from Azov dipping bullets in pig fat to kill Chechen Muslims from the Russian Army. I wrote an article about this completely factual as a journalist, and then I posted a screenshot of that article on Instagram. And Instagram censored it and said that it violated their content on promoting violence and hateful groups. But ironically, Meta, which owns Instagram, says that it actually allows people that praise Asov. So I guess they don't allow people who criticise these Ukrainian neo-Nazis apparently, but they do allow people who praise these neo-Nazi extremists because they're killing Russians, and that happens to serve US foreign policy interests”.

PS: *“Now, as I'm sure you're aware, RT has been blocked in Europe and YouTube was also blocked our channel. Why do you think big tech appears to be moving in lockstep to sense the Russian networks like RT and Sputnik? And whose interest do you think that serves?”*

BN: *“Well, we should never forget that most of these big Silicon Valley corporations have a revolving door with the US Government. They have contracts with the US Government. Many of them have their origins in the Pentagon and its its military research and technology through DARPA, which is the kind of lab to do research for technology which created the Internet and other technology, including GPS. So, Google, which owns YouTube, has contracts with the CIA. It has contracts with the Pentagon. It has contracts with the FBI and US police agencies. So unfortunately, we see that many of these big corporations in Silicon Valley, they basically act as arms of the US Government, especially when it comes to enforcing censorship in the interest of US propaganda, to advance US foreign policy interests. We've seen this again and again and again. I'm currently in the country of Nicaragua, and here in Nicaragua, before the November elections last year, these big tech corporations censored the accounts of many Sandinistas of many pro-government media outlets a few days before the election. That was a major form of election meddling. But the US of course, has targeted Nicaragua with sanctions demonising the Nicaraguan government. So we see again and again and again that the Silicon Valley corporations simply act, they censor any information that challenges Western propaganda to advance US foreign policy interests. And this is the ultimate irony of this, is that the European Union is attacking Russia, claiming that Russia's authoritarian and it doesn't care about human rights and press freedom and freedom of speech. Meanwhile, the European Union, which claims to be democratic, is violating the freedom of speech of its own citizens, is violating the freedom of expression and the freedom of press by preventing its own citizens from having access to journalism not only done by Russians, there are a lot of Europeans. There are people in Spain, people in Germany, people in France in Britain who worked for RT. They're not Russians. They are journalists who are doing journalistic work. And now they have been censored by their own governments”.*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *“That is, I'm afraid, that's all we've got time for now, but thank you very much for your insights. Benjamin North, an independent journalist. Thank you. I'm afraid that's a*

wrap for now. My name is Peter Scott, and I'll be back again with more on that unfolding crisis in Ukraine in just under 30 minutes. Thank you".

RT News, RT, 1 March 2022, 20:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Peter Scott ("PS"), who presented the programme's headlines:

PS: *"Ukrainian TV channels stop broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower. That's according to unverified reports. On day six of Russia's military intervention, the Ukrainian Army's alleged bombing of Donbass continues, leaving civilians caught between the front lines. We report from the Donetsk People's Republic, where homes and lives are still being lost after eight years of conflict".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of a female Donetsk resident with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 1: [English subtitles] *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person anymore. They bury them by the front door. Like animals".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ") was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger, and without you, Ukraine will be alone".*

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"Ukraine's President makes an impassioned plea to join the EU, but Brussels officials have held back on any assurances".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina ("MF") about an explosion at a TV tower in Kyiv (**Finoshina Report 2**):

PS: *"It's just gone 11pm here in the Russian capital, and wherever you're joining us from, welcome to 30 minutes of news here on RT International. And we start with breaking news this hour. Ukrainian TV channels have stopped broadcasting after an explosion at Kiev's network tower. That's according to unverified reports. With more details, here's RT's Maria Finoshina".*

MF: *"We now hear from Ukrainian Interior Ministry that the control room of the broadcaster on Kiev's TV tower has been hit. We also hear reports that we cannot yet verify at this moment that there were two strikes, and we are now receiving many yet unverified videos showing Kiev's TV tower and black smoke, heavy smoke coming out from the building next to the tower, and one strike was caught on the video too. But again, we cannot verify those videos so far. We also hear that several Ukrainian channels have stopped their broadcasting and they are talking about preparing, um, uh, backup methods, backup generators to restore their work. We heard again from Ukraine's Culture Minister that no one was killed during this attack. All this came shortly after, earlier today, Russia's Defence Ministry issued the official warning, saying that their forces are going to strike technological objects of Ukraine's Security Service. This is the official statement".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from the Russian Defence Ministry and was accompanied by a voiceover:

“Information attacks on Russia are carried out by the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations of the Ukrainian armed forces as well as by cyber operations units of the Security Service of Ukraine, using hardware and software systems and communication facilities in Kiev. In order to suppress information attacks against Russia, the technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd Main Centre of Information and Psychological Operations in Kiev will be hit with high-precision weapons. We call on Ukrainian citizens who are recruited by Ukrainian nationalists to carry out provocations against Russia, as well as residents of Kiev living near the relay hubs, to leave their homes”.

Maria Finoshina continued:

MF: *“Shortly after this warning was issued, we started receiving unverified videos showing people in Kiev, especially in railroad stations of the city, running in panic and fear, trying to escape, trying to leave the city. Uh, some of them were with bags, some of them with no bags at all, with pets, with children. Uh, so it's clear that people got scared following these warnings. But since the beginning of its special operation in Ukraine, Moscow has always been stressing that, uh, Russia has no plans of occupying Ukraine and has no plans to target residential areas or affect ordinary people, innocent civilian population. But still, it's clear that people are afraid, and we now hear from UN, they say that around four million people have possibly already left Ukraine”.*

The programme then returned to Peter Scott in the studio, who spoke about fighting across Ukraine, including the Donbass region (“**Scott Report 11**”):

PS: *“That's as fighting continues across Ukraine on day six of the Russian invasion. This map shows what's been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting has been reported. Russia's Defence Ministry claims the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian Army by another three kilometres, that's beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. And this is the latest footage we're getting from the Donbass region. Amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian Army, a missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the city of Donetsk. The number of casualties is not yet known. However, the city's mayor has warned there could still be victims under the rubble as the rescue operations continue. This footage from the Donbass shows an abandoned T64 tank near the settlement of Bugas. It appears that Ukrainian forces simply left the vehicle with all its equipment and ammunition intact. Videos posted on social media show cars destroyed in Kiev across the capital's nearly empty streets. This comes amid warnings of escalating crime in the city, as the government is said to be handing out guns to civilians and released prisoners. The Russian military is calling on residents to leave Kiev via a designated highway heading southwest”.*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev ("MG") from Donetsk ("**Gazdiev Report**"):

PS: *"And here is footage from Donetsk showing the aftermath of an apparent shelling. Civilians are trying to survive in the conflict zone as cities and towns are caught between the front lines with battles raging on. Local residents are terrified, with people's lives and homes still being lost eight years after the conflict began. RT correspondent Murad Gazdiev reports".*

MG: *"The sound of war is deafening across Donetsk. North, west and south, war rages. We are very close to Volnovakha, which is just west of Donetsk. As you can see, the offensive launched by the Republic of Donetsk is very much in full swing. The city of Mariupol, the heart of the Azov Sea and a bastion of Ukrainian troops and nationalist battalions. It is nearly surrounded, caught between advancing troops of Donetsk and Russian units spreading out from Crimea. Ukrainian troops have fallen back and, from a distance, wreaked destruction on villages and towns they once ruled. As you can hear from the sounds of artillery, the battles here, just, just west of Donetsk still, still rage. This used to be, until a week ago, a village well beyond the front lines. Ukrainian positions were east of here towards Donetsk. When this battle began the offensive, the Ukrainian military abandoned their positions there. They moved further eastwards, further towards Kiev. And that is where they took up positions. When the units of the Donetsk People's Republic began moving into here, they were met with a fire storm of artillery, which, which devastated this village. There were many people here, there are now much fewer. We've heard about three people killed in their house, another family that burned up. The barrage of shells and rocket artillery spared few houses and, try as they might, not everyone escaped the devastation. The tragedy here is that this mother and daughter, they, they hid in the basement, right, right outside the house. The shell impacted a little further away, right above the basement. The irony, the tragic and sad irony here is that if they had stayed in the house, they might have survived. It's a grisly scene down there, full of, full of blood. Images that we don't want to show you. Only the father survived, wounded amid the shelling. He ran for help".*

A clip of Murad Gazdiev interviewing two Donetsk residents was then shown, with English subtitles displayed on-screen:

Civilian 2: [English subtitles] *"His arm was injured, he survived. And I was thrown back by a shockwave. And the mother and daughter were killed. And we buried them like animals. There was a direct hit to the house, I do not know how I survived".*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"The fact is that it is already impossible to get out, they bombed us all day. We didn't eat or leave the shelter".*

MG: [English subtitles] *"So you were able to walk these 30 metres only after a day?"*

Civilian 3: [English subtitles] *"Yes".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"In nearby Nikolayevka, which is much bigger, the onslaught was much the same. Here, terrified civilians, women, children, the elderly hunkered down in a school basement, waiting for Ukrainian military bombardment to end. Here in nearby Nikolayevka, in a school basement underground, people are existing in these conditions. In the cold, without power, without heat. This is all about survival. Even though the front lines have moved on, they don't dare leave for fear of yet more shelling, which has claimed the lives of, of so many people already".*

This was followed by a pre-recorded clip of interviews with several Donetsk residents, with an English voiceover:

Civilian 1: *"This is too much. They don't even let you bury a person normally anymore. They bury them by the front door. Like animals. I'm not crying for myself, I'm crying for my grandson, for my son. My son came out of the basement three days ago and still hasn't come back".*

Civilian 4: *"They are still shelling. Of course it's scary. But I reassure myself that everything will be fine. They destroyed our houses. There are no windows in our house anymore as shells fell right here. Now we have to rebuild and clean everything up".*

Civilian 5: *"Right now I'm sitting and thinking, 'if I leave here, where will I go?' No windows, no doors. Everything is broken. I do not know where I should go now".*

Civilian 6: *"My granddaughter has had a fever for two days. My house was destroyed. My husband was operated on. His leg was torn through by a shell".*

Murad Gazdiev continued:

MG: *"On the outskirts, one family apparently decided to brave the shelling at home. It would be their last decision. This house sustained a direct impact. Shell landed in the middle of the house. You can perhaps see the remains of the house is still smouldering. Fires consumed everything, including a family that was in the house at the time. Their remains have been buried, but we have been unable to verify how many people exactly died here. Nevertheless, this scene is being repeated across the Donbass as fighting rages here. The Ukrainian military retreats, firing back, perhaps in revenge as they flee".*

The programme then returned to a report by Peter Scott in the studio, which included a clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the European Parliament ("**Scott Report 12**"):

PS: *"Kiev says around 5000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in recent days, with dozens of Russian planes and helicopters shot down and about 200 tanks destroyed. Moscow refutes those claims while not disclosing concrete figures and claims it's been making major advances against Ukrainian military. Ukraine's President has made an impassioned plea to join the European Union. At a special session of the EU Parliament, Volodymyr Zelenskyy stressed Kiev's willingness to accede. That's in the wake of signing official requests to become part of the bloc".*

A clip of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was then shown, with an English voiceover:

VZ: *"We're fighting to be equal members of Europe. I believe today we're all showing that a union with us will be stronger, and without you Ukraine will be alone. We have proven our strength, proven we're at least the same as you. Prove you aren't letting us go. Prove you're really Europeans and then life will defeat death and light will defeat darkness".*

Peter Scott then introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Charlotte Dubenskij ("CD") about Ukraine's proposition to the EU of a union between the EU and Ukraine which included a range of clips of various political leaders ("**Dubenskij Report 2**"):

PS: *"But despite the loud applause, European lawmakers and officials have not given any direct response to Zelenskyy's plea, referencing, quote, sensitivities within the EU on enlargement. RT's Charlotte Dubenskij reports".*

CD: *"The EU views this war in Ukraine from very different eyes to how it is being seen in Moscow. We know the EU is said to be preparing even more sanctions against Russia in the wake of this war, this invasion as they describe it, in, in Ukraine. And they say that the sanctions have already had a massive impact on the Russian economy. We know that the ruble has tanked in the last few days and that there are many people trying to get hold of their savings out of banks and saying that they can't do that. However, the Europeans have also warned that the sanctions, while they are hitting Russia right now, there will be a sense of them also hitting here in Europe as well. This is what Ursula von der Leyen had to say".*

A clip of Ursula von der Leyen ("UvdL"), the President of the European Commission, was then shown:

UvdL: *"I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy too. I know this and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic and we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment, and this is the cost we are willing to pay because freedom is priceless, honourable members. This is our principle. Freedom is priceless".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Well, just to give you a sense of what the EU is doing right now, it is sending arms to Ukraine. Some €450 to €500 million worth of weapons that are coming from countries that have previously been neutral, for example Finland. We also know that Switzerland has decided that it will support the sanctions that have been laid out by the EU so far against Russia, against companies and individuals. Now, just to give you a sense that the UK, who has also, which has also been sanctioning Russia and originally closed its airspace to Russia prior to the EU doing this, we know that the British Prime Minister was in Warsaw today, in the capital of Poland, and he was questioned about the situation, a rather emotional question coming from a Ukrainian journalist".*

A clip was then shown of the exchange between UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson ("BJ") and a Ukrainian journalist ("UJ") at a press conference:

UJ: *"And Ukrainian people are desperately asking for the West to protect our sky. So, you are coming to Poland, you are not coming to Kiev, Prime Minister, you are not coming to Lvov, because you're afraid. I see that my family members, that my team members are saying that we are crying. We don't have anywhere to run. This is what is happening, Prime Minister".*

BJ: *"Well, thank you. Thank you very much for, for your questions and when you talk about the no-fly zone. Unfortunately, the implication of that is that the UK and, will be engaged in shooting down Russian planes, will be engaged in direct combat with Russia. That's not something that we can do or that we've, that we've envisaged".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"EU's Council President has accused Moscow of engaging in what he describes as geopolitical terrorism. He said that the rules-based international order, democracy, human dignity, this is the quote from Charles Michel, are also under attack. And he said this geopolitical terrorism is pure and simple. However, despite that being the majority view at least here in Europe, there are some dissenting voices, who are suggesting that the EU has perhaps dragged Ukraine into this war".*

A clip of German MP Alice Weidel speaking at the European Parliament, was then shown:

AW: *"It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It would be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years".*

Charlotte Dubenskij continued:

CD: *"Of course, the first set of talks were held on the border with Belarus between Ukraine and Russia on Monday, and there is a suggestion that those talks will continue. And that is what pretty much everybody wants to see at this stage, for both countries to be sat down and to be able to engage in talks to find a way out of this crisis, out of this war".*

This was followed by a live interview with RT correspondent Caleb Maupin ("CM") about a UN General Assembly meeting ("**the Maupin Report 2**"):

PS: *"Russia's military intervention in Ukraine hasn't been universally condemned at the UN General Assembly. And we can cross live now to our correspondent in New York, Caleb Maupin. Caleb, what exactly was said at the UN General Assembly?"*

CM: *"Well, the UN General Assembly meeting that started yesterday, on Monday, has continued today, and every member state has the opportunity to address the UN General Assembly. Now, there's been this resolution put forward by the United States*

and its allies that would condemn Russia. Now, we heard yesterday from Ukraine, from Russia, from other countries, from the European Union. Today, the debate moved ahead and we actually heard from the representative of Cuba, and when the representative of Cuba took to the floor, he called for peace. He expressed concern for all who are suffering. But then he brought the hammer down and pointed out that NATO is to blame for this escalation, and the United States has been largely responsible for escalating the crisis in the country. Here's what the representative of Cuba had to say".

A clip of Pedro Luis Pedrosó Cuesta, Cuban Ambassador to the UN speaking in Spanish was then shown, there were no English subtitles or voiceover.

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"Now, from there, we also heard different countries. Now, not every country completely lined up with the United States. There were different countries that spoke today. When the representative of the Philippines spoke, for example, the representative of the Philippines made a point of pointing out that allegations about civilian casualties cannot be believed. And what was being said by, by, you know, US media about civilian casualties really couldn't be trusted. That was a comment we heard in the speech by the representative of the Philippines. Now, elsewhere in the United States, we have heard criticism of the standard narrative. We are facing a barrage of anti-Russian hysteria in the United States. There's just a full mobilisation. All kinds of debunked videos have been shown on Western media. However, recently on Fox News, we heard a prominent retired US military officer, who pointed out that this is what should be expected from Russia. This is what we heard from the retired Colonel MacGregor".*

A clip of retired US Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor ("DMcG") was then shown:

DMcG: *"Vladimir Putin is carrying through on something that he's been warning us about. He will not tolerate US forces or their missiles on his borders, and we ignored him and he finally acted".*

Caleb Maupin continued:

CM: *"So, there are many voices throughout the United States that are sceptical of the hysteria being mobilised against Russia right now. There are many who are wondering if all of what the US media is saying is true, now that so many of these videos have been debunked. Joe Biden is expected to give his State of the Union address, his speech to Congress tonight, which will undoubtedly be a podium-pounding anti-Russia tirade. Regardless, there are many people throughout the United States who don't completely buy into what we're hearing. The UN General Assembly meeting will continue tomorrow, and different countries that are critical of the United States and are sympathetic to Donetsk and Lugansk will be taking the floor. We should be hearing tomorrow morning at the UN General Assembly from Venezuela, as well as Nicaragua and other countries that have hailed Russia's move of recognising the Donetsk People's*

Republic. So, while we're facing this barrage of social media deception, US media is whipping up hysteria, there is another side of the story, and there are many people around the world that hear it".

PS: *"Well, we'll be waiting for more updates from that UN General Assembly meeting from you tomorrow. That's RT's Caleb Maupin reporting live from New York. Thank you".*

This was followed by a live report from Peter Scott on the global impact of US sanctions on Russia and Brazil's decision not to impose sanctions on Russia ("**Scott Report 13**"):

PS: *"Now, the US President's Chief Latin American adviser has admitted that punitive measures against Russia targets Washington and enemies on the continent as much as itself, sorry, as much as Moscow itself. That's after the White House targeted Russia's ability to make international financial transactions".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from Juan Gonzalez, Special Assistant to President Biden, and was accompanied by a voiceover:

"The sanctions against Russia are so robust that they will have an impact on those governments that have economic affiliations with Russia, and that is by design".

Peter Scott continued:

PS: *"The adviser named Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba on his list of targets he's confident will suffer from the restrictions on Russia. Former US National Security Advisor John Bolton previously branded those three Socialist nations the troika of tyranny, and all have voiced concern about NATO expansion through Eastern Europe. And staying on the continent, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro recently refused to impose sanctions on Moscow, saying he won't do anything to hurt his country's economy".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a quote from Jair Bolsonaro, Brazilian President:

"We will not take sides, we will continue being neutral, and help with whatever is possible".

This was followed by a live interview with a Brazilian journalist Breno Altman ("BA") about Brazil's stance on the conflict in Ukraine ("**Altman Interview**").

PS: *"We can go live now to Breno Altman, Editor-in-Chief of the Brazilian news portal Opera Mundi. Breno, welcome to RT International. Um, what do you make of Brazil's decision not to take sides in this Ukrainian conflict?"*

BA: *"Well, first of all, thank you for the invitation. Bolsonaro is lying about the Brazilian position. His government is voted against Russia in the United States Security Council. There is no effective neutrality. The most correct and most appropriate position in the Brazilian diplomatic tradition, I believe, would be to vote against or abstain for any measures aimed at isolating or harming Moscow, but, speaking out for a negotiated*

solution of the conflict. But Brazil is voting against Russia two times at the Security Council and now at the General Assembly. Bolsonaro is just lying about that”.

PS: *“Okay, with what, with what end, to what end would he be, would this disconnect come from?”*

BA: *“Because he wants to show to the Brazilian people, we're going to have elections in some months, that he is a very, he is a very important politician in the world. He has been received by Vladimir Putin and he doesn't want to disagree. The rightist people, the right-wing people here in Brazil who vote for him, and he wants to show he is very powerful. And then he's changing his position from some kind of neutrality to, uh, straight alignment with the United States. His government is very over addicted to United States”.*

PS: *“Now, geographically speaking, Brazil probably couldn't be too much further from Russia. How is this conflict in Ukraine being covered in the Brazilian mass media?”*

BA: *“Very bad, with the exception of independent and progressive press. The monopoly press controlled by, here, by five or six family is ideologically aligned with the United States and function as a transmission belt for the Western media, with rare exceptions”.*

PS: *“And with the sanctions being laid on Russia, how do you think that will affect trade between Russia and Latin American countries?”*

BA: *“Well, I think it's too early to understand how far the, uh, sanctions could affect our, our zone in the planet. But, of course, we are going to have a lot of problems because of the sanctions. These sanctions are like boomerangs measures. I mean, the United States target Russia and is going to affect people all around the world. And, of course, I think it's going to affect Latin American countries as well”.*

PS: *“Well, I'm afraid that's all we have time for, Breno Altman. That's Breno Altman, chief editor of the Brazilian News portal Opera Mundi. Thank you very much for your insights over there”.*

BA: *“Thank you”.*

Peter Scott then closed the programme:

PS: *“Thank you. Well, for all the latest on the war in Ukraine, head over to RT.com. But that's all for now from me, Peter Scott, and thank you very much for watching”.*

Annex: Programme summary

RT News, RT, 2 March 2022, 09:00

The programme was opened by RT News presenter Sean Thomas ("ST"), who presented the programme's headlines:

ST: *"The military operation in Ukraine enters its seventh day. Explosions have been reported at a Kiev TV tower and in the Kharkov region amid heavy fighting. On the other side of the conflict, horrific destruction of homes in the aftermath of a battle in the Donbass region, where a village has come under the control of the Lugansk militia. And EU politicians demand even harsher sanctions against Russia after the bloc decides to ban RT and cut some Russian banks out of the international transaction system, SWIFT. But there are voices in the bloc opposing the establishment's approach to the Ukraine crisis".*

A pre-recorded clip was then played of Alice Weidel ("AW"), leader of Alternative for Germany in the Bundestag, accompanied by an English voiceover:

AW: *"Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It will be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone's outpost".*

The programme then returned to Sean Thomas, who continued:

ST: *"Broadcasting live direct from our studios in Moscow, this is RT International. I'm Sean Thomas. Glad to have you with us as we try and unravel the war in Ukraine. Now, Russia's military operation in Ukraine has entered its seventh day with heavy fighting and explosions reported in several different cities around the country. There is an ongoing battle reported in Ukraine's eastern Kharkov region, with Russian troops attempting to advance. In this footage, you can see a massive explosion that happened late on Tuesday in the city of Chuguev in the Kharkov region, with plumes of smoke filling the sky. It was reportedly observed near a Ukrainian air force base. There is no information as of now, about the possible casualties. A bit of a warning: these images are from war, so they can be disturbing to many. This is another video from the region in Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, the flashes revealing intense shelling during the night. We heard from a local woman hiding in a basement to hear her thoughts".*

A pre-recorded clip of a female Kharkov resident ("KR") was then played, with an English voiceover:

KR: *"It is already the fifth day we are here in the basement. We are worried very much and it is very scary. We have small children, elderly people and, frankly speaking, it is very frightening. It is a nightmare and it seizes you from the inside very strongly. This cannot be explained with words".*

The programme then returned to Sean Thomas, who introduced a pre-recorded report from RT correspondent Maria Finoshina ("MF") in Luhansk (**the Finoshina Report**):

ST: *"Russia's military has confirmed that it conducted a strike on a television tower in Kiev and said that no residential buildings were damaged. It has also reported taking control of a regional centre in the south of Ukraine, but that has been denied by Ukraine's Defence Ministry saying that the battle is still ongoing. RT's Maria Finoshina has more".*

MF: *"Russia's Defence Ministry spokesperson Major General Igor Konashenkov said that Kherson, a big city on the Black Sea in the south, a regional capital, is now under total control of the Russian forces. He also added that the civilian infrastructure hasn't been affected anyhow, hasn't been damaged and that the negotiations are currently undergoing with local authorities on how to organise further cooperation in order to prevent, um, any bad things happening on the ground with local residents to provide security and to meet their everyday needs. Plus, he added that the armies of Donetsk and Lugansk Republics advanced 60 and 75 kilometres accordingly since the beginning of the special military operation here, with several towns and villages taken now under their control. And he also said that a total of 1500 [of] Ukraine's military infrastructure objects have been damaged and that they will continue striking military targets uniquely and yes, Mr Konashenkov also confirmed that Russia is behind Kiev's TV tower attack. He said that it was done to prevent information attack against Russia. Let's take a listen".*

A clip of Major General Igor Konashenkov ("IG"), Chief Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, was shown, with an English voiceover:

IG: *"In order to end information attacks against Russia, technological facilities of the Ukrainian Security Service and the 72nd main Centre for Psychological Operations were hit by high precision weapons in Kiev. The broadcasting of a television tower has been disabled. The strike did not destroy residential buildings".*

The programme returned to Maria Finoshina in Luhansk:

MF: *"Russia's defence ministry warned about this attack on TV tower hours before that, calling on local residents, especially those living near relay stations, to immediately leave their homes. And of course, clearly it sparked panic in the Ukrainian capital and we started receiving many*

videos, especially from the city's railway station, showing people trying to get on an evacuation train organised apparently by the authorities while it's already packed and people running with bags and children and pets in panic. Although Moscow has always been stressing, it has no plans of occupying Ukraine and it is not going to target residential areas. But it didn't prevent panic from spreading. The UN estimates that this whole crisis could force around four million people to flee Ukraine. That's 10% of the country's population. And all that comes at the time when the world is waiting for the second round of peace talks between Ukraine and Russia. President Zelensky spoke to American media from his bunker, saying that he is ready to meet Vladimir Putin. To remind you, leaders of the two countries did not take physically part in the first round of negotiations. Vladimir Putin and Mr Zelensky did not meet. They were not on the ground. They were not at the table. Maybe this time is going to be different. But Mr Zelensky also said that there are conditions that Russia should accept to continue talking".

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Volodymyr Zelenskyy ("VZ"), President of Ukraine, and was accompanied by an English voiceover:

VZ: *"You have to speak first of all. Everybody has to stop fighting and to go [back] to that point from where it began five, six days ago".*

The programme returned to Maria Finoshina in Luhansk:

MF: *"We also hear from Russia that Moscow does not see Ukraine is ready and willing to find balanced solution to this crisis. But of course, let's wait and see what the peace talks will bring and the very latest is that we hear that it could possibly be delayed and we can see the second round only at the end of this week. But we still have to verify this information actually, all the information that's coming. Back to you".*

The programme then returned to the studio, where Sean Thomas gave a report about Luhansk and Donetsk (**the Donbas Report**):

ST: *"And in the Lugansk and Donetsk Republics, residents are enduring intense battles between the Ukrainian army and local militia forces. If you take a look at this map, it shows what has been happening, with the red dots highlighting the major cities where fighting is being reported. Russia's defence ministry claims that the Lugansk People's Militia has advanced against the Ukrainian army by another three kilometres beyond Monday's front line. As for Donetsk forces, they have reportedly advanced 16 kilometres beyond previous front lines. Now, these are the latest images of a village that claimed to have come under the control of Lugansk military forces with residents showing the aftermath of the fighting. You can see that homes and infrastructure have been destroyed. More footage from the area showing the Donbass region*

amid apparent shelling by the Ukrainian army. A missile has destroyed cars and residential buildings in the Donetsk republic's capital city there. The number of casualties is not yet known, but the city of Donetsk's mayor has warned that there may be victims under the rubble as rescuing operations are continuing. This footage shows an abandoned T-64 tank near the settlement of Bugas after Ukrainian troops apparently left the vehicle with all of its equipment and ammunition intact. The Lugansk People's Militia has liberated the town of Schastye in an offensive as Ukrainian forces left the area on Monday morning. The battle had been ongoing for almost four days. Residents there had to take shelter in basements during the fighting while infrastructure was severely damaged. The Lugansk militia alleges that Ukrainian forces unleashed most of the damage and destruction during their retreat. Locals have been sharing their feelings about the situation with us".

Pre-recorded clips of male and female Shchastia residents ("MSR" and "FSR") were then played, with an English voiceover:

MSR: *"We have been waiting for our saviours. They have helped us a lot. The Ukrainian army were monsters. They wanted us to die. They wanted to shoot me in my legs. I was sitting on a bench and they approached me and told me that they had seen me in Lugansk. I said I hadn't been there for a long time".*

FSR: *"It is really scary going through this all. We are glad that it's over. We're locals and we know who was shelling where. When Ukraine shells our kindergartens, schools, houses, what love can there be? Thank God they got out of here. It should have happened a long time ago. How long were we supposed to bear this?"*

The programme returned to Sean Thomas, who gave a report on the Azov Battalion (**the Azov Report**):

ST: *"We have received exclusive video from what used to be a resort in the Donbass on the Sea of Azov. It now appears completely destroyed. It was used as a base for Ukraine's far right Azov Battalion, allegedly, before being taken on Monday by forces in the Donetsk People's Republic.*

In a disturbing U-turn, Facebook will now let users express praise for a neo-Nazi Ukrainian military group, previously banned along with Islamic state and the Ku Klux Klan. But meanwhile, Facebook is banning RT in the EU while promoting Ukraine's far-right Azov Battalion, in a bid to improve coverage of Ukrainian forces".

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from a spokesperson from Facebook's parent company, Meta, accompanied by a voiceover:

Meta: "For the time being, we are making a narrow exception for praise of the Azov Battalion strictly in the context of defending Ukraine or in their role as part of the Ukraine National Guard".

The programme returned to Sean Thomas, who continued:

ST: "The policy tweak, though, still forbids any praise of violence committed by the extremist group. The battalion emerged as an anti-Russian militia and joined the Ukrainian National Guard in 2014. It is infamous for its neo-Nazi ideology and usage of associated symbols. The UN has accused the Azov Battalion of committing torture and rape, and the US has blocked military aid to the group due to its Nazi ideology.

Ukraine's army has released a video showing a soldier from the neo-Nazi regiment dipping bullets into pig fat during a threat to kill Russian Muslims. Now we can't and won't show you this video because of its offensive content. But we have requested a comment about it from Facebook and we'll let you know if they reply. Meanwhile, we talked to independent journalist Benjamin Norton, who sees in Facebook's decision an obvious adherence to the US stance on the conflict".

A clip from a pre-recorded interview with journalist Benjamin Norton ("BN") was then played:

BN: "I wrote an article on my independent news website Multipolarista about this tweet of a National Guard. The official verified Twitter account of the Ukrainian National Guard sharing a video of a neo-Nazi from Azov dipping bullets in pig fat to kill Chechen Muslims from the Russian army. I wrote an article about this, completely factual as a journalist, and then I posted a screenshot of that article on Instagram, and Instagram censored it and said that it violated their content on promoting violence and hateful groups. But ironically, Meta, which owns Instagram, says that it actually allows people that praise Azov. The ultimate irony of this is that the European Union is attacking Russia, claiming that Russia's authoritarian and it doesn't care about human rights and press freedom and freedom of speech. Meanwhile, the European Union, which claims to be democratic, is violating the freedom of speech of its own citizens, is violating the freedom of expression and the freedom of press by preventing its own citizens from having access to journalism not only done by Russians. There are a lot of Europeans. There are people in Spain, people in Germany, people in France, in Britain who work for RT. They're not Russians. They are journalists who are doing journalistic work".

The programme returned to Sean Thomas in the studio, who introduced a clip from a pre-recorded interview with military journalist Viktor Baranets ("VB"), which had an English voiceover (**the Baranets Interview**):

ST: *“Amid the chaos in Ukraine right now there is an information vacuum about what has been happening and the positions of each side, with conflicting reports about who is responsible for certain attacks. And our team is working very hard to distinguish what is happening independently. This footage is from Tuesday morning from Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkov, with plumes of smoke rising into the sky from a massive explosion reportedly caused by a projectile that landed in the city centre near the regional administration building. Local authorities have blamed Russia, but media reports say that there were no Russian forces in the area from which the projectile had reportedly come. We are waiting for comments from the Kremlin about this situation. We heard from military journalist and retired Colonel, Viktor Baranets, who says that the Ukrainian side is probably aware that the projectile came from their own forces. This is his opinion”.*

VB: *“I got to talk to experts on the nature of the Kharkov blast. They say it looks like an artillery hit by a 152 millimetre gun, highly explosive with enhanced gunpowder charges. Considering the position of Russian and Ukrainian troops, everybody, even the Ukrainians, came to the conclusion that the administration building had been hit from the Ukrainian side. It's interesting to know how precisely the building was hit, considering the density of construction in Kharkov. It's clear that Ukrainian intelligence worked on it. This strike might be part of the Ukrainian operation. The reasons for that are obvious. It was a provocative step by Ukraine to play out an anti-Russian show. They took the fact of the explosion and spread it across social media, blaming Russia. However, the Russian side claims that it is a priori impossible”.*

The programme returned to Sean Thomas in the studio, who gave the following report about President of the United States Joe Biden giving his first State of the Union address (**the Biden Report**):

ST: *“Joe Biden has given his first State of the Union speech, choosing to focus on the Ukraine conflict as domestic problems mount in the US. He said the United States has joined the EU in closing its airspace to Russian flights and specified that American forces will not participate in the conflict with Russia”.*

A pre-recorded clip of President Biden (“JB”) was then played:

JB: *“[...] are inflicting pain on Russia and supporting the people of Ukraine. Putin is now isolated from the world more than he has ever been. I'm announcing that we will join our allies in closing off American airspace to all Russian flights, further isolating Russia and adding additional squeeze on their economy. But let me be clear. Our forces are not engaged and will not engage in the conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine. Our forces are not going to Europe to fight [in] Ukraine, but to*

defend our NATO allies in the event that Putin decides to keep moving west”.

The programme returned to the studio where Sean Thomas introduced a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Charlotte Dubenskij (“CD”) about Western sanctions against Russia (**the Dubenskij Report**):

ST: *“Meanwhile, EU politicians have called on the bloc to impose even harsher sanctions against Russia over the conflict in Ukraine as the EU has already approved banning news outlets RT and Sputnik, as well as excluding some Russian banks from the SWIFT international transactions system. The bloc is also considering restrictions on oil and gas imports. RT’s Charlotte Dubenskij reports”.*

CD: *“Well, these restrictions directly impact RT International and also our sister station RT France, here in France. What it means is that our channels are no longer allowed to broadcast, whether that be on applications on a telephone, via the Internet or even on television subscription services across the European Union. And those are new sanctions that have come into force on Wednesday. Now it comes as the EU says it has to stand in solidarity with Ukraine as this war plays out”.*

Pre-recorded clips of Ursula van der Leyen (“UvdL”), President of the European Commission, and Charles Michel (“CM”), President of the European Council, were played:

UvdL: *“Well, these restrictions directly impact RT International and also our sister station RT France, here in France. What it means is that our channels are no longer allowed to broadcast, whether that be on applications on a telephone, via the Internet or even on television subscription services across the European Union. And those are new sanctions that have come into force on Wednesday. Now it comes as the EU says it has to stand in solidarity with Ukraine as this war plays out”.*

CM: *“It’s not only Ukraine that’s under attack. International law, rules based on international order, democracy, human dignity are also under attack. This is geopolitical terrorism, pure and simple”.*

The programme then returned to Charlotte Dubenskij who continued her report:

CD: *“Well, the EU is using a special sanctions regime to bypass the ordinary media licences that apply, so to give you an example, RT France, our sister station, was given a renewed licence to broadcast in France just back in 2020. But despite that, under the sanctions regime that can be taken off air immediately. Now, RT France has denounced the action, saying that this is simply censorship”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a tweet from the Editor-in-Chief of RT France, Xenia Fedorova (“XF”)’s Twitter account and was accompanied by a voiceover:

XF: *“The decision to ban our channel, which currently has 176 employees, including more than 100 journalists, is a violation of the rule of law and goes against the very principles of freedom of speech. Nothing can justify this censorship”.*

Charlotte Dubenskij then continued her report:

CD: *“Now there has been criticism of that decision, not just by one union of journalists, but also by the President of Serbia. Of course, Serbia is not an EU country, but the President there saying that, this is when he said, when they talk about freedoms, what they mean really, in terms of freedom of the press is the only freedom that they're thinking of is the freedom for themselves. Now, in a separate development today, European energy ministers are going to meet to basically look at the EU's reliance on Russian energy supplies. So just to give you a sense, 40% of gas used here in the EU, 35% of crude oil and more than 40% of coal supplies all come from Russia, and the EU is desperate to wean itself off those supplies as a result of not just these sanctions, but the fear that they say that Russia could potentially turn off the gas supplies to Europe. We've also heard from Germany that says it regrets its heavy reliance in the past on Russian energy”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Robert Habeck (“RH”), Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and Vice Chancellor of Germany, accompanied by a voiceover:

RH: *“As for Germany, we have to admit that in the past we relied far too one-sidedly on energy imports from Russia. Germany is more dependent than other European countries in this regard. This means there is an obligation to get rid of this quickly”.*

Charlotte Dubenskij then continued:

CD: *“Now other sanctions coming to bite on Wednesday include the fact that certain Russian banks are going to be excluded from the SWIFT messenger service. All of these sanctions, the idea from the European Union and the UK, is to have a heavy financial and economic burden on the Russian economy. We do also know that there has been further help for that via companies from the United States such as Apple, Nike, Boeing and Ford have all said that they have now suspended their sales, their transactions in the Russian Federation. And in another development we know on Tuesday that President Zelensky of Ukraine once again called on the European Union to look at immediate accession for his country to the bloc. As a result of that, MEPs on Tuesday voted to ask for EU institutions to start looking at how this could happen. Now this is a non-binding vote. It doesn't mean that Ukraine is about to join the European Union. What it does signal, though, is that the EU is*

showing that it has solidarity with Ukraine and it does see Ukraine potentially in the future being an EU member”.

The programme returned to Sean Thomas in the studio, who said:

ST: *“But not all EU politicians share the bloc’s approach to the conflict in Ukraine, as a German MP says it’s NATO that is responsible for the crisis”.*

A pre-recorded clip was then played of Alice Weidel, leader of Alternative for Germany in the Bundestag, accompanied by an English voiceover:

AW: *“It was a fatal mistake to tease Ukraine with impossible promises, joining NATO and the EU. Europe has dragged Ukraine into this confrontation. It will be smarter to do so, so that Ukraine could develop. It cannot be anyone’s outpost. NATO membership is a red line for Russia. The Russian Federation will not allow this. It has been talking about it for 20 years”.*

The programme then returned to Sean Thomas who introduced a pre-recorded interview with Vladimir Chizhov (“VC”), permanent Russian representative to the EU (**the Chizhov Interview**):

ST: *“We heard from Vladimir Chizhov, Russia’s permanent representative to the European Union. Commenting on Moscow’s complicated relations with the bloc as well as restrictions imposed on RT, he says the EU sanctions are designed to push the Russian government into making policy concessions”.*

VC: *“If the aim of these sanctions is to influence, uh, Russian state policy and the, ah, the views of the Russian President, that is irrational. Because that aim will not be achieved by these symbolic sanctions. And trying to locate non-existent assets of President Putin in Europe or elsewhere in the world, uh, is just ridiculous.*

Russia-EU relations have seen their ups and downs over the years. But what we witnessed today is certainly beyond any comprehension. Perhaps the European Union wants to prove its relevance in the situation. Financial war might drag other countries, if Russia, uh, proceeds to certain countermeasures along that track.

RT is, I would say, beloved target for, um, Western regulators and Western governments. It’s portrayed as a propaganda channel. Though I believe it’s, uh, beyond just the current crisis. I believe it’s a case of unfair competition from those who find themselves lagging behind in terms of popularity. Of lagging behind RT”.

The programme then returned to Sean Thomas, who reported on Western technology companies restricting access to RT, and introduced a pre-recorded interview with RT reporter Oksana Boyko ("OB") (**the Boyko Report**):

ST: *RT's app was removed from Apple's app store after the US tech company halted sales in Russia. That's amid claims that the news agency's content was upsetting to some users. The app is to be removed from the app store globally but remain available in Russia. Earlier, social media giants, including YouTube, Tiktok and Meta, announced that they would restrict access to Russian media outlets RT and Sputnik in the EU. RT's Oksana Boyko comments and says that the network has been caught in the middle of a massive information war launched by NATO countries and their allies. We got a response from Meta on the issue".*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Correctiv, described as the "official Facebook fact-checker", accompanied by a voiceover:

Correctiv: *"You are not independent media. You're a state agency of the Russian government under the jurisdiction of Putin responsible for war crimes. You do not publish independent reports about the statements of Putin's politicians. You are a state integrated power propaganda tool that is published in the West with the intention of broadcasting the will of the Putin government in our country. You are permanently opposed to the foundations of the German Press Code. You can't have any claims against us".*

A pre-recorded interview with Oksana Boyko was then played:

OB: *"We are a part, right in the middle of a major information war and I have to tell you that NATO analysts and people who work for NATO for a number of years now have been talking about the so-called cognitive warfare, which they saw as an alternative to a full kinetic warfare and many of the recommendations that they have been producing and now are used by the Ukrainians. I mean, you heard that warning by the Russian Defence Ministry of the impending attack on the Information and Psychological Centre in Kiev. That centre has been responsible for an avalanche of phone terrorism here in Russia. Because over the last couple of days there's been a huge wave of various alerts of various buildings, social infrastructure supposedly being bombed there. We are talking about shopping malls, kindergartens, schools, et cetera. And it's not just a campaign of fakes. It's very organised. It looks like chaos, but it's not. It's a, it's an organised, deliberate information campaign. In fact, today, Russia's Foreign Ministry said that behind this avalanche of fakes are special forces of NATO countries. There is a degree of censorship against our channel, against our agencies, which are actually producing verified information about what, at least people here in Moscow think about it. That is being blocked. So the access of European*

and American citizens, people who are citizens of the world actually, to that kind of information is blocked. Meantime, we have a huge operation to infiltrate Russian Airways to affect the public opinion in this country through the use of, you know, various platforms through the use of various media, which don't even bother to verify that information. There is a deliberate effort to make sure that the Russian Government crumbles, under the pressure from its own population. That's actually the goal of this cognitive warfare”.

The programme then returned to Sean Thomas in the studio who introduced a pre-recorded report from RT reporter Paula Slier (“PS”) about restrictions placed on Russian performers and athletes by Western countries (**the Slier Report**):

ST: *“More and more reports are appearing in the media and on social networks about Russian citizens facing discrimination in Western countries due to their nationality. RT’s Paula Slier explains”.*

PS: *“It's one thing to blame the Russian Government for ordering troop movements in Ukraine, but it's quite another to put the responsibility on the shoulders of ordinary Russians who are now feeling discriminated against and isolated, not to mention being banished. Russian conductor Valery Gergiev has refused to condemn his own country, and he's paying the price”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from Dieter Reiter (“DR”), Mayor of Munich, accompanied by a voiceover:

DR: *“With immediate effect, there will be no further concerts by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra under his direction”.*

Paula Slier then continued her report:

PS: *“Other countries have also refused to cooperate with Gergiev and for not playing their tune, his career is crumbling. Internationally famed performer Anna Netrebko has also been banned from the Bavarian Opera. Russian sport is also under attack and footballers are no longer allowed to play”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from FIFA, accompanied by a voiceover:

FIFA: *“FIFA and UEFA have today decided together that all Russian teams, whether national representative teams or club teams, shall be suspended from participation in both FIFA and UEFA competitions until further notice”.*

Paula Slier added:

PS: *“And the Olympic Committee is following suit”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from the International Olympic Committee (“IOC”), accompanied by a voiceover:

IOC: *“The International Olympic Committee executive board strongly urges international sports federations and organisations of sports events worldwide to do everything in their power to ensure that no athlete or sports official from Russia or Belarus be allowed to take part under the name of Russia or Belarus. Russian or Belarusian nationals, be it as individuals or teams, should be accepted only as neutral athletes or neutral teams. No national symbols, colours, flags or anthems should be displayed”.*

Paula Slier then continued:

PS: *“Not to mention the Eurovision Song contest, whose organisers say Russia's participation would bring the competition into disrepute. It certainly flies in the face of the European Union, insisting that it's not targeting ordinary people”.*

A pre-recorded clip of Josep Borrell (“JBo”), High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was then played:

JBo: *“I want to stress that we are not targeting Russian people. Many of them have spoken against the senseless war and I want to salute their courage”.*

Paula Slier continued:

PS: *“Meanwhile, ordinary citizens are being discriminated against just for being Russian”.*

The following text was displayed on-screen as a statement from an unnamed UK-based Russian (“UKR”):

UKR: *“I'm not ashamed to say I am Russian because I don't support this, but I'm a bit afraid. I'm worried society will have this perception that all Russians are bad”.*

The voiceover which accompanied this statement said:

UKR: *“I'm not ashamed to say I am Russian but I'm a bit afraid. I'm worried society will have this perception that all Russians are bad”.*

Paula Slier then continued:

PS: *“And there are many cases of people being put to shame”.*

A clip of a pre-recorded interview with Kirill Vyshinsky (“KV”), Chairman of Russia’s Human Rights Commission, was then played:

KV: *“There's only one way to counter this barrage of Russophobia, by drawing attention to the double standards that are employed in the West when viewing Russia. This is currently the only way to at least cool their collective sentiment in regard to Russian citizens. In my opinion, the term double standards is widely used. Now we see how they replied en masse when Russian-speaking Ukrainians were discriminated against in Ukraine, when the main right, the right to life for Russians in the Donbas, was violated. Nobody paid attention to that. They thought it had nothing to do with human rights and that it was a domestic affair within Ukraine. This reaction has led to what Ukraine has been doing for a long time. Today they've forgotten what's been happening in the Donbas for over seven years. They've forgotten what's been happening in Ukraine lately. Now they just talk about Russians as the main violators of human rights. This issue requires attention. In terms of our athletes, I hope those are just emotional steps that international organisations are taking. I hope that soon people will realise that athletes have nothing to do with politics and with the current situation. I hope that international organisations will act considerably in regard to our athletes”.*

Paula Slier then ended her report by saying:

PS: *“A poignant and powerful African proverb says that when elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers. It's one thing that the EU and Western countries are pushing back on Moscow, but it's not clear why they choose to punish ordinary people and what that can achieve”.*

Sean Thomas then closed the programme:

ST: *“We should note that this is an incredibly volatile and fluid situation and our news team is working tirelessly to try and get you the best information possible. It is dividing lives and we're doing our best here at RT International to bring it to you”.*