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Up to 13,000 Ukraine soldiers killed since Russian invasion, says Kyiv

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Up to 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed since [Russia](#) invaded in February, according to Kyiv's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, far below estimates of Ukrainian casualties from western leaders.

At certain points in the war, [Ukraine](#) said that between 100 and 200 of its forces were dying each day on the battlefield, making Podolyak's estimate seem conservative.

Speaking to Ukraine's 24 Kanal, Podolyak quoted official figures from Ukraine's general staff. He said Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, would make the total public "when the right moment comes".

Ukraine has been tight-lipped about the number of its military dead and wounded, citing its worry that revealing the total would give [Russia](#) a military advantage. The first official total was announced in August when Ukraine's army chief, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, said 9,000 had died. The total number of injured has not been stated.

On Wednesday, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, estimated that 100,000 Ukrainian service personnel had died or been injured.

Ukraine's last announcements about its daily dead came in late spring

and early summer, and were seen as part of a campaign by Kyiv for additional western military support to stave off Russian advances.

Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, claimed in September that Russia had lost 5,937 men in Ukraine, a number far below western estimates. The US has put the total of Russian military losses at 100,000 killed or injured since February.

Ukraine claims it has killed far more, with its total of Russian dead 90,090 as of Friday. Each day, Kyiv's general staff updates the tally and publishes it on its [Facebook page](#), with the number killed that day highlighted on one side.

Recent reports in Russia's independent media indicate that the daily numbers of Russian losses may have increased since Moscow started using newly mobilised and poorly equipped soldiers on the frontlines. Survivors of one battle in Ukraine's Donbas in November claimed that as many as [300 had died](#) in one day.

Ukraine [said on Friday a number of its European embassies and consulates had received "bloody" packages](#) containing animal eyes, after a series of letter bombs were sent to addresses in Spain including Ukraine's embassy in Madrid.

The packages, soaked in a liquid with a distinctive colour and smell, were sent to embassies in Spain, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Croatia and Italy, to general consulates in Naples and Krakow, and the consulate in Brno, according to the foreign ministry.

"We are studying the meaning of this message," Oleg Nikolenko, a foreign ministry spokesperson, said in a statement on Facebook.

On the diplomatic front, the US president, Joe Biden, said on Thursday he would talk to Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, about the conflict only

if he could see an indication that Russia was prepared to pull out of Ukraine.

“There’s one way for this war to end – the rational way. Putin to pull out of Ukraine ... it’s sick, what he’s doing,” said Biden. “I’m prepared to speak with Mr Putin if in fact there is an interest in him deciding he’s looking for a way to end the war.”

Biden said he had not expected Russia to be so “brutal” in Ukraine.

The Kremlin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, struck a dovish tone when asked about Biden’s remarks on Friday, saying that Putin remained open to negotiations but that Russia would not pull out of Ukraine. “The president of the Russian Federation has always been, is and remains open to negotiations in order to ensure our interests,” Peskov said.

However, Russia has not yet shown any indication that it is ready to back down militarily and cede the territory it has occupied in the south and east of Ukraine since 2014.

In Ukraine, anti-Kremlin sentiment is omnipresent as a result of the violence. The Moscow-affiliated Orthodox church, which is widely viewed as an outpost of Kremlin influence by Ukrainians, is likely to be banned from operating in the near future.

In his nightly address on Thursday, Zelenskiy said the national security council had asked the cabinet to draft a bill on the ban that would be voted on in parliament. He also said there would be a review of the church’s control over Kyiv’s [Pechersk Lavra monastery](#), the holy centre of eastern Orthodoxy.

Over the last week, Ukraine’s security services conducted a series of raids on Moscow-affiliated monasteries and churches, which were prompted by a video of churchgoers singing pro-Russia songs. They

said they found pro-Russia literature, Russian passports and money, and identified suspected Russian agents.

“We have to create conditions so that no actors dependent on the aggressor state can manipulate Ukrainians and weaken Ukraine from within,” Zelenskiy said.