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Cyber

1. [**AI chatbots and image generators may lead to new mobile threats, McAfee says**](#) **(The Hindu, 28 FEB)**

   The McAfee Consumer Mobile Threat Report found that advancements in AI chatbots and image generators could to lead to new mobile threats and aid scammers

   The release of applications such as OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot and DALL-E 2 image generator have provided powerful Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the masses which can be used by cybercriminals, McAfee in its annual Consumer Mobile Threat Report shared.

2. [**US warns of cyberattacks by Russia on anniversary of Ukraine war**](#) **(ARN NET, 25 FEB, Apurva Venkat)**

   The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued an advisory about stepped-up Russian 'disruptive' actions right after Ukraine detected a cyberattack on government websites.

   The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has issued an advisory urging organizations to increase cybersecurity vigilance on the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in the wake of a cyberattack against several Ukrainian government websites.

   "The United States and European nations may experience disruptive and defacement attacks against websites in an attempt to sow chaos and societal discord," the CISA advisory said.

3. [**Cyber threat actors using fake ChatGPT app to run a malicious campaign: Report**](#) **(The Hindu, 24 FEB)**

   Cyber threat actors are using a desktop app masquerading as an official client for OpenAI's ChatGPT to run a malicious campaign. Attackers are enticing users to install a Trojan stealer in the guise of being able to use the ChatGPT app on Windows, which officially does not exist.

4. [**Ukraine's year of war exposes changing roles for cyber weapons**](#) **(The Next Web, 23 FEB, Thomas Macaulay)**

   On the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion, Ukraine is commemorating horrific losses — and remarkable defiance.

   The country's fierce resistance on the battlefield has been echoed on the digital front — where Kyiv has unique experience. The conflict with Russia has become the world's first full-scale cyberwar, but Ukraine was a test bed for digital weapons long before the invasion of 24 February, 2022. Since Putin's troops began flooding across the border, the cyber tactics have shifted dramatically.

5. [**Even hackers are reportedly getting laid off by organized crime groups**](#) **(Yahoo! Finance, 21 FEB, Sindhu Sundar)**

   Hackers and others perpetuating ransomware threats seem to be the latest tech industry workers navigating a shaky job market.

   As US Department of Justice investigators and companies beef up their oversight of cybersecurity threats, the impact of ransomware attacks — hackers demand ransom payments from targets — has been blunted, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

6. [**Hackers create ChatGPT-driven Telegram bots that can write**](#)

malware (The Economic Times, 12 FEB)

Cyber-criminals are using Microsoft-owned ChatGPT to create Telegram bots that can write malware and steal your data, new research has revealed.

Currently, if you ask ChatGPT to write a phishing email impersonating a bank or create malware, it will not generate it.

However, hackers are working their way around ChatGPT's restrictions and there is an active chatter in the underground forums disclosing how to use OpenAI API to bypass ChatGPT's barriers and limitations.

7. [The Next Cyber Phase of the Russia-Ukraine War Will Echo in Asia](#) (The Diplomat, 11 FEB, Muhammad Faizal bin Abdul Rahman)

In January 2022, alleged Russian-linked hackers conducted a major cyberattack on the websites of the Ukraine government. They posted an ominous message, which read, "Ukrainians! … All information about you has become public. Be afraid and expect worse. It's your past, present and future." Amid this incident, NATO and Ukraine signed an agreement to deepen practical cybersecurity cooperation.

A month later, Russia invaded Ukraine.

8. [Security News This Week: North Korean Hackers Are Attacking US Hospitals](#) (Wired, 11 FEB, Matt Burgess & Lily Hay Newman)

Plus: Deepfake disinformation spotted in the wild, Android privacy problems in China, Reddit gets phished, and more.

WITH A MAJOR United States intelligence authority set to expire at the end of the year, and a congressional showdown brewing over whether or not to renew it, new details of an internal audit show that US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) personnel have repeatedly conducted unlawful searches of data collected under the imperiled surveillance authority. Agents requested information on journalists, a US congressman, and a political party as a result of what the US Department of Justice called "misunderstandings."

9. [CYBER WAR, FROM THE BOTTOM UP](#) (Diplomatic Courier, 11 FEB, Joshua Huminski)

The story of cyber wafare is typically West-centric. This ignores both the surprising roots of cyber war and the bottom-up, percolating nature of cyber threats, writes Joshua Huminski in his review of Matt Potter's latest book, "We Are All Targets."

Afew weeks ago, I found myself in a café in Ballston, part of Arlington, Virginia. It is ground-zero for the cyber-industrial complex that has sprung up around Washington D.C. While enjoying a cup of coffee, I overheard two gentlemen speaking in what would sound like an arcane language to those not au fait with cybersecurity-ese. They bandied about phrases like "resilience," "cyber hygiene," "attack surfaces," "threat vectors," "machine learning," and more. Had I been playing cybersecurity bingo, I would have easily won. These were all delivered in rapid succession, presumably as part of a pitch they were about to make to one of the Department of Defense-affiliated offices in the area.

10. [Worldwide cost of cyberattacks to triple](#) (World Pipelines, 10 FEB, Sara Simper)

In an increasingly digital world, secure internet infrastructures are both a challenge and an obligation. As the number of devices sharing data grows thanks to the rise and democratisation of the Internet of Things (IoT), the number of threats that users face is

also on the increase. Estimates suggest that if the current rate of growth continues, the value of the damage caused by cyberattacks will amount to around US$10.5 trillion a year by 2025, compared with US$3 trillion in 2015, an increase of more than 200%.

11. **[Great, hackers are now using ChatGPT to create malware](#) (Digital Trends, 09 FEB, Fionna Agomuoh)**

A new threat has surfaced in the ChatGPT saga, with cybercriminals having developed a way to hack the AI chatbot and inundate it with malware commands.

The research firm Checkpoint has discovered that hackers have designed bots that can infiltrate OpenAI's GPT-3 API and alter its code so that it can generate malicious content, such as text that can be used for phishing emails and malware scripts.

12. **[North Korea's Lazarus gang exposes itself in OPSEC failure](#) (Computer Weekly, 02 FEB, Alex Scroxton)**

A campaign of cyber attacks targeting medical research bodies and energy firms has been pinned on the infamous North Korean advanced persistent threat (APT) group known as Lazarus – the group behind the 2017 WannaCry incident – after an operational security error by gang members exposed its activity.

Researchers at Finland's WithSecure picked up the story after detecting what appeared to be a run-of-the-mill ransomware attack on a customer that was using its Elements cloud-native security platform. But it soon became apparent that something else was happening.

13. **[Microsoft OneNote Is Latest Malware Vector](#) (Gov Info Security, 02 FEB, Prajeet Nair)**

At least somebody uses Microsoft OneNote: Security researchers say they've detected an increase in the number of hackers delivering malware via the note-taking app bundled into the computing giant's Office suite of programs.

A spike over the last two months in malicious .one files is likely due to hackers adapting to Microsoft's crackdown on macros, leading them to look for other ways to smuggle malware past threat detection, say researchers at Proofpoint.

14. **[From phishing scams to propaganda: How Russia, rogue nations utilize cyber capabilities against the US](#) (Fox News, 1 FEB, Peter Aitken)**

Rogue nations including China, Russia, Iran and North Korea continue to close the cyber capabilities gap on the U.S., utilizing a range of operations that have created an increasingly complex and difficult security landscape to navigate.

"Cyber warfare isn't just about access to sensitive or classified information," Jamil Jaffer, founder and executive director at the National Security Institute at the George Mason University Law School, told Fox News Digital. "It can have real physical effects."

The cybersecurity landscape has shifted over the past 10 years, due in part to disclosures from various nations, including the U.S., into how their national cyber toolkits work, allowing other countries to quickly develop capabilities they had lacked.

Electronic Warfare

1. **[Russia Also Has A Fleet Of Spy Balloons](#) (The Warzone, 13 FEB, Riotr Butowski)**

   Balloons were an important component of the Soviet Union's arsenal, for everything from spying to bombing, and Russia still uses them today.

   Aerostats, including unpowered balloons, were very popular in the Soviet Union before World War II, but subsequently fell almost completely out of favor. However, once the Cold War was underway, Soviet surveillance balloons made a comeback. In the modern Russian military, there remains a limited niche for these kinds of balloons, although, with spy balloons very much back on the international agenda, it's possible that they could become part of a broader resurgence.

2. **[Chinese balloon wasn't downed over Alaska due to 'dangerous' recovery](#) (C4ISRNet, 09 FEB, Bryant Harris & Colin Demarest)**

   A senior Pentagon official on Thursday tried to justify the military's decision not to shoot down a Chinese balloon as soon as it entered Alaskan airspace by highlighting the dangers doing so would have posed to the recovery and examination of its surveillance equipment.

3. **[Chinese balloon reignites focus on Electronic Warfare and intelligence gathering platforms](#) (FOX Carolina, 09 FEB, Arthur Mondale)**

   Electronic warfare is a largely invisible, yet critical part of modern war. It targets communications, navigation, guidance systems and even civilian life. The discussion about it has heightened amid both the War in Ukraine and following a Chinese balloon (an intelligence gathering platform) that captivated the nation, and our state.

4. **[China spy balloon part of military fleet to collect communications across five continents, US says](#) (Just The News, 09 FEB, Medeleine Hubbard)**

   The balloon had multiple antennas built in a manner that was "likely capable of collecting and geo-locating communications," the U.S. said.

   The Chinese spy balloon shot down over the Atlantic Ocean after traversing much of the continental United States was part of a larger Chinese military fleet of surveillance balloons that flew across five continents, the State Department said Thursday.

5. **[China conducted spy balloon program for years, Pentagon says](#) (C4ISRNet, 08 FEB, Lolita C. Baldor & Tara Copp)**

   The Chinese balloon shot down off the South Carolina coast was part of a large surveillance program that China has been conducting for "several years," the Pentagon said Wednesday.

   When similar balloons passed over U.S. territory on four occasions during the Trump and Biden administrations, the U.S. did not immediately identify them as Chinese surveillance balloons, said Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary. But he said "subsequent intelligence analysis" allowed the U.S. to confirm they were part of a Chinese spying effort and learn "a lot more" about the program.

6. **[Russia-Ukraine lessons to boost US electronic warfare, Sen. Reed says](#)** (C4ISRNet, 08 FEB, Colin Demarest)

The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee wants to reimagine how the U.S. military fights, including across the electromagnetic spectrum, and is looking to Ukraine for clues.

"We are in a tremendously dynamic situation, where technology is changing rapidly, techniques are changing rapidly," Sen. Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat, said Feb. 7 at a Defense Writers Group event. "We are truly multidimensional."

7. **[Russia buys US-made components for electronic warfare systems through Chinese, Turkish intermediaries – Russian media](#)** (Euromaidan Press, 07 FEB)

Using its own subsidiaries, shell companies, and foreign intermediaries, Russia's Rostec state-owned corporation purchases US-made components to produce electronic warfare equipment later used against Ukraine, according to an investigation by the Russian website Vazhnye Istorii. Rostec has been under US and EU sanctions since 2014.

8. **[Pentagon tester gives thumbs up to US Army electronic warfare planner](#)** (C4ISRNet, 02 FEB, Colin Demarest)

The Pentagon's independent weapons tester verified that the U.S. Army's premier electronic-warfare visualization software is operationally effective and capable of assisting soldiers in the field.

The service's Electronic Warfare Planning and Management Tool, or EWPMT, contributed to the successful engagement of "high-payoff targets," provided effective tools for understanding the electromagnetic spectrum and, overall, improved situational awareness during trials, the Office of the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation said in its latest public report, released late last month.

Information Advantage

1. **[What will ChatGPT mean for the US defense industrial base?](#)** **(C4ISRNet, 27 FEB, Noah Rivers & Olivia Letts)**

   ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence-enabled chatbot tool developed by U.S.-based AI lab OpenAI. Two months after its launch in November, it became the fastest consumer application in history to reach 100 million active users, and it has already started to have a noticeable impact in business and academia.

2. **[Ads with misinformation, doxing, incitement easy to place on TikTok: report](#)** **(NL Times, 27 FEB)**

   Advertisements containing doxing, misinformation, and even incitement to violence are easy to place on TikTok, BNR reports after an experiment done ahead of the Provincial Elections next month.

   BNR submitted seven advertisements aimed at sabotaging the Provincial Elections to publish on TikTok on election day, March 15. Six of them got approved, despite TikTok's general ban on political advertisements.

3. **[Russian disinformation fogs up view of Ukraine war for many Canadians](#)** **(Global News, 25 FEB, David Akin)**

   More than two-thirds of Canadians say disinformation campaigns about Russia's invasion of Ukraine have made an impact on their ability to sort through true and false information about the conflict, according to internal federal government polling obtained by Global News.

   Questions about disinformation and Ukraine were part of the Privy Council's weekly polling program in October. That polling data was recently released to Global News under federal access-to-information laws.

4. **[One year on: Disinformation and the dismantling of Russian independent media](#)** **(The Foreign Policy Centre, 24 FEB, Lana Estemirova)**

   As we approach the grim one year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we cannot underestimate its crushing impact on independent journalism and human rights inside Russia.

   Without a doubt, the systematic demolition of civil society in Russia helped to lay the ground for the invasion, as did the notorious Foreign Agents Law. Incessant Kremlin propaganda that dominates state channels, coupled with the shutdown of independent media, blocks citizens from easy access to truthful information. In a new draconian measure, the Russian parliament passed a law that imposes a 15-year sentence for spreading 'fake' information about the invasion. For example, a 20-year-old student, Olesya Krivtsova, who is currently under house arrest, is facing up to ten years in prison for posting anti-war messages on her social media.

5. **[New AI Voice Technology Makes It Easy To Spread Misinformation](#)** **(Lovin Malta, 18 FEB, Ibrahim Gaddari)**

   It has just become even easier to manipulate and create misleading content, including the creation of deepfake videos.

   You may have seen it: a doctored video of US President Joe Biden went viral on social

media. In the video, he appeared to be attacking transgender people, but it was a result of AI tools that can simulate a person's voice with just a few clicks of a button.

6. **Propaganda machine preparing Russians for new wave of mobilization, warns Ukrainian military intelligence** (The New Voice of Ukrane, 15 FEB)

Russian dictator Vladimir Putin is planning a series of public statements, assurances, calls, and concerts to "fuel the propaganda with something," with the main purpose being to prepare the population for this new mobilization, Yusov said.

7. **Hacks, Bots and Blackmail: How Secret Cyber Mercenaries Disrupt Elections** (OCCRP, 15 FEB, James O'Brien)

Undercover reporters recorded a group of covert cyber influence specialists as they pitched their services, which involve using disinformation campaigns, false intelligence, hacks and blackmail to promote their clients' interests. The group, which calls itself Team Jorge, claims to have worked on dozens of presidential elections around the world and charges multimillion dollar fees.

8. **ChatGPT hints at potential for artificial intelligence in government** (C4ISRNet, 15 FEB, Jay Meil)

The rapid adoption and scrutiny around ChatGPT, the latest artificial intelligence model, highlights the exploding potential of AI. It also underscores a stark delta between AI's current capabilities and human willingness to embrace them.

This untapped potential is perhaps most apparent in the public sector where AI is both championed and feared - offering exciting federal use cases but lacking policy guidance and maturity at scale.

9. **Here's How AI Will Disrupt Warfare** (Globely News, 07 FEB, Michael Raska)

The main challenge for implementing artificial intelligence in warfare is the wholesale re-engineering of C4ISR strategies and doctrines.

Cyber operations have been evolving as part of major wars and conflicts over the past three decades. Yet modern militaries have struggled to align advanced cyber capabilities with conventional military power. If militaries can fully harness the next cyber revolution in potential conflict flashpoints, there could be enormous implications for the future of warfare.

10. **EU to open new center fighting 'Russian disinformation'** (Anadolu Agency, 07 FEB, Agnes Szucs)

The European Union will create a new center fighting "Russian disinformation," the EU foreign policy chief announced on Tuesday.

Josep Borrell gave a speech while opening the European External Action Service's "Beyond Disinformation: EU Responses to the Threat of Foreign Information Manipulation" conference.

He said "Russia is using information manipulation and interference as a crucial instrument" of its war on Ukraine, which it started last February.

"This is not only using explosives, bombs bullets, killing people. It's about the mind, it is about how to conquer your spirits," he added.

11. **[EU steps up disinformation fight as threats to staff abroad rise](#) (EURACTIV, 07 FEB, Alexandra Brzozowski)**

The EU will launch a new platform to counter disinformation campaigns by Russia and China, the bloc's chief diplomat Josep Borrell said on Tuesday (7 February), as EU delegations and missions abroad are increasingly becoming a target.

A so-called Information Sharing and Analysis Center within the EU's diplomatic service EEAS will seek to track information manipulation by foreign actors and coordinate with the 27 member states and civil society actors.

12. **[Russia is using Wagner group and disinformation to exploit power vacuum in Africa, experts say](#) (iNews, 05 FEB)**

Regime changes in Mali and Burkina Faso have brought in leaders more hostile to Western forces, creating an opportunity for Russia to expand its influence in the continent.

Russia is using the Wagner military group and a disinformation campaign to expand its foreign policy reach in Africa as the withdrawal of Western nations leaves a power vacuum, experts have claimed.

Signal

1. **[Military agency praised for leading the way on laser communications](#)** **(Space News, 09 FEB, Sandra Erwin)**

   The Space Development Agency in 2021 issued technical specifications that manufacturers have to comply with in order to compete for contracts

   By requiring suppliers of laser terminals to comply with a common set of standards, the U.S. Space Development Agency has helped propel the industry forward, executives said Feb. 8 at the SmallSat Symposium in Mountain View, California.

   The Space Development Agency (SDA), an arm of the U.S. Space Force, is building a mesh network of satellites in low Earth orbit to serve as a data transport layer for the U.S. military. Each satellite will have anywhere from three to five laser links so they can talk to other satellites, airplanes, ships and ground stations.

2. **[Pentagon kicks off 5G competition to upgrade base communications](#)** **(Defense News, 02 FEB, Colin Demarest)**

   WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Defense is launching the latest 5G competition with millions of dollars on the table, a move it anticipates will shape the rollout of communication upgrades at military bases.

   The "2023 5G Challenge: Advanced Interoperability" was announced Feb. 2 in collaboration with Department of Commerce, and comes a little less than one year after a similar contest.

3. **[Russia Versus Ukraine and the Role of Software-Defined Radios](#)** **(The Cyber Edge, 01 FEB, Tamara Moskaliuk & Brandon Malatest)**

   With the current war in Ukraine, it's clear that Russia's modernization program has involved electronic warfare and signals intelligence and played a huge part in Russia's combat advances and overall positioning leading up to the actual invasion.

Items of Interest

1. **Russia-Ukraine Situation Report, (U.S. Army Asian Studies Detachment)**

   These reports are a compilation of articles from Russia, Ukraine, and other nations regarding the current tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Topics covered in this report include the following:

   - Foreign Observations and Reactions
   - Social Media Highlights
   - Russian Eastern Military District Movements
   - Other Topics

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 28 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 27 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 24 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 23 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 22 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 21 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 17 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 16 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 15 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 14 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 13 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 09 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 06 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 03 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 02 February 2023

   [Russia-Ukraine Situation Report](#), 01 February 2023

2. [**Ukraine Situation Report: Kyiv Details Russia's Scaled-Back Goals A Year Later**](#) **(The Drive, 23 FEB, Howard Altman)**

   A year after launching its full-on invasion, Russia's more focused operation is being effectively countered, a top Ukrainian general says.

   On the eve of the one-year mark in its defense against Russia's full-on invasion, a top Ukrainian general laid out what he perceives as Moscow's near-term military objectives. They are far less grandiose than when Russian troops first attacked from three directions on Feb. 24, 2022, with the aim of toppling the Zelensky government and seizing control of the country.

3. [**Our Best Look Yet At The Chinese Spy Balloon's Massive Payload**](#) **(The Drive, 22 FEB, Joseph Thevithick)**

A just declassified high-resolution image of the Chinese spy balloon taken from a U-2 shows what appear to be propellers and other features.

The Pentagon has now confirmed the authenticity of a picture taken from a U-2S Dragon Lady spy plane of the Chinese surveillance balloon that passed over parts of the United States and Canada earlier this month before being shot down. The U.S. military subsequently released a high-resolution copy of the image that gives us the best look to date at the balloon and the massive payload apparatus suspended below it.

4. **[Pilots Advised Of Large White High-Altitude Balloon East Of Hawaii (Updated)](#) (The Drive, 19 FEB, Joseph Trevithick & Tyler Rogoway)**

The balloon was supposedly called-out by the FAA as being roughly 600 miles east of Hawaii at between 40,000 and 50,000 feet.

According to multiple reports, the FAA notified pilots of a sighting of a large white balloon at between 40,000 and 50,000 feet roughly 600 miles east of the Hawaiian Islands. Subsequent ACARS (Aircraft Communications, Addressing and Reporting System) messages show aircraft in the area — which is normally quite busy as it sits on the route from the U.S. west coast to Hawaii — acknowledging the alert, which includes a request to report back if they spot any such object.

5. **[Chinese Spy Balloon Had 'Self-Destruct' Capability That Wasn't Activated: Report](#) (Forbes, 15 FEB, Matt Novak)**

The Chinese spy balloon that was eventually shot down over the Atlantic Ocean on Feb. 4 after sailing over the continental U.S. was apparently blown off course and had a "self-destruct function" that wasn't activated before reaching Alaska, according to a new report from the New York Times. It's not immediately clear what would have allowed the balloon to self-destruct or whether that capability would've posed a danger to anyone on the ground if it was done over U.S. airspace.

6. **[Why Wreckage Of The Three Shot Down Objects Is So Hard To Find](#) (The Drive, 15 FEB, Tyler Rogoway)**

The circumstances of the Chinese spy balloon's downing were very different than the other three, and recovering them will be much tougher.

I t's been three days since the U.S. shot down a balloon-like object over North America. That would have seemed like a totally bizarre statement to make just a couple of weeks ago, but it's not after recent events. U.S. Air Force F-22s and F-16s have shot down four objects in just over one week.

7. **[Losses to Russian military power, 7% rise in China's defense spending in 2022, finds IISS](#) (The Print, 15 FEB, Suchet Vir Singh)**

Russia has suffered significant losses in its military power since its invasion of Ukraine, while Kyiv is scrambling to offset the hit its airpower has taken in the last one year, according to data by a think tank.

Further, China's increase in defence spending for 2022 is its largest increase in absolute terms. There has been a 7 per cent rise in China's defence spending from 2021, finds the Military Balance 2023, published by the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS).

8. **[Balloons Shot Down Over Ukraine Point To New Russian Tactics](#) (The Drive, 15 FEB, Howard Altman & Joseph Trevithick)**

Cheap balloons with radar reflectors could expose useful details about Ukrainian air

defenses and bait them into wasting valuable munitions.

Ukrainian armed forces shot down several balloons with radar reflectors suspended beneath them that were spotted flying over or near the capital Kyiv on Wednesday, according to officials in that country. This appears to be an emerging Russian tactic that could be used to gather intelligence about Ukraine's air defense capabilities, baiting them into wasting precious ammunition and other resources, or otherwise distracting or confusing their operators.

9. **[Vaunted Russian military overhaul fares poorly amid setbacks](#) (Washington Times, 15 FEB Mike Glenn)**

Russia's abysmal battlefield record in Ukraine is calling into serious question the effectiveness of post-Soviet military reforms that were supposed to transform Moscow's army into a modern, well-equipped and competent force, according to an authoritative survey of the world's major military powers released Wednesday.

The Military Balance audit of the world's armed forces, issued annually by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, estimated that Russia has lost 40% of its tank fleet in the fighting since it invaded neighboring Ukraine last February. Fierce fighting continues in contested areas of Ukraine's east and south.

10. **[Russia has 97 percent of its troops in Ukraine but is struggling to advance: UK](#) (New York Post, 15 FEB, Isabel Keane)**

Russia has deployed around 97% of its troops as it tries to step up its offensive in eastern Ukraine — but it still lacks the manpower to "punch through" Kyiv's defenses. a top British military official said Wednesday.

UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace told the BBC that Russia had yet to make a breakthrough in the eastern region of Ukraine despite its advances.

"We haven't actually seen this massing of a single force to punch through in a big offensive. We've just seen an effort to advance, and that has come at a huge cost to the Russian army," he said.

"We now estimate 97% of the Russian army, the whole Russian army, is now in Ukraine."

11. **[F-16 Shoots Down "Octagonal Object" Over Lake Huron (Updated)](#) (The Drive, 12 FEB, Howard Altman, Tyler Rogoway)**

For the third time in three days, an unknown object has been shot down, a U.S. Rep. from Michigan said Sunday.

Another unknown object was shot down, this time over Lake Huron, according to U.S. Reps. Elissa Slotkin and Jack Bergman of Michigan.

"The object has been downed by pilots from the US Air Force and National Guard," Slotkin tweeted Sunday afternoon. "Great work by all who carried out this mission both in the air and back at headquarters. We're all interested in exactly what this object was and it's purpose."

12. **[F-22 Shoots Down Another Object, This Time Over Canada (Updated)](#) (The Drive, 11 FEB, Stetson Payne)**

F-22 Raptors under the control of NORAD have now shot down two objects in North American airspace within a day, three in the last week.

AU.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor has shot down an object over Canada's Yukon Territory, per a Tweet from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The shootdown is the second such incident in two days and the F-22's third 'kill' ever, after the shooting down of a Chinese high-altitude balloon a week ago. Trudeau tweeted he spoke with President Joe Biden on Saturday afternoon about the incident, and that Canadian forces will recover the object's wreckage.

13. **[F-22 Shoots Down "Object" Flying High Over Alaskan Waters (Updated)](link) (The Drive, 10 FEB, Howard Altman & Joseph Trevithick)**

The new high-altitude incident in U.S. airspace off the coast of Alaska follows recent revelations about Chinese spy balloons.

Details are still limited, but a U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor has shot down a relatively high-flying "object" over U.S. territorial waters off the coast of Alaska. What exactly this may have been and who it might have belonged to are unknown, but this does come less than a week after an F-22 brought down what American officials say was a Chinese surveillance balloon after it traveled through U.S. and Canadian airspace for a number of days.

14. **[US Recovering Balloon Debris, Won't Return It To China](link) (Times of Malta/Army Open-Source Portal, 07 FEB)**

The United States is recovering debris from the downed Chinese balloon in the Atlantic for analysis by intelligence experts and there is no plan to give the remains back to Beijing, officials said Monday.

China says the balloon was an errant weather observation aircraft with no military purpose, but the United States says it was a sophisticated high-altitude spying vehicle.

15. **[Chinese Spy Balloon: Everything You Need to Know](link) (Globely News, 04 FEB, Ian Boyd)**

The Chinese spy balloon hovering over the U.S. provides clearer visuals than satellites. But its purpose is more likely political than military.

Officials of the U.S. Department of Defense confirmed on Feb. 2, 2023, that the military was tracking what it called a "spy balloon" that was drifting over the continental United States at an altitude of about 60,000 feet. The following day, Chinese officials acknowledged that the balloon was theirs but denied it was intended for spying or meant to enter U.S. airspace. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the balloon's incursion led him to cancel his trip to Beijing. He had been scheduled to meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang on Feb. 5 and 6. On Feb. 3, the Pentagon said that a second suspected Chinese balloon was seen over Latin America.

16. **[Why Shooting Down China's Spy Balloon Over The U.S. Is More Complicated Than It Seems](link) (The Drive, 04 FEB, Emma Helfrich, Joseph Trevithick & Tyler Rogoway)**

The emergence of the Chinese balloon above the U.S. left many asking why not just shoot it down, but it's not that simple.

Aballoon, which the Pentagon says is a Chinese surveillance asset, is currently heading along a southeasterly path across the United States. U.S. officials say they considered shooting it down on Wednesday but decided not to over safety concerns. Many are now clamoring for them to try again for a host of reasons, but even attempting to do so is far more complicated than it appears at first glance.

17. **[Chinese Spy Balloon Reaches Missouri](link) (The Drive, 03 FEB, Joseph**

Trevithick)

Questions and concerns are growing around the presence of the balloon and when the Pentagon actually disclosed it to the public.

What U.S. officials say is a Chinese government surveillance balloon is now soaring over the northwestern end of Missouri. This is in line with a generally southeasterly track that the balloon has been following since it was first publicly spotted over Montana on Wednesday. Readers of The War Zone can first get up to speed on this situation, which is the latest in a string of similarly concerning incidents in recent years, in our initial reporting here.

18. [China's Spy Balloon Over Montana Is Part Of A Larger, More Troubling Pattern](#) **(The Drive, 02 FEB, Joseph Trevithick)**

The Pentagon says Chinese balloons have flown over the U.S. multiple times before and other peculiar incidents point to a much wider issue.

The U.S. Air Force has moved F-22 Raptor stealth fighters into position to be ready to shoot down what American officials say is a Chinese government high-altitude surveillance balloon over Montana. The balloon remains in U.S. airspace after the decision was made not to destroy it, at least for the time being. The Pentagon has downplayed the overall significance of the balloon's presence and stated that this has happened multiple times before. The latter is new official information as far as we can tell at this time.

19. [F-22 Shoots Down Chinese Spy Balloon Off Carolinas With Missile (Updated)](#) **(The Drive, 04 FEB, Howard Altman, Stetson Payne, Tyler Rogoway)**

After days spent floating over the U.S., the Chinese spy balloon was shot down and a collection operation is now underway off the Carolinas.

The U.S. has shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon off the coast of South Carolina as multiple assets have entered the area to recover its debris.

The saga that began with the balloon's appearance high above Billings, Montana, on February 1 reached its climax Saturday with an explosion and the balloon's subsequent fall from high altitude. Videos of the shootdown showed an F-22 Raptor launching an air-to-air missile at the balloon for the kill. This would be the F-22's first 'kill.'

20. [Switzerland rethinks neutrality, considers weapons exports amid Ukraine crisis](#) **(Politico, 02 FEB, Wilhelmine Preussen, Leonie Kijewski and Nicolas Camut)**

Swiss government has been grappling with how to get around a neutrality law prohibiting re-export of weapons from European partners to Ukraine.

Swiss lawmakers are rethinking what it means to be neutral amid Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine — although change might come too late for Kyiv.

In Bern, sending weapons doesn't just depend on a political decision from the top, but also legal issues and a secular commitment to neutrality.

A small country surrounded by great powers, neutrality is baked into Switzerland's history: The mountainous country has been neutral for close to five centuries, while being recognized in international law as an unaligned state since 1815.

21. [Philippines grant US greater military access as tensions with China](#)

mount **(Fox News, 02 FEB, Caitlin McFall)**

The Philippines on Tuesday granted the U.S. access to four more military bases, allowing Washington to expand its presence in the region and bolster its deterrence against China's aggression.

In a statement from the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. and the Philippines will "accelerate the full implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the agreement to designate four new Agreed Locations in strategic areas of the country."

22. **Putin amasses 500,000 troops for 'new Ukraine invasion' ahead of war's first anniversary** **(Leading Britain's Conversation, 02 FEB 23, Harvey Lindsay)**

The Russian president has gathered 300,000 men to be entered into a general mobilisation in September, however Mr Reznikov recently told the French BFM network that the real figures of conscripts deployed to battle in Ukraine could be much more.

He said: "Officially they announced 300,000 but when we see the troops at the borders, according to our assessments it is much more."

Ukraine president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy backed up the claim, saying that Ukraine is seeing "a certain increase in the occupier's offensive actions at the front – in the east of our country".