

News From Ukraine

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

March 12, 2024

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U.S. Defense Spending – Implications for Ukraine?

Will the U.S. defense spending drop below 2% of GDP, the level agreed to by NATO members? If the trend continues, we will no longer be able to browbeat our recalcitrant allies, those that spend less than 2% of GDP, about relying on the U.S. military to keep them safe, rather than relying on their own.

According to this Op-Ed in the Wall Street Journal, entitled “[Biden Shrinks the U.S. Military](#),” U.S. defense spending will fall to 2.4% in Fiscal Year 2034, from 3.1% of GDP this year. The article also states that the latest Federal budget calls for a 1% increase in defense spending in nominal terms, or a reduction after inflation. The U.S. now spends more on interest on the Federal debt than it does on defense. In the current fiscal year, President Biden proposes to spend approximately \$850 billion on defense, less than the over \$1 trillion in student loan forgiveness that Pres. Biden proposes.

It seems to make sense that if the U.S. is engaged in “managed decline” in the size of its military, described in this article, that the odds are that it will have less to spend on supporting allies under assault by totalitarian neighbors, including but by no means limited to Ukraine. The current controversy over the Ukraine supplemental that is held up in the U.S. House of Representatives is a symptom; the shrinking of our military under the Biden Administration, at a time when our allies are in danger from totalitarian neighbors, is the disease.

[The 2024 Presidential Campaign Officially Begins](#)

Last night, both Pres. Biden and former Pres. Trump accumulated enough delegates to ensure the respective nominations of their parties. The 2024 Presidential Campaign has begun.

American voters need to ask both candidates pointed questions about their willingness to support their democratic allies to defend themselves against current and possible attacks by totalitarian neighbors. Democratic allies under current or threatened attack will listen carefully to their respective answers, as will our allies and other countries, such as those in the “Global South,” that are weighing whom to trust.

On the same day as the Op-Ed about U.S. defense spending, this opinion piece by Wall Street Journal columnist Holman Jenkins appeared, entitled “Trump and Ukraine.” Jenkins advises his readers “Ignore the press. They don’t know what he’d do because they forget how politics works.” Jenkins goes on to state the following, “Mr. Biden prefers a “limited” war, understandably. His team always said negotiations were the expected outcome. In failing to nail his colors to any declared terms, though, he seems to have convinced Mr. Putin—and not a few Republican backbenchers—the U.S. would fold.”

Jenkins continues, “Mr. Trump likes a star turn. On no occasion in his long life, as far as I can tell, has he approached such a moment in a spirit of supplication and appeasement. **So having his underlings threaten the Putin regime with a big increase in U.S. military aid would at least be in-character gambit** (my emphasis). The constantly repeated refrain that he would sell out Ukraine is reflected in nothing he ever said or did, including his famous 2019 phone call to President Volodymyr Zelensky.”

Pres. Biden’s record on supporting Ukraine is not without criticism:

- In 2014, when Biden Vice President and responsible for Ukraine policy, the Obama Administration declined Ukraine’s request to supply lethal weapons including the Javelin Missile. The software in the counter battery radars that the U.S. supplied was programmed so that they could not detect missiles launched from Russian territory.

- Before Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine even started, Pres. Biden made a statement, subsequently walked back, to the effect that it may be OK for Russia to take a piece of Ukrainian territory as part of a negotiated settlement.
- The constant refrain that Ukraine would only last 5 days, likely affecting U.S. decisions on supplying weapons to those that Ukraine could use in a partisan conflict with Russia, apres surrender.
- The Biden Administration's continual delays in supplying Ukraine with the weapons they asked for, starting in the Spring of 2022 with M-777 howitzers up through ATACMS missiles and F-16s.
- Continually declining to use the word "victory" in defining the U.S. objectives in Ukraine.

Had Ukraine received the weapons they had asked for, when they asked for them, Ukraine may not have had to worry about Speaker Mike Johnson blocking the Ukraine Supplemental.

The press needs to play a far more honest role. As Holman Jenkins said, "Donald Trump, like most challengers to a vulnerable sitting president, relies on hyperbolic criticism and changing the subject rather than committing himself on difficult policy choices that might displease some set of voters. The media, however, can no longer be trusted to give a skeptical, realistic account of what he might do as president, preferring to put words in his mouth to suit its own narratives."

Both candidates have much work to do, to clearly state their respective positions on providing Ukraine with the military support that it needs, and the press needs to honestly describe what their respective positions are. Pres. Biden now has a record for everyone to see. Former Pres. Trump needs to be far more specific but, as Jenkins points out, he's also vulnerable to media spin.

Robert Gates famously said of Pres. Biden, "I think he (Biden) has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades." In Ukraine, Pres. Biden has time to prove Gates wrong, but so far, at least based on my observations Pres. Biden hasn't done

so. Now that the campaign has started, let's hope Biden finally does prove Gates wrong.

["The Invisible War: Inside the Electronic Warfare Arms Race That Could Shape the Course of War in Ukraine"](#)

The Russians had a big "head start" in electronic warfare technology, jamming Excalibur artillery shells, Ukrainian drones and HIMARS missiles. The article states that Russian investments in EW systems date back to 1991. However, as a Formal Naval Person who was the Electronic Warfare Officer on my ship in the late 1960s, Russian technology was built on Soviet experience, which at the time was formidable.

However, my bet is on Ukraine. Ukraine can draw upon its excellent system of technical universities, its broad and successful information technology industry, the support of some of the U.S. companies that I mentioned in yesterday's email, all run by 20- and 30-year olds or so it seems and, in general, the technical aptitude of the Ukrainian people and their ability to take chances. Additionally, much of the Soviet expertise had its origins in Ukraine, the big electronic warfare complex based in Ivano Frankivsk and other locations.

News From the Battlefield

The "[Latest Denys](#)" describes how Ukraine is marking the imminent Russian Presidential election, including 4 incursions into Russia by Russian troops supporting Ukraine, and a number of drone strikes on Russian oil installations inside Russia.

3/13/2024 Sitrep

Abbreviations: RMA = Regional Military Administration UAV = Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

INTERNATIONAL

8:27 AM: President Joe Biden's administration has released a budget proposal for fiscal year 2025 that includes \$482 million in aid to Ukraine.

8:27 AM: The European Union plans on allocating up to 3 billion euros to Ukraine this year of the profit received from the frozen assets of the Russian Federation.

3:30 PM: The European Parliament adopted a directive to criminalize the violation and circumvention of EU sanctions.

- "EU sanctions may include the freezing of funds and assets (including crypto-assets), travel bans, arms embargoes and restrictions on business sectors," the press service of the parliament writes.
- At the same time, the Financial Times writes that the EC has a plan that provides for the confiscation of profits from assets frozen in the Euroclear depository (their value is estimated at €190 billion). Ukraine can receive the first funds already in July.

3:54 PM: Polish protesters have completely blocked the movement of trucks from Ukraine to Poland in the directions of the checkpoints "Shegyny", "Yagodin", "Ugryniv" and "Ustylug".

- Andriy Demchenko, the spokesman of the State Security Service of Ukraine, announced this.
- According to him, as of this morning, a total of 1,500 trucks are in queues on these routes on the territory of Poland.

4:25 PM: In addition to the purchase of 300,000 artillery ammunition for the Armed Forces, the Czech initiative was promised another 200,000 units on an optional basis.

- This was stated by the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Fiala, reports CTK.
- "This is more proof that the Czech Republic is a fully active player in the European security policy," Fiala said.

5:30 PM: The US is preparing a new \$400 million military aid package for Ukraine, — Reuters.

- The publication notes that this is the first such step in several months, as additional funds for Kyiv are still being blocked by Republican leaders in Congress.
- "Officials said on condition of anonymity that an announcement is expected later on Tuesday," the report said.

5:55 PM: Denmark has prepared a new package of military aid to Ukraine worth \$337 million.

- The press service of the Ministry of Defense of Denmark writes about this.
- The package includes, in particular, CAESAR self-propelled guns, self-propelled 120 mm mortars and corresponding ammunition.

6:21 PM: Another 47 Ukrainian citizens were evacuated from the Gaza Strip — the plane has already landed in Moldova.

- This is reported by the GUR of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.
- In total, 363 citizens of Ukraine were evacuated from the Gaza Strip during the three stages of the mission: 141 children, 135 women and 87 men.

8:10 PM: The US announced a \$300 million military aid package for Ukraine.

- This was announced by White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan.

10:16 PM: Ukraine won 20 awards and took first place in the medal tally of the 2024 World Championships in parabiathlon.

- Among the awards are eight gold, seven silver and five bronze.

10:50 PM: Ukraine and the European Union signed a loan agreement and a memorandum on transitional financing for Ukraine under the Ukraine Facility.

- The total amount of preferential funds provided for March-April this year is €6 billion, the press service of the Ministry of Finance reported.

11:03 PM: The European Union has extended the sanctions against the Russian Federation for another six months, the Council of the EU.

11:03 PM: Turkey is preparing a "large-scale anti-terrorist operation" in northern Iraq, Hürriyet.

11:03 PM: Switzerland launched the first criminal investigation into the violation of sanctions against the Russian Federation, Financial Times.

11:03 PM: NATO can send up to 300,000 troops to Poland in the event of a threat, General Karol Dymanovsky, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, said.

11:03 PM: Romanian President Klaus Iohannis has announced that he has decided to run for the post of NATO Secretary General, G4Media.

11:03 PM: Biden to announce \$2 billion loan to Poland to buy American weapons, White House.

11:18 PM: The Pentagon revealed the contents of a new package of defense aid to Ukraine.

- The new aid package allocates additional missiles for HIMARS, artillery shells of various calibers, anti-aircraft missile and anti-tank weapons, other ammunition, as well as means for maintenance.
- The announcement came from Pentagon spokesman General Patrick Ryder.

11:34 PM: In Slovakia, thousands of people came out to protest against the government and in support of Ukraine. The protest started with an air raid signal.

- "People in Ukraine hear this every day," said protest organizer Michal Hvoretskyi.
- The protesters are concerned about the sharp criticism of military aid to Ukraine and the desire to restore ties with Russia.

11:50 PM: Marta Kostyuk has reached the quarterfinals of the WTA 1000 tournament in Indian Wells.

- The Ukrainian beat "neutral" tennis player Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in two sets (6:4, 6:1).

NATIONAL

12:08 AM: Poltava, Kharkiv regions - the threat of using ballistic weapons, the Air Force reports.

12:37 AM: Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad and Zhytomyr regions - the threat of using ballistic weapons, the Air Force reports.

12:48 AM: Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad and Poltava regions - repulse the threat of using ballistic weapons.

1:38 AM: Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk regions - the threat of using ballistic weapons, the Air Force reports.

5:34 AM: Activity of enemy tactical aviation along the border, - Ukrainian Air Command.

7:30 AM: Summary of Battlefield events on March 12 from Ukr. General Command 7:00 AM March 13

10:22 AM: Attention! The threat of using ballistic weapons in areas where an air alert has been declared — Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

11:57 AM: Attention! The threat of using ballistic weapons in areas where an air alert has been declared — Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

1:16 PM: Volodymyr Zelensky signed the law on honest lobbying.

- "The President signed the draft law on lobbying #10337. The law enters into force only two months after the start of operation of the Transparency Register from the NAKC, but no later than January 1, 2025," the message reads.
- This is the last requirement for the start of EU accession negotiations.

3:10 PM: An air alert has been issued in a number of areas.

4:45 PM: "BRSM, Marshal, Motto, Avantaz and others. What happened to you?!" - the military officer appealed to gas station chains that underpay taxes.

- "So I looked at the taxpayers among the gas stations and private companies. Big chains: BRSM, Marshal, Motto, Avantage 7 and others. What's wrong with you?! How can you have hundreds of gas stations, earn millions and billions and not pay taxes?"
- Making money from the tax scheme at the expense of the Armed Forces is a story of its own. You either pay taxes for the Armed Forces today, or you will feed the occupier's army tomorrow," says political expert and military man Kyrylo Sazonov.
- 5:00 PM Social Networks: From March 15, the price of a green card for traveling abroad will increase by up to 42% !!

6:13 PM: BEB detectives are investigating 112 criminal proceedings related to the illegal organization and conduct of gambling.

- During 2023, BEB analysts created 8 analytical products in this direction for a total amount of over UAH 11 billion.

- In total, over 400 illegal gambling establishments and 7 casinos were shut down in Ukraine last year, most of them in Kyiv and the region.

6:15 PM: An air alert has been issued in a number of areas.

6:36 PM: The SBU neutralized a large-scale FSB intelligence network in Kyiv that was operating "under the cover" of the UOC (MP).

- Members of the network are accused of destabilizing the situation in Ukraine and spreading religious enmity.
- "As a result of complex measures, the SBU exposed more than 15 members of the group, four key figures have already been detained [...]", - writes the press service of the SBU.
- Currently, this is one of the largest networks of the FSB, which has been active in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale invasion - they face life imprisonment.

6:59 PM: An air alert has been issued in a number of areas.

7:12 PM: Volodymyr Zelenskyi signed a draft law on the preservation of military reproductive cells.

- This is reported on the official website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

7:58 PM: Summary of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as of the evening of March 12:

- During the day 78 combat clashes were recorded.
- Aviation of the Defense Forces struck 9 areas where the enemy's personnel, weapons and military equipment were concentrated.
- The units of the missile forces inflicted damage in the area of the concentration of personnel, artillery equipment and 2 air defense equipment of the enemy.

8:35 PM: More than 10 serious assassination attempts were made on Budanov, head of GUR MOU.

- Andriy Yusov, representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Ukraine, stated this.

- "[...] Unfortunately, as a result of these attempts, over the past 10 years, there have been Ukrainian intelligence officers killed," Yusov noted.

9:31 PM: Volodymyr Zelenskyi commented on the strikes on Kryvyi Rih in his evening address.

- "We will inflict losses on the Russian state in response - quite rightly. Those in the Kremlin must get used to the fact that terror does not go unpunished for them. Nothing will cure these patients from evil, but they will feel the losses," he said.

10:37 PM: Volodymyr Zelenskyi announced in his evening address that the number of border troops will increase.

- "We will increase the number of border troops - both in view of the current tasks of protection against Russian aggression, and with a view to the long-term protection of the borders of our state after this war," - said the president.

10:39 PM: Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk regions - missile danger, the Air Force reports.

11:55 PM: Ukraine is launching mass production of robots that can destroy equipment and evacuate the wounded, Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov said

- Dozens of robotic complexes were tested on the training ground, including kamikaze platforms, turrets, platforms for destroying positions and equipment, demining and demining, evacuating the wounded and transporting ammunition.
- In a few months, the works will be on the battlefield. Their main goal is to minimize human involvement and preserve the life and health of Ukrainian soldiers.

MORDOR – ruZZia

3:10 AM: An oil depot is on fire in the Russian Eagle, - rosZMI.

- The governor of the Oryol region, Klychkov, reported on the fall of the UAV on the facility of the fuel and energy complex.

8:16 AM: Legion "Freedom of Russia" goes to the elections in the Russian Federation.

- "We are coming to free you from abject poverty and fear. Release the terrorist organization that seized power from the Dictatorship," the message states.

8:20 AM: Legion "Freedom of Russia", Russian Voluntary Corps and the Siberian battalion entered the Kursk and Belgorod regions of the Russian Federation as part of a joint operation, - rosZMI.

- Several armed groups are reported to be breaking through in pick-up trucks, supported by mortar fire and artillery. Tanks are also fixed.

8:27 AM: Local Russian media outlets reported a UAV attack in the Belgorod, Kursk, Tula, Oryol and Moscow regions.

8:49 AM: The GUR commented on the actions of the fighters of the "Freedom of Russia" legion.

- "The Legion "Freedom of Russia", the Russian Voluntary Corps and the Siberian battalion on the territory of the Russian Federation operate as independent units, since they consist of citizens of the Russian Federation. They are, after all, at home. It is likely that a joint operation of these units is taking place on the territory of the so-called Russian Federation," said the representative of the GUR, Andriy Yusov.

9:05 AM: Sirens and gunfire are heard in the Kursk and Belgorod regions of the Russian Federation, local channels.

9:37 AM: Yevgeny Putin, Vladimir Putin's cousin, has died, rosZMI.

- According to their data, Yevgeny Putin's son holds the position of deputy chairman at Gazprom, and his daughter is married to the governor of the Kemerovo region, Serhii Tsivilev, and is the owner of one of the largest coal companies in Russia.

10:52 AM: The Southern Thermal Power Plant is on fire in St. Petersburg, — rosZMI.

10:58 AM: There was an explosion in the Belgorod district, followed by a fire, — rosZMI.

- Local residents will report the downed plane. There are no official confirmations yet.

11:23 AM: In the Russian city of Orel, at the Orelnefteprodukt enterprise, as a result of an unmanned aerial vehicle attack, a tank with a volume of 2,000 cubic meters, which contained 150 tons of gasoline, was damaged - rosZMI.

- There was a leak of petroleum products.

12:23 PM: A plane crashed in the Russian city of Ivanovo, — rosZMI.

- According to locals, the Il-76 military transport engine caught fire, after which the plane crashed near the Ivanovo-North airport.
- There were 10 to 12 people on board the Il-76, — rosZMI.

12:43 PM: The moment when the engine fell out of the plane in Ivanovo, Russian Federation, got into the social network.

1:02 PM: 15 people died in Ivanovo due to a plane crash, — Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

- According to the official version, the cause of the disaster was a fire in one of the engines during takeoff. RosZMI wrote that it happened after a bird got into the engine.

1:20 PM: In the Russian city of Belgorod, the city administration building was damaged as a result of an UAV attack, — rosZMI.

1:35 PM: Legion "Freedom of Russia" and Russian Voluntary Corps took full control of the village. Tiotkino, Kursk region.

- "Putin's army is rapidly leaving the village, leaving positions behind and abandoning heavy equipment," the message states.

UPD: As of 3:00 p.m., the fighting for the village of Tyotkino is still ongoing, Suspilne reports with reference to the Freedom of Russia Legion.

1:45 PM: A video of an anti-aircraft missile hitting a store in Belgorod, Russia appeared on social media.

2:23 PM: rosZMI publishes footage from the crash site of the Il-76 military transport plane near Ivanovo.

2:33 PM: An unmanned aerial vehicle attack knocked out "at least half of production" at the Lukoil oil refinery in Nizhny Novgorod, — Reuters.

- As a result of the attack, the main oil distillation unit (AVT-6) at Lukoil-Nizhegorodnaftoorgsintez (NORSI) was damaged.
- According to the publication, NORSI processes about 15.8 million tons of Russian oil per year, or 5.8% of the total volume of oil processed.

REGIONS

KYIV



12:29 AM: An air alert has been announced in Kyiv, — KMVA.

SUMY



1:01 AM: The Sumy region is a missile hazard, the Air Force reports.

1:52 PM: This morning, the Russians carried out an airstrike on the Velikopysariv community of the Sumy district, — RMA.

- Guided aerial bombs were dropped from an enemy plane on the residential sector of the settlement. 2 arrivals were recorded.
- Earlier, as a result of shelling, a large family was injured: two children aged 6 and 10 were wounded. One adult was also injured.

KHARKIV



8:27 AM: Russians dropped an aerial bomb on a residential high-rise in Kupyansk, Kharkiv region. Four apartments in two entrances were on fire. People were not injured.

3:08 PM Social Networks: Explosions are heard in Kharkiv.



ZAPORIZHIA

7:34 AM: A 45-year-old man died as a result of enemy attacks near the village of Novoolenivka, Zaporizhzhia district, another man in his 60s was injured.

- This was announced by Ivan Fedorov, the head of the Zaporizhzhia RMA.

10:05 AM: In the temporarily occupied Berdyansk, the sound of an explosion was heard - local channels.

10:44 AM: An explosion rang out near the airport in temporarily occupied Berdyansk.

- This was reported by Petro Andryushchenko, adviser to the mayor of Mariupol.

11:43 AM Social Networks: Explosions are heard in the temporarily occupied Tokmak of the Zaporizhzhia region.

7:46 PM: As a result of Russian strikes on Gulyaipol, two women - 63 and 77 years old - were injured.

- This was announced by Ivan Fedorov, the head of the Zaporizhzhia RMA.
- The police provided the women with first aid and took them to the hospital.

DNIPRO



6:38 PM: Air-guided missile, presumably Kh-59, in the direction of Kryvyi Rih, Ukrainian Air Command.

6:38 PM Social Networks: Explosions are heard in Kryvyi Rih.

UPD: Chairman of the Defense Council of Kryvyi Rih Oleksandr Vilkul confirmed the explosion in the city.

7:02 PM: As a result of the Russian strike on Kryvyi Rih, a fire broke out in a high-rise building.

- This was announced by the head of Dnipropetrovsk RMA Serhii Lysak.

7:43 PM: More than 30 victims have already been admitted to Kryvyi Rih hospitals.

- "Five in the operating room. "Severe". Among the injured is a child," writes RMA head Lysak.

8:15 PM: Volodymyr Zelenskyi showed the consequences of enemy strikes on Kryvyi Rih.

- At the moment, 33 victims are known, including 4 children, said the head of RMA, Serhiy Lysak.

8:21 PM: The number of dead as a result of the attack on Kryvyi Rih has increased to three, RMA head Lysak said.

- The number of wounded increased to 36.
- 9:05 PM: Currently, 10 children and 38 adults are known to have been injured as a result of the enemy attack in Kryvyi Rih, RMA head Serhiy Lysak said.

10:02 PM: The search and rescue operation was completed in Kryvyi Rih, RMA head Serhiy Lysak said.

- Emergency personnel inspected all apartments of mutilated buildings. 9 residents were rescued.

KHERSON



8:47 AM Social Networks: Explosions were heard in Kherson.

12:15 PM: A 42-year-old man was wounded in the morning shelling of Kherson by the Russians.

- This was reported by the head of the MBA, Roman Mrochko.
- There were hits, in particular, at residential buildings and an administrative building in the central part of the city.

5:29 PM Social Networks: Explosions are heard in Kherson

9:09 PM Social Networks: Explosions are heard in Kherson.

10:24 PM: With the current dynamics, it will take at least two years to clear the right-bank Kherson region.

- This was stated by the head of the Kherson RMA, Oleksandr Prokudin.
- "Currently, a third of the liberated territories have been surveyed. In this area alone, explosives technicians discovered and destroyed more than 155,000 mines, streamers, unexploded shells and other explosives," Prokudin said.

POLTAVA



10:43 AM: Rocket to Poltava Region, — Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

KHMELNITSKY



12:04 AM Social Networks: An explosion was heard in the Khmelnytskyi region.

Comparing Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to Russian invasion of Ukraine using Wikipedia and Ukraine Ministry of Defense Daily Bulletins. Soviet and Russian military losses not including captured equipment.

	Soviet Afghanistan	Mar 8	Mar 9	Mar 10	Mar 11	Mar 12
Duration	9 years and 9 months	After 743 days	After 744 days	After 747 days	After 746 days	After 747 days
Military Personnel Liquidated	14,453	423,160	424,060	424,980	425,890	426,870

Material
Losses

Tanks	147	6,712	6,731	6,739	6,747	6,752
Armored Personnel Carriers	1,314	12,823	12,850	12,874	12,901	12,921
Artillery, Mortars, and Ballistic Rocket launchers	433	11,440	11,481	11,515	11,538	11,571
Cruise Missiles		1,919	1,919	1,919	1,920	1,921
Fighters Bombers	118	347	347	347	347	347
Helicopters	333	325	325	325	325	325

Drones		8,041	8082	8,141	8,184	8,205
Anti Aircraft Missile Batteries		707	709	711	711	715
Cargo/Fuel/ other transport	11,36 9	13,683	13,752	13,826	13,870	13,932
Naval Vessels		26 + 1 submar ine	26 + 1 submar ine	26 + 1 submar ine	26 + 1 submar ine	26 + 1 submar ine
Specialized equipment		1,666	1,672	1,686	1,691	1,699

SOURCES

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