

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine begins evacuating civilians from the northeastern city of Sumy under a deal with Moscow to set up humanitarian corridors out of cities besieged by Russian forces. Thousands attempt to board packed trains out of Odessa, Ukraine's main port which is also bracing for attack.

Moscow announces a ceasefire in the five cities worst-hit by the fighting: Chernihiv, Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kyiv and Sumy. Previous such cessations of fire collapsed at the weekend, with both sides trading blame.

At least 21 people, including two children, were killed in air strikes on Sumy on Monday night, hours before the evacuations began.

The UN says the number of people fleeing the war now tops two million. Poland alone has received 1.2 million people.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urges “maximum restraint” over Ukraine but stops short of condemning the Russian invasion in a video summit with the leaders of France and Germany.

Energy giant Shell says it will stop purchasing Russian crude oil and shut down its operations in the country.

FORCES DEPLOYED

Russia has committed nearly all its combat power stationed along the border into Ukraine, the Pentagon said Monday as it announced 500 more US troops were deploying to Europe to boost Nato security. With President Vladimir Putin intensifying operations, the US Defense Department also warned that Russian strikes on civilians were mounting and that Moscow was seeking to recruit foreign fighters, notably Syrians, for the war.



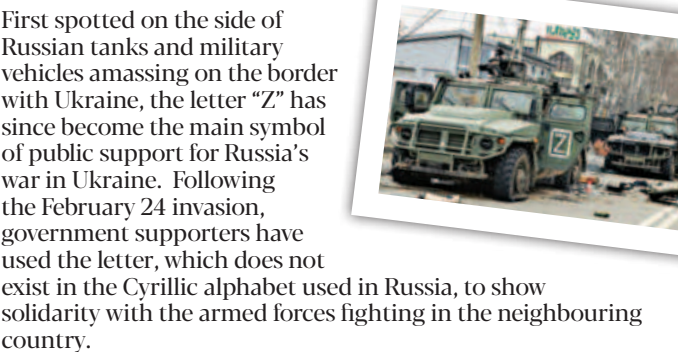
A boy has arrived safely in Slovakia after travelling some 1,200km (750 miles) from eastern Ukraine with no more than two small bags, a passport and his relatives' phone number.

Hassan, 11, left his home in Zaporizhzhia because his mother could not leave her elderly mother.

She put him on a train, and when he finally got to the border he was helped across by customs officers. Officials said he was a true hero and had won over everyone with his smile.

The boy arrived at the border carrying a plastic bag, a small red backpack and his passport. He was taken in by volunteers who gave him food and a drink while border officials got in touch with relatives in the Slovak capital Bratislava.

His mother, in a video posted by Slovak police, thanked everyone for taking care of her son.



There have been various theories put forward since Z was first seen emblazoned on military hardware, alongside other letters, including V and O.

The most popular theory used by military experts to explain the letters is that they were written according to the respective areas where the Russian troops are usually stationed, with Z potentially standing for Zapad (west).

The Russian defense ministry itself has not commented on any of the theories, and instead posted on its Instagram channel that Z meant *Za pobedu* (“for victory”) and V stood for “power of truth”.

