



Ukraine Promises to Destroy the Crimean Bridge “This Year”

The Crimean Bridge linking the Crimean Peninsula to the Krasnodar Region of Russia will be destroyed in 2024, the commander of the Ukrainian Navy, Vice Admiral Aleksey Neizhpapa, claimed.

On Monday, Neizhpapa gave an interview to Aleksandr Gordon, a Ukrainian journalist who is wanted by Moscow on accusations of disseminating false information about the Russian military, and of inciting terrorist activities.

During the conversation, Gordon wondered if it would be accurate to describe the 19-kilometer-long bridge as “potentially dead.” The navy chief concurred with the description, maintaining that he knew how to destroy this major piece of infrastructure.

When questioned about when exactly the longest bridge in Europe will go down, Neizhpapa replied by saying, “I think we won’t have to wait long. At least this year, for sure.”

The Crimean Bridge was constructed between 2016 and 2018 and was the only traffic and railway link between the peninsula and Russia at the time.

Moscow has since developed a vast land bridge to Crimea after the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions and the People’s Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk voted to officially join Russia in the fall of 2022. The EU, along with the United States and other countries, slammed the referendums as an “illegal annexation” by Russia and has progressively enforced economic sanctions on Moscow since then.

Following the outbreak of conflict between Russia and Ukraine, various officials and commanders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, threatened to devastate the Crimean Bridge, claiming that the bridge was vital for the Russian military. The structure had been targeted with missiles and naval drones on numerous occasions, but most of those attacks have been successfully repelled.

In October 2022, an explosives-laden truck blew up as it was traveling along the bridge, killing three people and resulting in damage that took months to repair. In July last year, a drone boat exploded under one of the segments of the structure, killing two civilians and orphaning a 14-year-old girl.

Back then, Russian President Vladimir Putin portrayed the attack as “brutal” and pointless from a military perspective, explaining that the bridge is no longer used to transport combat equipment and ammunition.

Last week, Putin said that the Ukrainian military has “turned into a terrorist organization” as various units have increasingly been targeting innocent civilians and social infrastructure.



AP Images
Crimean bridge



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 7, 2024

Reuters reported in October last year that four companies and eight individuals in the Netherlands have been fined for violating EU sanctions on Russia between 2014 and 2017.

These firms were accused by the Dutch prosecutor's office of helping Moscow construct the Crimean Bridge.

The eight people were sentenced to community service ranging from 20 to 60 hours, while the companies paid fines totaling €160,000 (\$169,000), the news outlet revealed. The Dutch state also confiscated one firm's "illegal" profits of more than €71,000, the report added.

The unnamed companies allegedly supplied machines, machine parts, and other services for the construction of the 19-kilometer bridge.

On February 6, a chief advisor to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that Europe has been brought to its knees due to the stance taken by the United States on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Balazs Orbán, who is not related to the prime minister, maintained during the launch of his new book on Tuesday that the policy of "bloc-ism" or the creation of geopolitical alliances "isn't the solution" to the present situation.

"We see that Europe has been basically brought to its knees due to the attitude of the US towards the conflict between Russia and Ukraine," Orbán said.

The situation is also risky for Hungary, which is an EU and NATO member, as it closes off many development possibilities, Orbán explained. "Bloc-ism" also does not help the United States, but accelerates the global process of change, he added.

The EU has joined the United States in sanctioning Russia and supplying arms to Kyiv since 2022, while also excluding itself from Russian energy resources. Consequently, the bloc's economy has been adversely impacted as it narrowly averted a recession in 2023.

"The current industrial revolutions are based on technologies, which require raw materials that aren't available in Europe, so the continent is vulnerable," the aide warned.

"Russia didn't collapse, was able to diversify its economy, and strengthened its relationship with China," Orbán added.

Hungary should use its position as "a gateway to the EU and the Balkans," and assert its sovereignty to succeed economically in the coming years, he claimed.

Budapest has adopted a neutral stance since the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022. It denounced Russia's military operation, but refrained from providing weapons to Ukraine, while asking for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. The Hungarian authorities also condemned sanctions on Moscow, arguing that they hurt the EU more than Russia.

For months, Hungary vetoed the EU's move to provide Kyiv with a €50 billion (\$54 billion) aid package, citing the lack of mechanisms to determine how the money will be used by Ukraine. The package was finally agreed upon last week.

Budapest is poised to take over the rotating EU presidency in July 2024, but with Orbán's government growing increasingly unpopular with other member states, some are having reservations on whether Hungary should have the role at all.



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The country also remains an impediment to Sweden's bid to join NATO. On Tuesday, the ruling Fidesz party boycotted a vote on the issue in the Parliament, saying the Swedish PM should come to Budapest to discuss membership prospects.

Meanwhile, various U.S. ambassadors have signed a letter urging lawmakers to approve a \$118 billion bill with funds for Ukraine, Israel, and border security, warning that failure to do so would undermine Washington's diplomatic clout.

The long-debated compromise bill — which also includes aid for American partners in the Indo-Pacific seeking to deter China — was introduced several days ago to immediate Republican resistance. It earmarks far less money for border security than for foreign military assistance.

Besides, the White House has been pushing Congress to authorize a supplemental funding package for several months amid growing concerns that Ukraine will struggle to fend off Russia without U.S. support. Republicans, however, have been procrastinating on the package, demanding more measures to enhance security on the southern U.S. border.

On Sunday, Senate Republicans and Democrats released the text of a \$118 billion compromise package. About \$60 billion was allocated for Ukraine, with \$14 billion destined for Israel and \$4.8 billion to support Washington's Indo-Pacific "partners" amid tensions with China. Of the total, only \$20 billion was to be set aside for border security.



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