



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Energy Security; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Warfare; Corruption; Europe; North Korea; Russia; Ukraine

ANOTHER OLIGARCH MEETS AN UNTIMELY END

Yet another Russian energy magnate has died. Lukoil Chairman Ravil Maganov died after falling from his hospital window. Although Maganov's death is being treated as a suicide, with sources citing that he was chronically ill and on anti-depressants, several people close to the oligarch have expressed doubts about the cause of death. Maganov's fatal fall follows a pattern of mysterious deaths of several other Russian businessmen, all of whom worked in Russia's energy sector. Perhaps significantly, Lukoil's Board of Directors has denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, and has called "for the soonest termination of the armed conflict." (Reuters, September 1, 2022)

MOSCOW PUTS THE ENERGY SQUEEZE ON EUROPE

As the EU continues to face acute energy shortages, Russian natural gas giant Gazprom has canceled the reopening of the Nord Stream I pipeline in a move that Charles Michel, president of the European Council, has called the "use of gas as a weapon." Russia previously cited maintenance issues as the reason for the energy route's closure. However, it has become clear that Gazprom intends to keep the pipeline offline in response to the EU's new caps and restrictions on the importation of Russian energy.

So far, European leaders have not capitulated to the pressure. Gazprom's actions "will not change the resolve of the EU," Michel has pledged. "We will accelerate our path towards energy independence. Our duty is to protect our citizens and support the freedom of Ukraine." Those sentiments, however, could change as Europe inches closer to wintertime and heating, previously powered by Russian energy, become increasingly in demand. (*Washington Post*, September 2, 2022)

MAKING AN EXAMPLE OF IVAN

The Kremlin's crackdown on the remnants of independent media in Russia continues. In the latest development, Russian authorities have found Ivan Safronov, a former reporter, guilty of treason for sharing state secrets. Safronov, a former reporter for *Kommersant* and *Vedemosti*, was sentenced to 22 years in a penal colony, just shy of the 24 year sentence that state prosecutors had lobbied for. At issue are Safronov's past reports on Russian arms deals – which the journalist maintains relied on information available in the public domain.

Safronov's case is hardly unique. He joins the long list of journalists who have been the targets of official persecution in recent years. Nevertheless, Safronov's sentence is unusually heavy – and exceeds what Russian courts typically hand out for murder and other grave crimes. (*Al-Arabiya*, September 5, 2022)

WHAT RUSSIA NEEDS TO FIGHT ITS WAR

In its war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia's military campaign hinges on its ability to continue to acquire high tech components for its war machine – and that capability is increasingly in doubt. As *Politico* reports, coordinated sanctions imposed by Western allies and new, stricter export regimes have crippled Russia's ability to procure the high tech parts, particularly microchips, necessary for its replenishment of key weapons. It is a dynamic that officials in Ukraine are watching closely. "Kyiv is acutely aware that the outcome of the war is likely to hinge on whether Russia finds a way to regain access to high-tech chips, and is out to ensure it doesn't get them," the paper reports. "In order to flag the danger, Ukraine is sending out international warnings that the Kremlin has drawn up shopping lists of semiconductors, transformers, connectors, casings, transistors, insulators and other components, most made by companies in the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, the U.K., Taiwan and Japan, among others, which it needs to fuel its war effort." (*Politico*, September 5, 2022)

A HELPING HAND FROM THE DPRK

Meanwhile, Russia's war effort is getting inputs, and assistance, from Asia. With China hesitant to supply it with weaponry, Moscow has turned to North Korea, among other sources, to replenish its depleted weapons supplies. Recent Russian purchases of non-precision guided artillery shells and rockets from the DPRK highlights both how Moscow is reaching out to rogue state partners, and that its partner of choice, the PRC, remains hesitant to provide high tech components that are being restricted by international sanctions. (*New York Times*, September 5, 2022)