

Editorial

At least one rising threat presents existential danger to Kyiv



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Right at a time when it needs more support from the West in the battle against Russia and war criminal Vladimir Putin, Ukraine is being squeezed on two fronts.

The first is a new wave of deadly attacks targeting civilians in the country's west. The strike used 476 drones, as well as 48 missiles. The night-time assault hit two apartment blocks in the city of Ternopil – just 200 kilometres from the Polish border, killing at least 25 people. Many of those killed were burnt alive, including three children, [according to Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko](#).

As the *Herald* has reported in its new series [Blood Oil](#), some of these weapons could have feasibly been funded by revenue generated from petroleum sales to Australia. While Australia banned the import of Russian crude in early 2022 when Ukraine was invaded, [a loophole is allowing the import of oil products](#) of Russian origin if they have been refined in third countries such as India, Malaysia, Singapore and China.

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a non-profit group based in Europe, estimates that between February 2023 and June 2025, Australians bought \$3.8 billion worth of petrol and diesel produced from Russian crude and refined in India alone, generating about \$2 billion in tax revenue for Moscow.

A group of Ukrainian and European civil society organisations pushing for policy change say Australia has recently been the world's largest importer of refined fuels made from Russian crude. And at a time when we should be axing any reliance on Russian products, Australian imports from Indian refineries using Russian crude more than doubled between September and October. This is unacceptable and must be addressed urgently by the Albanese government. Labor has frankly run out of excuses for its ongoing inaction.

As the *Herald's* Eryk Bagshaw explains in the latest piece in our series, assuming half of Russia's revenues are spent on the war effort, the \$1 billion sent there via oil sales in

Australia could pay for many of the sort of weapons which killed men, women and children in the city of Ternopil overnight.

While mass death and destruction has gripped Ukraine for nearly four years, the second front facing the country could prove existential. US media reports claim Trump officials have signalled to President Volodymyr Zelensky that he must accept an American-drafted framework to end the war with Russia, which proposes that Ukraine give up territory and some weapons.

The plan was thrashed out in a recent flurry of secret talks between Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, and key Putin adviser Kirill Dmitriev, renewing fears that Ukraine is being frozen out of discussions about its future.

But a plan that requires Ukraine to give up vast swaths of land and expose itself to near-certain future aggression by Russia is no peace deal. It is capitulation, and President Volodymyr Zelensky would be right to reject it.