

With her cousin dead and mother badly injured by a missile strike, Blood Oil is deeply personal for Kateryna Argyrou

By [Samantha Selinger-Morris](#) and [David Crowe](#)

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Kateryna Argyrou may be “safe in Australia” with her two children, but she has felt the [grim reality](#) and pain of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

Her cousin Yuriy Sayenko, a combat medic, was killed trying to pull two heavily wounded soldiers from [battle](#). Her mother is suffering a brain injury after a missile strike shook her apartment so violently that she was thrown across the room and suffered an internal brain bleed.

Argyrou, the honorary consul of Ukraine in Sydney and chair of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, says Australians are unwittingly and indirectly supporting the bloodshed unfolding on Ukrainian territory.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Australia banned the import of Russian crude oil. But nearly four years later this oil is still making its way into our petrol bowsers, and into our cars. Argyrou calls this contribution to the Kremlin’s budget “[blood oil](#)”.

“Australians are taking money out of their pocket, their hard-earned cash ... unknowingly filling up their tanks, unknowingly investing their money that goes to profit the Russian Federation that goes to profit these companies that are indirectly [supporting a war machine](#),” Argyrou told [The Morning Edition podcast](#).

“We know that a significant portion of the Russian economy is geared towards producing things for the Russian war effort,” Argyrou said. “Things like missiles, things like drones that go and attack Ukrainian cities and kill Ukrainian civilians every single day.”



Kateryna Argyrou and her cousin Yuriy Sayenko, a Ukrainian combat medic who was killed evacuating injured soldiers. *Credit:*

Speaking to host **Samantha Selinger-Morris** and Europe correspondent **David Crowe** on *The Morning Edition* podcast, Argyrou told of the pain and anger over her cousin's death and her mother's injury, how Russia's crude oil was being laundered through countries such as India and Malaysia and landing in Australian petrol stations, and how Australia had spent billions of dollars on imported refined Russian crude oil, while sending \$1.5 billion in aid to Ukraine.

Click the player or watch the video below to listen to the [full episode](#), or read on for an edited extract of the conversation.

Selinger-Morris: And very sadly, you actually have felt very personally the suffering from this war. Would you tell our listeners a little bit about your cousin and your mother, what they've experienced?

Kateryna Argyrou: My cousin decided to go and defend Ukraine from the very first days of the full scale of Russia's full-scale invasion. He was serving as a combat medic.

He's got two little boys at home, and despite the fact that he was serving on the front line for 3½ years and conducting evacuations on a daily basis, the stories that I heard from him were horrific. At the end of July, he was killed on the front line.

I received a call from his wife saying that she couldn't get a hold of him, and she couldn't get a hold of him for two days. And because I visited him a couple of times, I

knew all of his commanders, and I called one of his closest friends, he is also a combat medic. I didn't even say hello. I just said, "Tell me what happened?"

And he said, Yuriy, my cousin's name, is no longer with us. And I couldn't believe it. He was killed as he was performing an evacuation of two heavily wounded soldiers.



Kateryna Argyrou talks about Australia's unknowing support of Russia's war on Ukraine on The Morning Edition. *Credit: Tom McKendrick*

And he was killed with a Russian FPV drone, which, when we talk about this blood oil and what the import of refined Russian crude in Australia means for me personally, it means the production of such weapons. It means the production of FPV drones. It means the production of Shahed drones that Russia buys from other countries. It means the missiles that Russia produces that go and hit Ukrainian civilian targets, so I have felt that firsthand.

Now I call my cousin's wife that's a widow at 32, little kids that still don't understand that their father is gone, that the only place that they can see him is by going to the cemetery and kissing his photo on his grave. To say hello or good morning to their father.

And that's just my cousin's story, but every single member of my family has been impacted in some shape, way or form.

Most recently, my mum experienced a missile strike right next to her home, next to her apartment building. It was such a loud missile strike and heavy missile strike that the entire building shook it, threw my mum across the room. Her windows were blown out.

She ended up in hospital with an internal brain bleed, which she goes to the hospital now on a regular basis just to check to make sure she's OK.

Selinger-Morris: Do we know if that money can actually be traced back to the Kremlin and its war that it's prosecuting against Ukraine specifically, or is it sort of more symbolic that you know this money is supporting Russia, and some of it might be going to the war, like, can we actually trace it directly to the war effort?

Kateryna Argyrou: Yes, we can because 40 per cent of the Russian economy is currently working for the war effort. It's the production of equipment, it's the production of weapons. So we can definitely say that maybe not every single dollar that goes from Australia to the Kremlin is funding the war effort, but it is of significant chunk, and that is very worrying.