

# Dentons Flashpoint

## Daily Global Situation Report

April 18, 2022

# Global Situation Update: April 18, 2022

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

China's GDP expanded by an annual 4.8 percent in Q1, despite lockdowns.

North Korea conducted a short-range missile launch, testing of a new-type tactical guided weapon system.

Easter Mass was celebrated in St. Peter's Square for the first time since the pandemic started.

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## WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and government officials will meet in a hybrid format for Spring Meetings where the war in Ukraine will take center stage in discussions. With some high-level dignitaries in-person in Washington, DC and some remote, the immediate priorities are to end the war in Ukraine, confront the COVID-19 pandemic, and tackle inflation and debt, and global supply chain challenges.

In the lead up to the meetings, the managing director of the IMF issued a warning that inflation has become a clear and present danger for many countries around the world. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will participate in meetings and focus on how to better support developing countries as they weather the shock of rising food and fuel prices.



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# Global

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**British intelligence assesses that despite moving its military operations in Ukraine to the east of the country, Moscow has not changed its objective of trying to stop Ukraine moving out of its orbit toward the West.**

- As Russian forces mobilize for the Donbas offensive, Ukraine's President Zelensky pleads for allies to expedite shipment of heavy military equipment for **Ukraine's defense**.
- Conditions for Ukrainian forces and civilians in **Mariupol** are dire. Ukrainian defenders, surrounded in the steelworks factory rejected Russia's Easter Day ultimatum to surrender and are poised to make a last stand.
- On Sunday, Pope Francis celebrated **Easter Sunday Mass** in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican for the first time since the pandemic started.

# Markets & Business

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**China's GDP expanded by an annual 4.8 percent in the first quarter, a faster pace than the 4 percent expansion recorded in the final three months of 2021, beating forecasts.**

- **US natural gas prices** surged to the highest intraday level in over 13 years as robust demand.
- **Infowars**, a company owned by far-right radio host Alex Jones, filed for bankruptcy after being hit by a flurry of lawsuits brought by relatives of children killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook school massacre, shootings which Jones called a hoax.
- **Uber Technologies Inc.** will integrate **Rakuten Group Inc.'s** payment services into its Uber Eats and later Uber mobility app in Japan.
- **DiDi Global Inc.** will hold an extraordinary general meeting to vote on delisting its shares from the New York Stock Exchange, a sign the ride-hailing company is heeding Beijing's call to address concerns about how its data is handled abroad.

# Environment, Sustainability & Governance

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**Global Citizen, an international non-profit aiming to help end poverty, plans to launch six funds of up to \$1 billion each focused on generating environmental and social impact in the developing world.**

- Canada's total **greenhouse gas emissions** fell nearly 9 percent in 2020, as Canadians along with the rest of the world were forced to change their lifestyles and restrict movement to curb the spread of COVID-19.
- **Climate change activists** forced the closure of a main square in central Paris on Saturday to protest against the environmental programs put forward by France's remaining presidential candidates.
- China's **coal output** rose 15 percent in March from the same month a year ago, with daily production climbing to a record, as Beijing urged miners to crank up operations to ensure steady market supply.
- Cargill Inc., one of the world's biggest agricultural traders, stopped buying palm oil products from Sime Darby Plantation Bhd. after the US said it found indicators of **forced labor** in the Malaysian grower.

# Africa

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- **Sudan's** military leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan suggested in comments a willingness to make concessions in a possible step to ease tensions in the country six months after a military coup.
- After heavy rains in recent days triggered floods and mudslides that have killed more than 440 people in **South Africa**, the search for missing people continued, and thousands have been left homeless, knocked out power and water services and Durban, one of Africa's busiest ports, operations have been disrupted. A provincial economic official estimated the overall infrastructure damage at more than 10 billion rand (\$684.6 million).
- The **US** approved a nearly \$1 billion weapons sale to **Nigeria** after lawmakers had put a hold on the deal over concerns about possible human rights abuses by the Nigerian government.
- A joint military force from **Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon** said it had killed more than 100 Islamist insurgents, including 10 commanders, in the past few weeks, as it intensifies a ground and air offensive in the Lake Chad region.



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# Asia

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- **Myanmar's** military junta announced that it will pardon hundreds of prisoners, including 42 foreigners, as the country marks the Buddhist new year.
- Ramadan bombings in **Thailand's** Muslim-majority deep south will not derail peace talks with separatist rebels, the government said on Sunday after a sidelined insurgent group, the Patani United Liberation Organization, claimed responsibility for the attacks on Friday.
- **South Korea's** military detected two short-range missile launches from the North's east coast towards the sea. South Korea gave no details on the launch but linked it to **North Korea's** nuclear objectives and testing of a new-type tactical guided weapon system.
- The northwestern **Chinese** city of Xian has imposed a partial lockdown to reduce its 13 million residents' movement, after reporting dozens of COVID-19 infections this month. Shanghai continued to report record numbers of new infections and the first deaths in the city. Authorities plan to accelerate COVID testing and the transfer of positive cases to quarantine centers in order to begin to ease the lockdown starting Wednesday in non-quarantine areas.



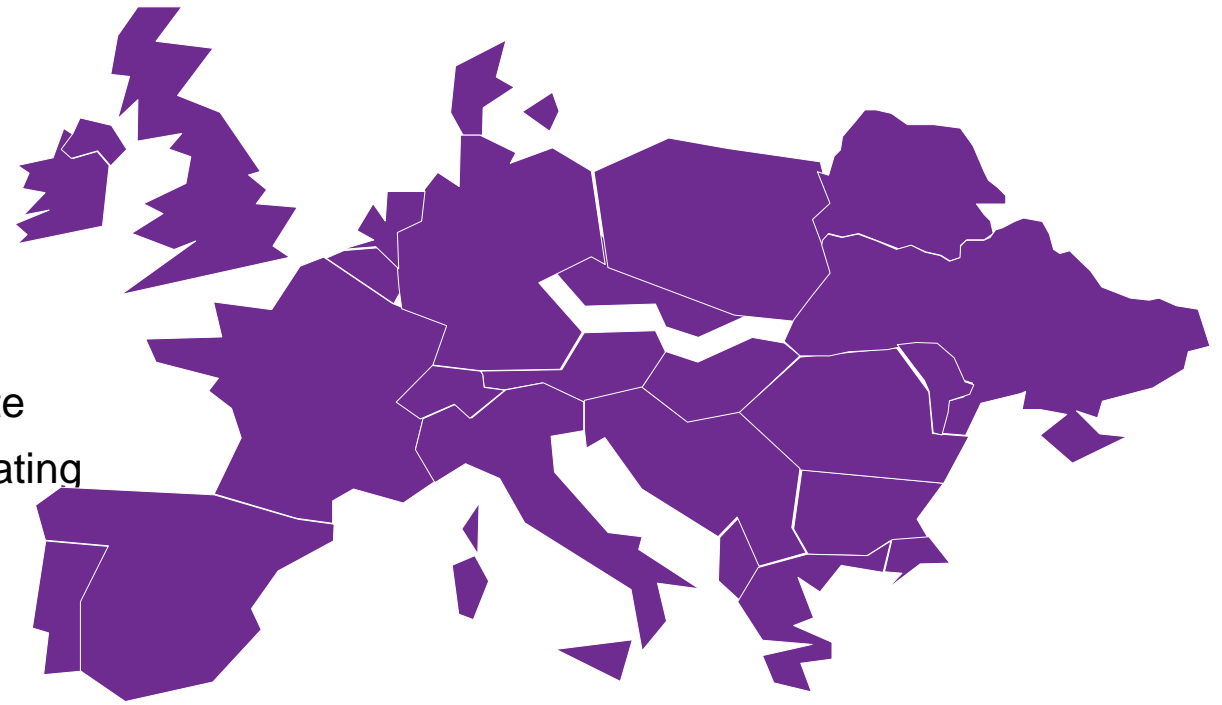
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# Europe

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- **French** prosecutors are examining a report by the EU's anti-fraud agency accusing far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen and members of her party of misappropriating thousands of euros' worth of EU funds.
- **Sweden** has been rocked by days of violence triggered by far-right Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan, whose anti-immigration and anti-Islamic Stram Kurs (Hard Line) movement has threatened to burn copies of the Quran, Islam's holy book during extremist rallies.
- **Germany** earmarked €3 billion to lease four floating LNG terminals to wean itself off **Russian** gas.
- **Turkey** launched a new cross-border offensive against Kurdish militants in northern **Iraq** early Monday, hitting Kurdish militant targets, camps, tunnels, shelters, and ammunition storage areas.



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# How do You Manage Incident Response?

*2021 has already seen business disrupted by extreme weather, ransomware attack, the ongoing pandemic and more. The common refrain “It’s not if, but when” rings truer than ever for disruptive incidents that will impact business as usual.*

*Working with Dentons, you can effectively develop an organizational incident-behavior adopted by all your team members. Dentons will help you build muscle memory through tabletop exercises, which are crafted to fit the business strategy of every client.*

*Our team plays events and incidents of different severities and complexities and accounts for real-world factors such as inconclusive evidence, mistakes by responders, and the business impact of eradication steps. Our tech-savvy lawyers continuously revise the playbooks per the evolving sector-specific threat landscape.*

*Dentons tabletop sessions are fluid, and designed to enhance preparedness with services, including:*

- ❖ Ransomware tabletop exercises
- ❖ Post-tabletop action reports
- ❖ Maturity assessments for preparedness
- ❖ Supply-chain attack simulation
- ❖ Comprehensive incident response plan
- ❖ Threat analysis and monitoring

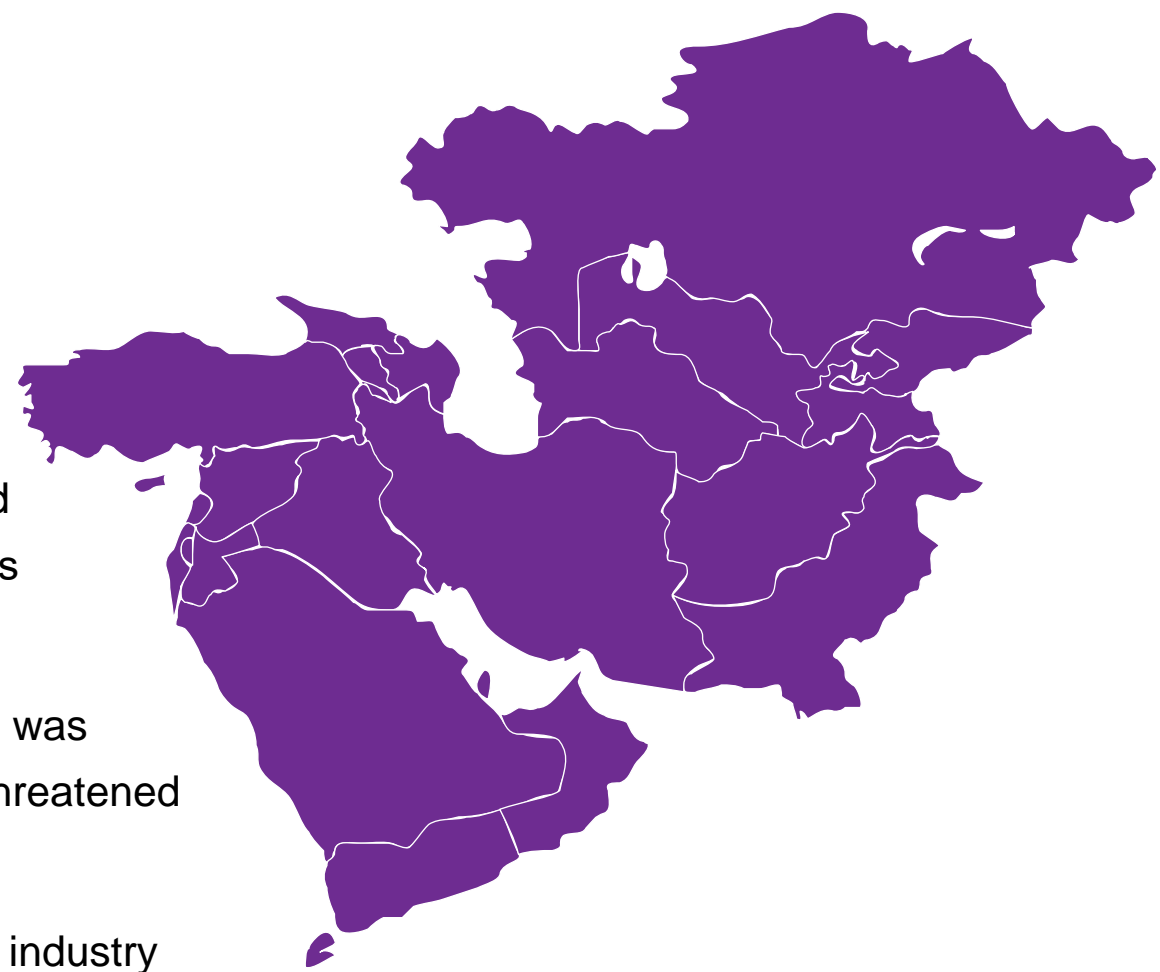
*All interaction with Dentons is attorney-client privileged*

*To learn more about the bespoke intelligence and risk services from Dentons, contact [Karl Hopkins](#).*

# Middle East

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- Clashes in **Jerusalem** that have stoked tensions during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan spread into Sunday, putting further strain on **Israel's** coalition government, with the United Arab List suspending its government membership over Israel's handling of the Al-Aqsa violence.
- **Libya's** National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced Sunday it was forced to shut down an oil field amid a political impasse that threatened to drag the North African nation back into armed conflict.
- **Pakistan's** new government cut electricity to households and industry unable to afford to buy coal or natural gas from overseas to fuel its power plants.

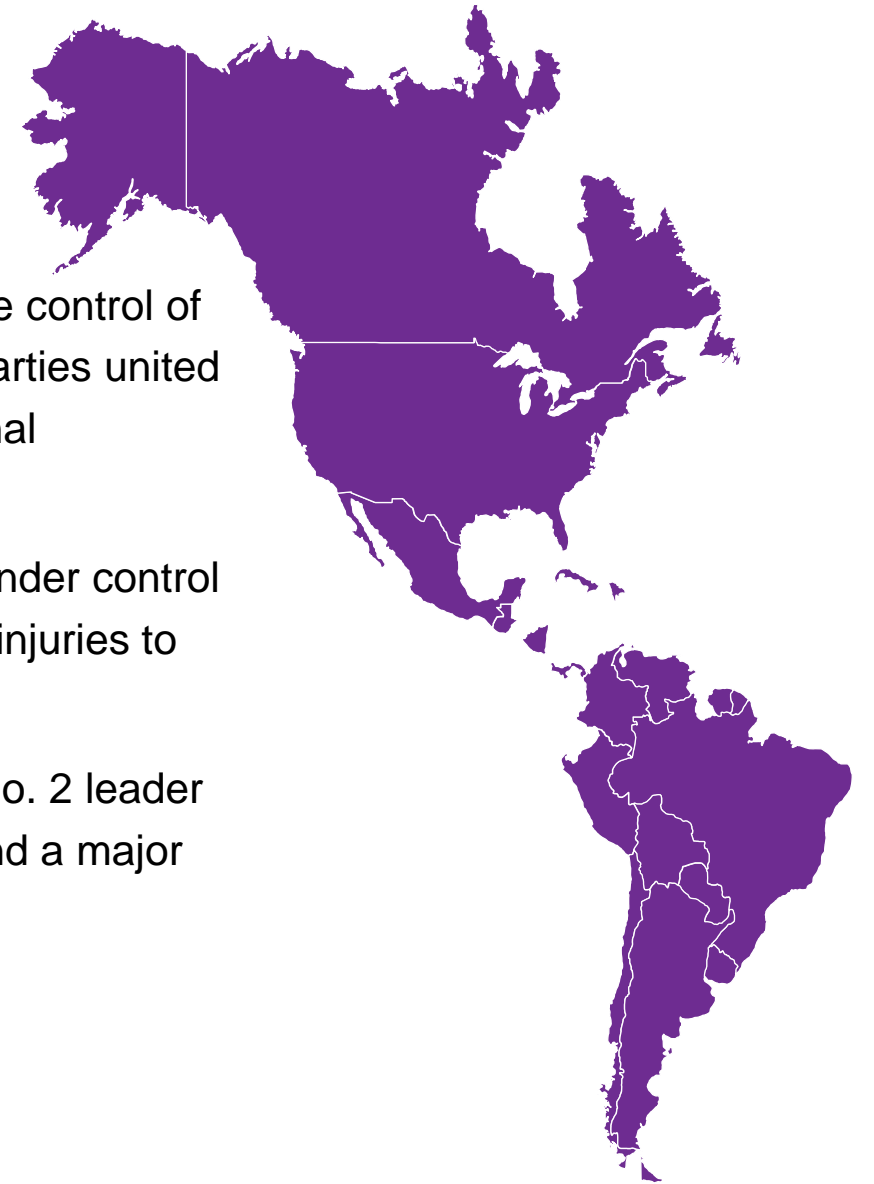


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# Americas

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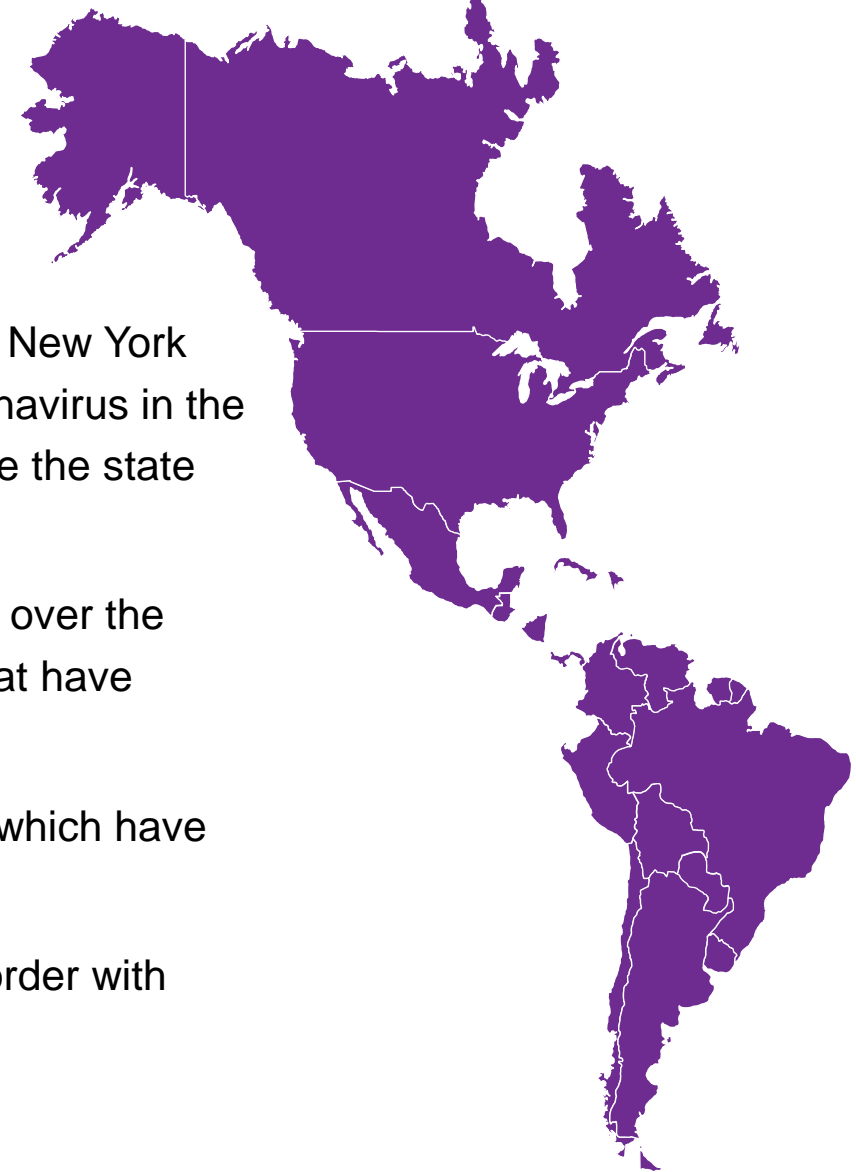
- **Mexican** President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's plan to increase state control of power generation was defeated in parliament on Sunday, as opposition parties united in the face of a bill they said would hurt investment and breach international obligations.
- **Mexican** state oil company Pemex said on Saturday that it had brought under control a fire at its Salina Cruz refinery in the southern Oaxaca state without any injuries to personnel.
- **Brazil's** justice ministry announced that federal police had captured the No. 2 leader of the First Capital Command, the country's most powerful prison gang and a major exporter of cocaine.



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# Americas: US

- A new, highly transmissible versions of the **Omicron variant** is spreading in New York state. BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1 have become the dominant forms of the coronavirus in the central part of the state, with infection rates in central New York at least twice the state average.
- **Mass shootings** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Columbia, South Carolina over the weekend are the latest in a string of high-profile incidents of gun violence that have unfolded across the country.
- The **Avian flu** has spread to 27 states and is sharply driving up egg prices, which have nearly tripled since November.
- US border authorities arrested 210,000 **migrants** attempting to cross the border with Mexico in March, the highest monthly total in two decades.



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# BA.2 Risks Amid Return to Office

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By Matt Skros

***As the United States transitions out of the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, many US companies prepare for a return to some form of in-office work. For companies planning for their employees' return to the office, though, the rise of the BA.2 subvariant presents a challenge. Organizations may have to adopt policies and procedures to manage the risk this subvariant presents if they are to have a smooth return-to-office transition.***

Many employers developed return-to-office timelines in 2020 and 2021 only to see those plans delayed due to the ongoing persistence of COVID-19. Now, though, the United States is taking steps to move from the pandemic phase of COVID-19 to the endemic phase, meaning that many employers are now setting concrete deadlines for returning employees to some form of in-person work. There is a wide spectrum of return-to-office plans: Goldman Sachs' CEO has required employees to return to the office full-time, while Apple has announced that employees should plan to work in the office three days a week. The rise of the BA.2 subvariant of COVID-19 complicates this return to office, however. While it is unlikely that this subvariant will alter the trajectory of office return plans the same way previous variants have, it will

require companies to take steps to manage risk and protect the health of their employees.

While BA.2 is milder than earlier iterations of COVID-19, the variant still presents risk of severe infection to people who are not vaccinated. To mitigate the risk of severe COVID-19 illness in the office spaces, some employers require employees to be fully vaccinated if they wish to work from the office. Google, which removed its mandatory vaccination policy for all employees, will still require employees who come into the office to be fully vaccinated. Unvaccinated employees who enter the office space will have to receive prior approval and follow additional protocols, such as submitting to testing and wearing a mask. Measures like this can

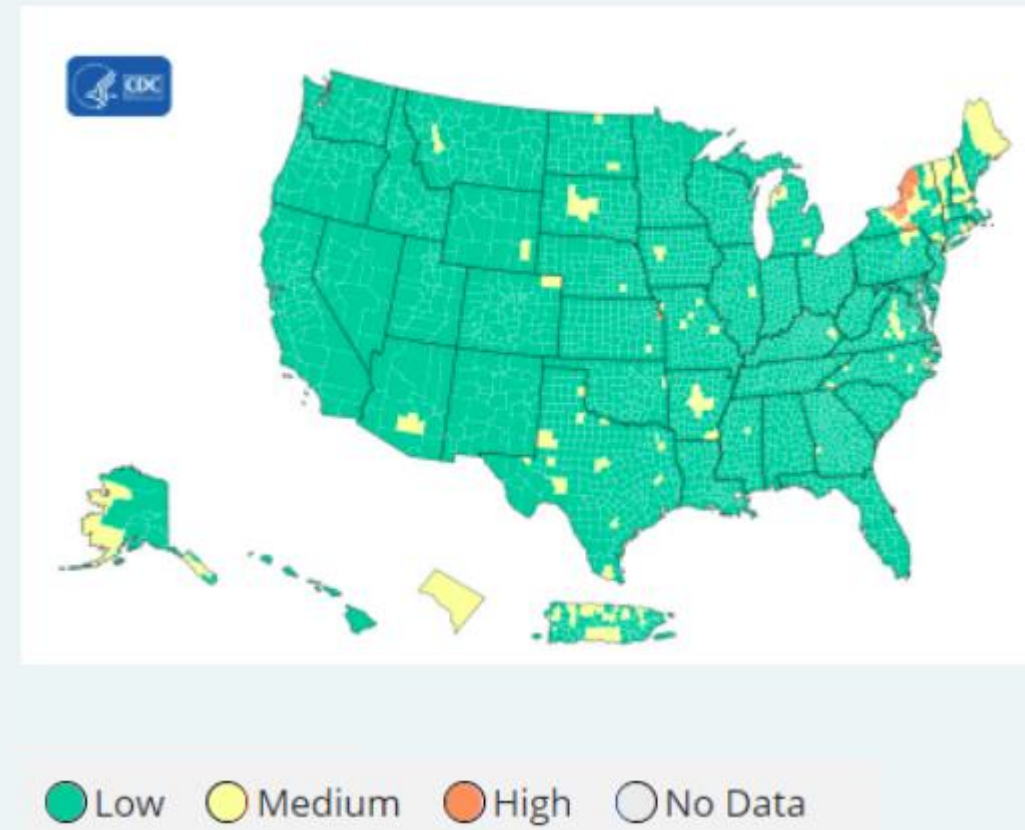
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## BA.2 Risks Amid Return to Office

slow the spread of BA.2 in the workspace and reduce the severity of the illness for those who contract it. It can also make health-conscious employees feel safer returning to the office space, knowing their risk of contracting COVID-19 is low.

Vaccine protection, though, naturally wanes over time. Getting a recommended booster shot can help extend that protection. The CDC already recommended one round of booster doses for all vaccinated Americans and has authorized a second booster for those 50 years and older. Yet in the US, only 45 percent of those fully vaccinated (defined as those who received a complete initial course of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson vaccines) have received a recommended booster dose. Employees who may technically be in compliance with the vaccination policy of the company may not actually have the robust protection that the vaccines offer due to the time passed since their doses. Some organizations are updating their policies to require both full initial vaccination and subsequent booster shots. For example, the NFL required all coaches and staff to get a

U.S. COVID-19 Community Levels by County



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## BA.2 Risks Amid Return to Office

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booster shot by December 27 of last year. Companies who have not added the booster requirement to their vaccination policy may find higher levels of COVID-19 transmission in their office spaces as well as more severe cases due to waning antibody protection among their employees, resulting in apprehension about return to office plans.

Finally, employers may have to prepare for case spikes that are likely to occur in the near future. While hospitalizations will be uncommon among vaccinated employees, COVID-19 is still an unpleasant illness even for those with robust antibody protection. Having an outbreak in the office can affect productivity, especially if the virus infects several members of a particular team. It can also harm employee morale. Companies should be aware of case numbers and transmission rates in their cities and localities, with contingencies to move to hybrid work if infections pass a certain threshold. Measures like this will ensure that the transition back to the office, as well as the shift from pandemic to endemic COVID-19, is as smooth as possible.

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# Ukraine War Update: Mariupol's Easter Ultimatum, Russia's Shelling Campaign, Ukraine's EU Application

***British intelligence assesses that despite moving its military operations in Ukraine to the east of the country, Moscow has not changed its objective of trying to stop Ukraine moving out of its orbit toward the West. "Russia is committed to compelling Ukraine to abandon its Euro-Atlantic orientation and asserting its own regional dominance." Ukraine announced it has completed a questionnaire that forms the basis for the start of EU accession talks.***

## ***Political Developments***

Ukrainian President Zelensky has criticized delays in arms deliveries to Ukraine. While Zelensky did not name any countries, in Germany there is a dispute within the governing coalition as to whether to supply Ukraine with heavy weapons. German Chancellor Scholz has been accused of dragging his feet. German Justice Minister Buschmann said the delivery of heavy weaponry to Ukraine, including tanks, would not constitute an entry into the conflict.

In response to Ukraine's pleas, the UK announced it will send armored vehicles to Ukraine "*in the coming days.*"

Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said Russia told Prague not to transfer heavy weapons dating back to the days of the Soviet Union

to Ukraine. Local media reported that dozens of Soviet-era T-72 tanks and BMP-1 infantry fighting vehicles had been sent from the Czech Republic to Ukraine. However, officials have refused to comment on any agreement.

The Swiss government has called on the International Olympic Committee to exclude Russian and Belarusian officials from top posts in international sports federations.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expelled 18 EU diplomats from the 27-nation bloc's delegation to Russia in retaliation for the EU's decision to expel 19 Russian diplomats earlier this month.

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Moscow imposed an entry ban on UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson as well as several other top British officials. The move is a response to new sanctions introduced by London.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova alleged that Germany worked with the US to create dozens of biological laboratories in Ukraine.

## Battlefield Developments

Over the weekend, Russia continued to shell Ukrainian cities, hitting Kyiv and Lviv in the west and pummeling eastern cities, particularly the northeastern city of Kharkiv. The Russian defense ministry said in a statement that air-launched missiles had destroyed 16 Ukrainian military facilities overnight, hitting targets in the Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk regions and in the port of Mykolayiv, including five command posts, a fuel depot and three ammunition warehouses, as well as Ukrainian armor and forces.

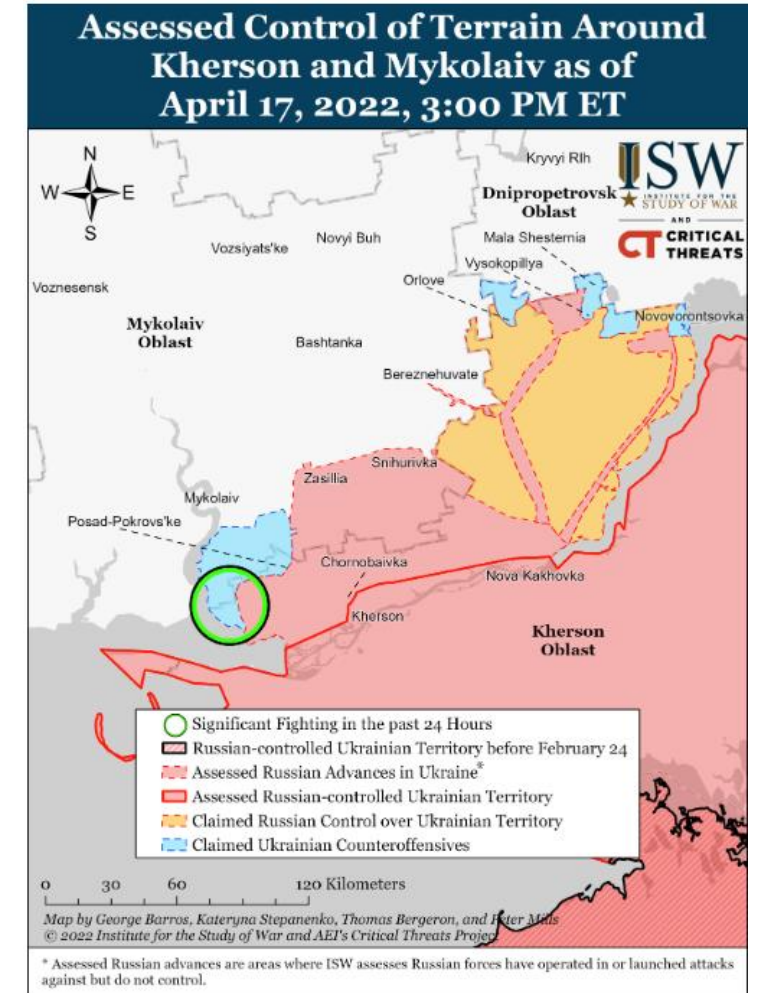
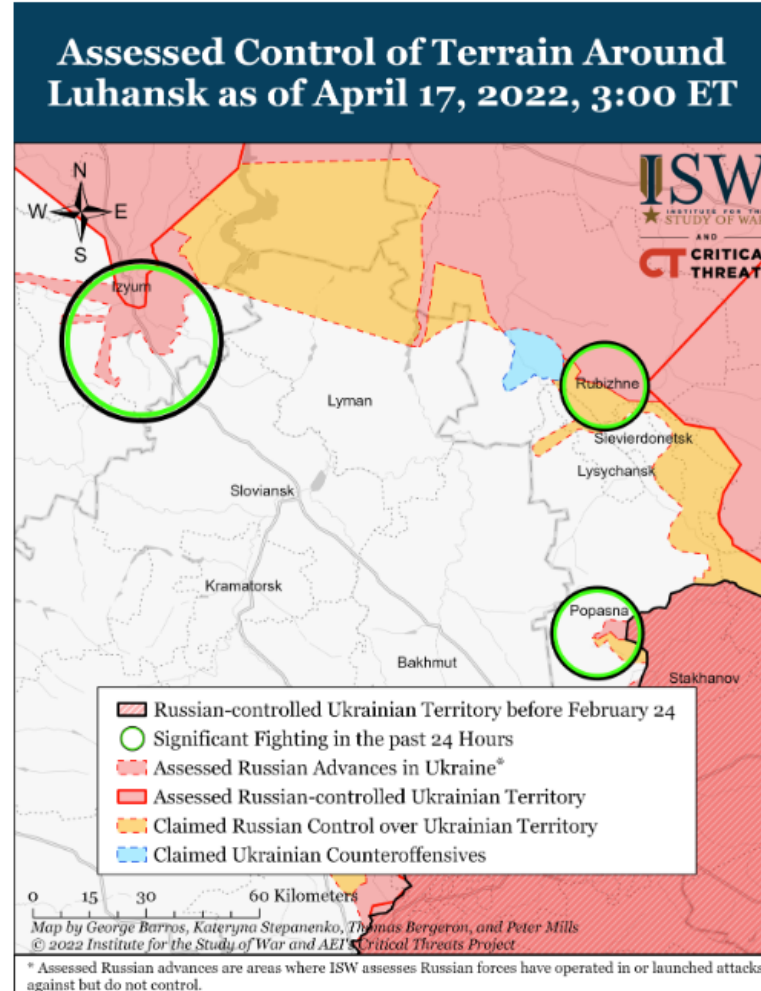
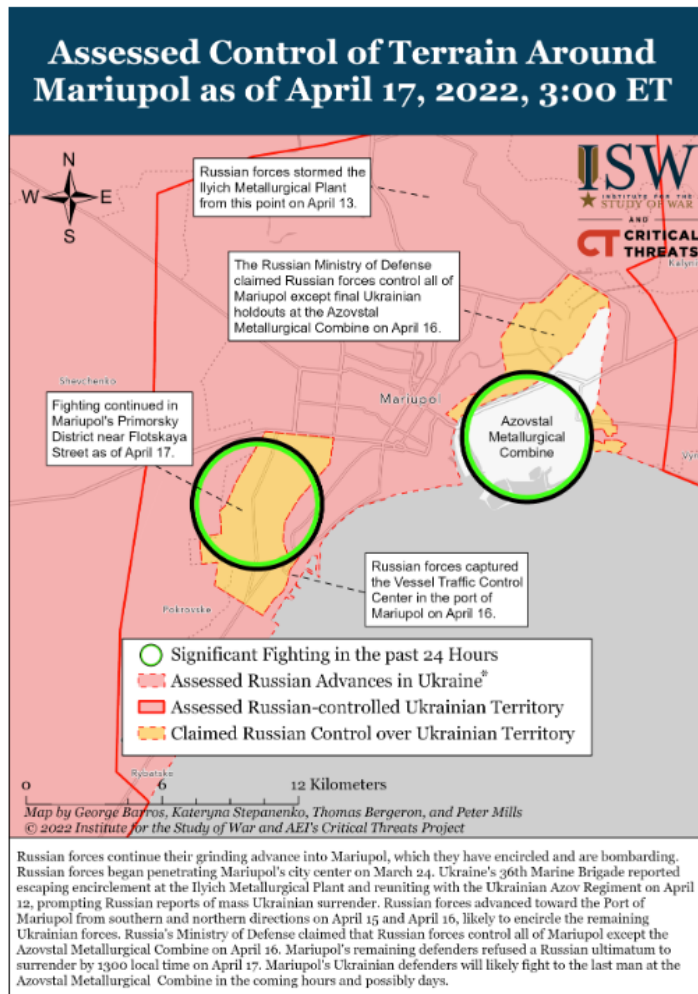
The Ukrainian military assessed that Russian forces have almost finished preparing for a new offensive in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, gathering tens of thousands of soldiers. Ukrainian officials accused Russia of purposely targeting civilians while Russia denied these charges.

The Institute for the Study of War assessed that Russian forces continued to amass on the Izyum axis and in eastern Ukraine, increasingly including low-quality

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# Ukraine War Update: Mariupol's Easter Ultimatum, Russia's Shelling Campaign, Ukraine's EU Application



Source: [Institute for the Study of War](https://www.instituteforthe studyofwar.com/)

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# Ukraine War Update: Mariupol's Easter Ultimatum, Russia's Shelling Campaign, Ukraine's EU Application

proxy conscripts, in parallel with continuous – and unsuccessful – small-scale attacks. Russian forces did not take any territory on the Izyum axis or in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in the past 24 hours. Russian forces deploying to eastern Ukraine reportedly continue to face significant morale and supply issues and appear unlikely to intend, or be able to, conduct a major offensive surge in the coming days. Deputy Ukrainian Minister of Defense Anna Malyar stated on April 17 that the Russian military is in no hurry to launch an offensive in eastern Ukraine, having learned from their experience from Kyiv – but Russian forces continue localized attacks and are likely unable to amass the cohesive combat power necessary for a major breakthrough.

Following an airstrike on Kyiv, the city's mayor warned that the capital would likely be the target of more strikes and recommended that people who have started to return to the city reconsider their plans for the time being.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said its air defense system had shot down two Ukrainian MiG-29 fighter jets in the region of Kharkiv.

Mariupol remains contested. Ukrainian defenders continued to resist, ignoring a Russian ultimatum to surrender Easter morning or

be destroyed. Ukrainian fighters are still held up in a steelworks plant. Russia continues to bomb the city, with remaining trapped civilians in dire conditions.

Russia is ignoring Ukrainian President Zelensky's warning that targeting the last Ukrainian troops trapped in Mariupol will put an end to negotiations.

President Zelensky said in an interview that Ukrainian officials believed that around 2,500 to 3,000 of their troops have died since Russia launched its invasion on February 24 and another 10,000 Ukrainian troops have been injured. He dismissed Russia's claim that there had been between 19,000 and 20,000 Ukrainian fatalities.

The Ukrainian government says Russia is holding around 700 Ukrainian soldiers and several hundred civilians captive.

Andriy Nebytov, the chief of police in the Kyiv region, said 900 civilian bodies were discovered largely abandoned in the streets or in shallow graves after Russia withdrew its forces. He added that 95 percent of those found dead had died of gunshot wounds, likely from sniper fire.

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## *Humanitarian Developments*

The EU said it is allocating a further €50 million (\$54 million) in funding to give humanitarian support to people affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The UK's Ministry of Defense assessed that parts of Ukraine have been left with minimal access after Russian troops destroyed bridges and left land mines. This destruction of infrastructure is presenting "*a significant challenge in delivering humanitarian aid to areas formerly besieged by Russia.*"

Over five million people have fled Ukraine since the Russian invasion began, according to UNHCR. The displacement is Europe's fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II.

## *Economic Developments*

Ukraine asked G7 nations for \$50 billion in financial support and is also considering issuing 0% coupon bonds to help it cover a war-linked budget deficit over the next six months.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyhal announced Ukraine will receive 500 million Canadian dollars (\$396 million or €367 million) in aid from Ottawa and 13 billion Japanese yen (\$100 million or €73 million) from Tokyo.

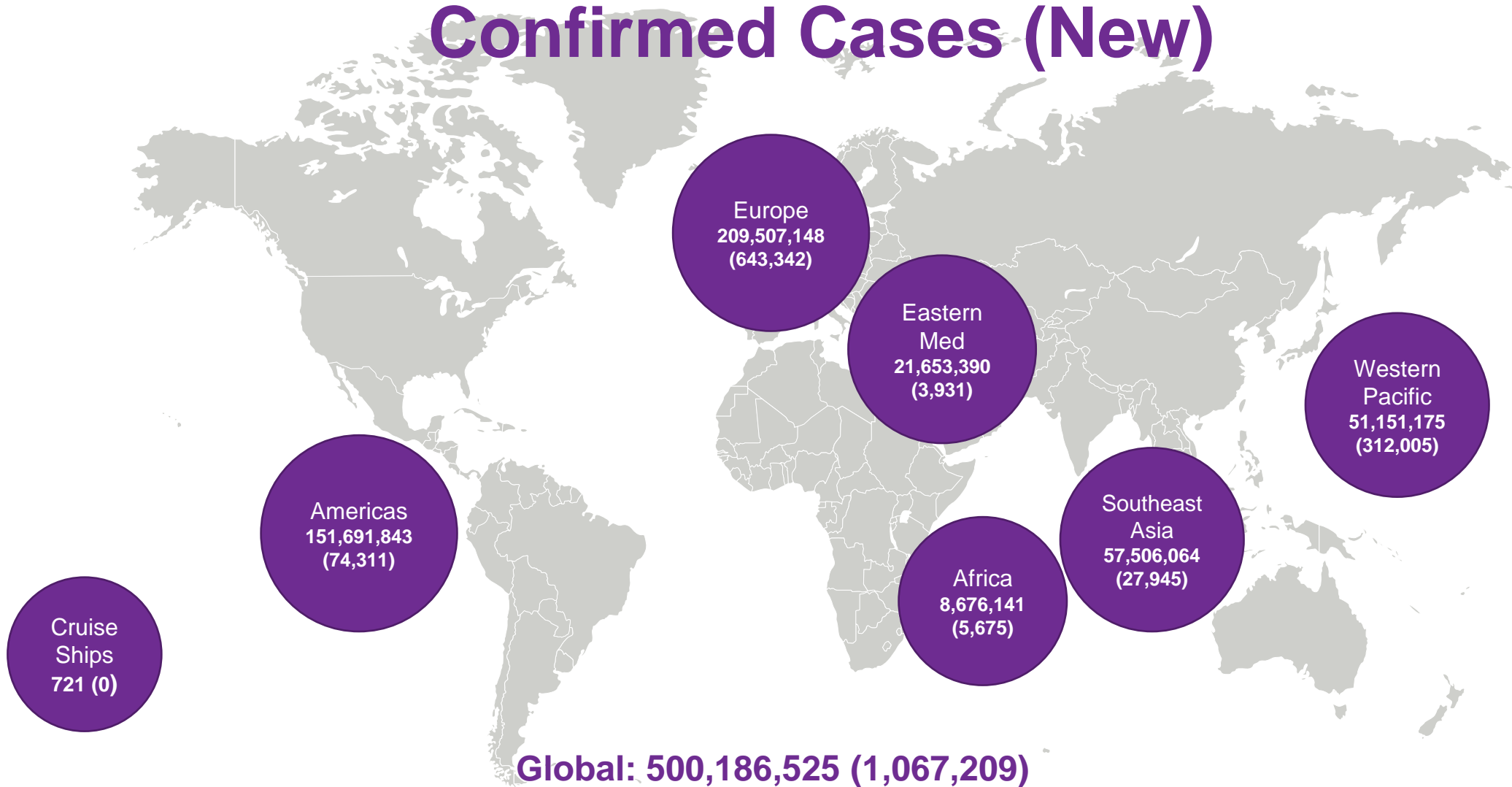
The EU's forthcoming sanctions on Russia will target banks, in particular Sberbank, according to media reports.

Ukrainian ministers are in Washington for the spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which begins today.

# Coronavirus Condition Updates

The WHO has not updated COVID-19 stats since April 14 due to the holiday weekend.

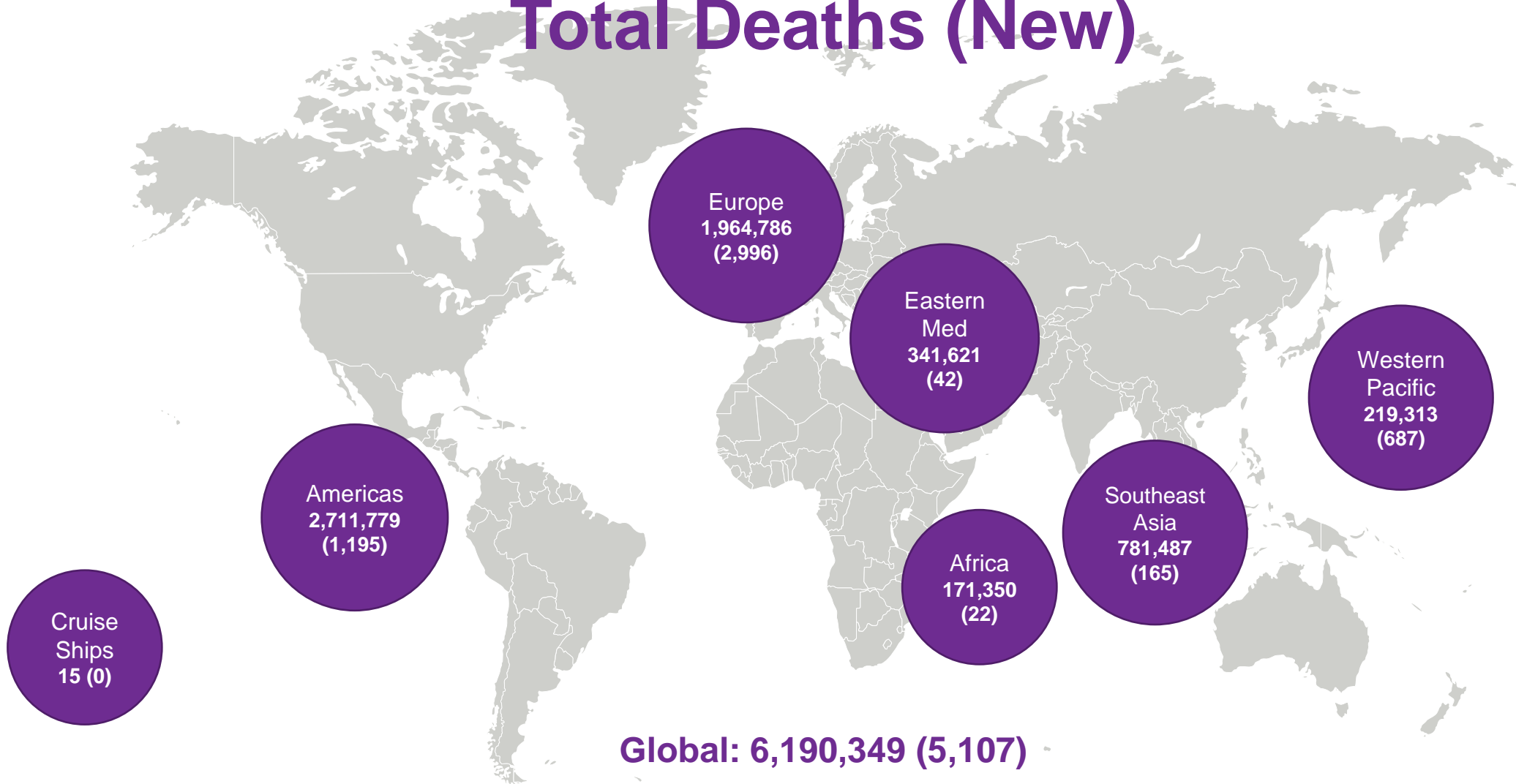
# Confirmed Cases (New)



Reflects data as of 8:36 pm CEST on April 14, 2022.  
Data Source: World Health Organization

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# Total Deaths (New)



Reflects data as of 8:36 pm CEST on April 14, 2022.  
Data Source: World Health Organization

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# Contacts

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*This summary is based on reports sourced from among the 75 countries in which Dentons currently serves clients as well as from firms in other locations, some of which will formally join Dentons later in 2020. We are pleased to share this complimentary summary and contemporaneous assessment, with the caveat that developments are changing rapidly. This is not legal advice, and you should not act or refrain from acting based solely on its contents. We urge you to consult with counsel regarding your particular circumstances.*

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