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Russia, Vladimir Putin emerge as a winner from Iran war

BY CELLAN-WILLIAMS | SENIOR EDITOR STAFF

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It's been a good month for Russian President Vladimir Putin amid the U.S.-Israel war against its ally Iran.

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Oil prices have already rearranged their economy to more effect a war than Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Economist Caroline Liang said on March 27 in Ukraine. "Their own defense industrial base has been not only stabilized, but also, let's say, inflated financially."

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has led to sharply rising energy prices, with the price of a barrel of Russian crude oil jumping from $57 to $115 within the span of a month.

The Trump administration has sought to temper runaway energy costs by lifting sanctions on Russian oil, which has been selling at a discount oil already at one estimate being accounted for 30 days — further inflating Moscow's coffers.

In the longer term, those extra dollars benefit Russia's ability to continue paying contractors to fight in Ukraine, Liang said.

"One of the largest expenditures of this war is the fact that Russia is paying its military contractors very generously," Liang said. "Some of the money Coffey said: "Many think that the people fighting in Ukraine are conscripts or they're drafted. But they're not. They're all contractors, and they're being paid very well. Some of them are being paid so well that they don't have to continue with a second job."

European officials are also taking note of Russia's gains. Gen. Michael Cleasure, the commander of Sweden's armed forces, told The Hill last week that Moscow is benefiting from the war in Iran by "journey" increased of revenue into its war coffers.

In the first two weeks of the war, Russia earned an estimated $8 billion from selling fossil fuels — nearly $600 million more than usual. Roughly $610 million of that money came from additional oil sales, The Guardian reported.

Amounts of the additional gain the war has made for Russia, however, the fact remains that it is still the U.S. distraction from Ukraine, "according to Daniel Fried, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland and a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council.

"Russia's cooperation with Iran, Russia and Ukraine appeared to come to a complete standstill in February as Washington was gearing up for its war against Tehran. The last round of talks, which took place in Feb. 15, saw an impasse over Russia's demands that Ukraine give up swathes of territory.

But "Russia was in a relatively bad position" in the days leading up to the war, Fried said, "because it was being pushed by Ukraine and Europe and by its cards in the table and and the war — a chance that didn't have, I said.

"The Ukraine war was not going well for Russia. It was under enormous pressure, which had been mounting. It was under military pressure — the Ukrainians were doing very well, and it was under — it was under — it was facing — it was under economic pressure to drive sanctions both bilaterally and on the battlefield and strategically, was becoming apparent," he explained, adding that the U.S. has been "moving forward, Ukraine has brought home a big win in Venezuela, he said.

"What is very clear is that Ukraine is not a priority" for the Trump administration, said Mona Sengupta, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The Kremlin probably couldn't believe its luck making some of the social media posts today by the White House," he said.

Trump on Tuesday lambasted European allies over their reluctance to help Washington in its war against Iran, saying the U.S. will not go to their aid themselves from the critical shipping lane.

"All of those countries that can't get out and assist Trump, the NATO alliance, the United Kingdom, which refused to get involved in the decapitation of Iran, I have a suggestion for you. Number 1, buy from the U.S., we have plenty of oil. Number 2, if you don't want to participate, go to the Strait, and just TAKE IT," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post.

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