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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Announces Measures to Overcome Western 'Economic Blitzkrieg'

By AFP

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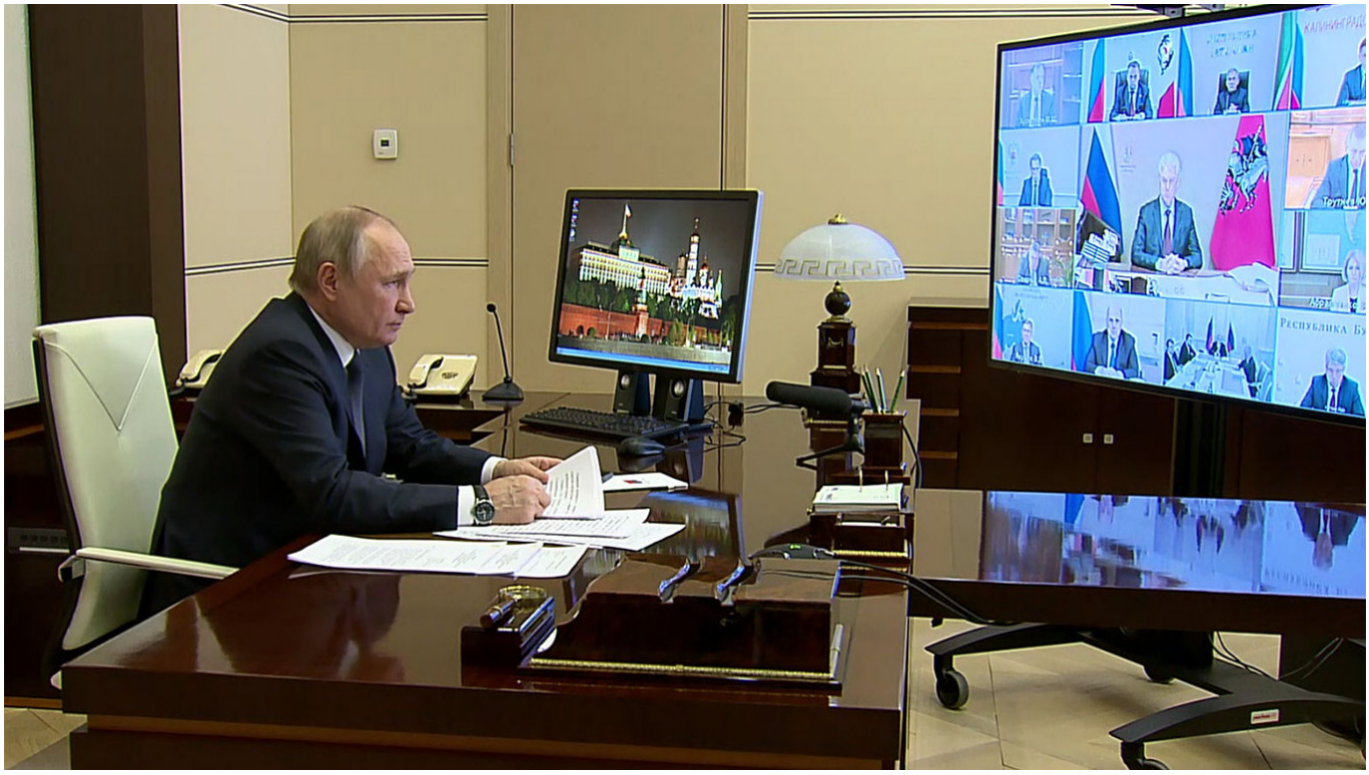

Meeting on measures of socio-economic support of regions (via videoconference). **kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin promised financial help to ordinary Russians and the country's businesses Wednesday, calling on the nation to come together to overcome the West's "economic blitzkrieg."

Putin made an impassioned defense of his military actions in Ukraine, saying his tactics were "completely justified" and that he had no other choice but to send troops into the country.

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Speaking at a televised government meeting, the Kremlin chief called on Russians to "mobilize" in order to overcome difficulties related to the massive sanctions imposed on the country.

"Yes, it is not easy for us now," Putin acknowledged.

"But this economic blitzkrieg against Russia has failed."

He announced an "increase of all social payments in the near future" and said the Russian economy had "all the necessary resources to solve long-term tasks."

"The current situation is, of course, a test," the longtime leader said.

"I am sure that we will pass it with dignity and hard work. We will overcome these difficulties," he said.

He also sought to reassure Russian private companies, saying they played a "key role in overcoming the current issues."

Putin promised "maximum entrepreneurial freedom," ordering his government to "remove administrative barriers" in an economy largely dominated by the state.

'Spit them out like a fly'

The Russian leader said Western sanctions had "one aim: the destruction of Russia."

He compared the avalanche of Western sanctions to anti-Semitic violence by fascists.

"The West dropped its mask of civility and began to act belligerently. It begs a comparison to the anti-Semitic pogroms" of Nazis, he said.

Putin claimed that the West sought to divide Russian society, railing against a "fifth column" that was "mentally" in the West.

"Russian people will always be able to distinguish true patriots from traitors and just spit them out like a fly that accidentally flew into their mouth," he said.

He alleged that the Russian army's operation in Ukraine was unfolding "successfully."

"We will not allow Ukraine to serve as a springboard for aggressive actions against Russia," he said.

He claimed Western leaders gave him "no option to resolve the process in a peaceful way."

Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24 despite Western leaders warning him of massive sanctions that would cripple the Russian economy for months.

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