

RUSSIA: Putin opens bridge to Ukrainian land seized in “illegal land grab”

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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Student-created	Required (bold)
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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Wednesday **denounced** a new bridge linking mainland Russia to Moscow-annexed¹ Crimea as “another violation” of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Atlantic alliance echoed the European Union’s earlier condemnation of the bridge, which Russian President Vladimir Putin drove a truck over on Tuesday.

“NATO condemns Russia’s construction and partial opening of the Kerch Strait bridge between Russia and Crimea,” NATO deputy spokesman Piers Cazalet said.

“Crimea is part of Ukraine and this bridge represents another violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” Cazalet said in a statement.

The Kerch Strait Bridge, which limits sea traffic to Ukrainian ports on the Azov Sea, amounts to “the **infringement** of its navigational rights in its territorial waters,” he added.

“Russia continues to demonstrate a clear disregard for international law,” Cazalet said, adding that NATO will not recognize Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Putin ordered the 12 mile long bridge four years ago and construction began in February 2016. He said Tuesday about 15,000 people and more than 200 businesses worked on the project. The bridge can handle 40,000 cars a day and move 14 million passengers and 13 million tons of cargo per year. Trains will begin crossing next year.

The bridge was ordered one month after Moscow annexed Crimea in March 2014, in a move that was internationally criticized. The annexation followed the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, a Russian ally, following large peaceful protests that were met with violence from Yanukovych that then forced him to flee.

The United States and most Western states have not recognized Crimea as Russian territory – condemning it as an illegal land grab – and have imposed sanctions over the move.

Moscow has called the annexation a “restoration of historical justice.”

Two years ago, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned (imposed sanctions on) several companies and numerous individuals involved in the construction of the bridge. U.S. officials said these Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned Russia’s construction of the bridge, which connects mainland Russia to Moscow-annexed Crimea, saying, “The bridge represents not only an attempt by Russia to solidify its unlawful seizure and its occupation of Crimea, but also **impedes** navigation by limiting the size of ships that can transit the Kerch Strait, the only path to reach Ukraine’s territorial waters in the Sea of Azov. We call on Russia not to impede this shipping,” he added.

¹ To add (territory) to one’s own territory by appropriation (the action of taking something for one’s own use, typically without the owner’s permission)

Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman condemned the project, saying that larger ships will not be able to pass through its ports on the Azov Sea. “The Russian occupying powers, which have temporarily occupied Crimea, are continuing to act outside international law,” Volodymyr said.

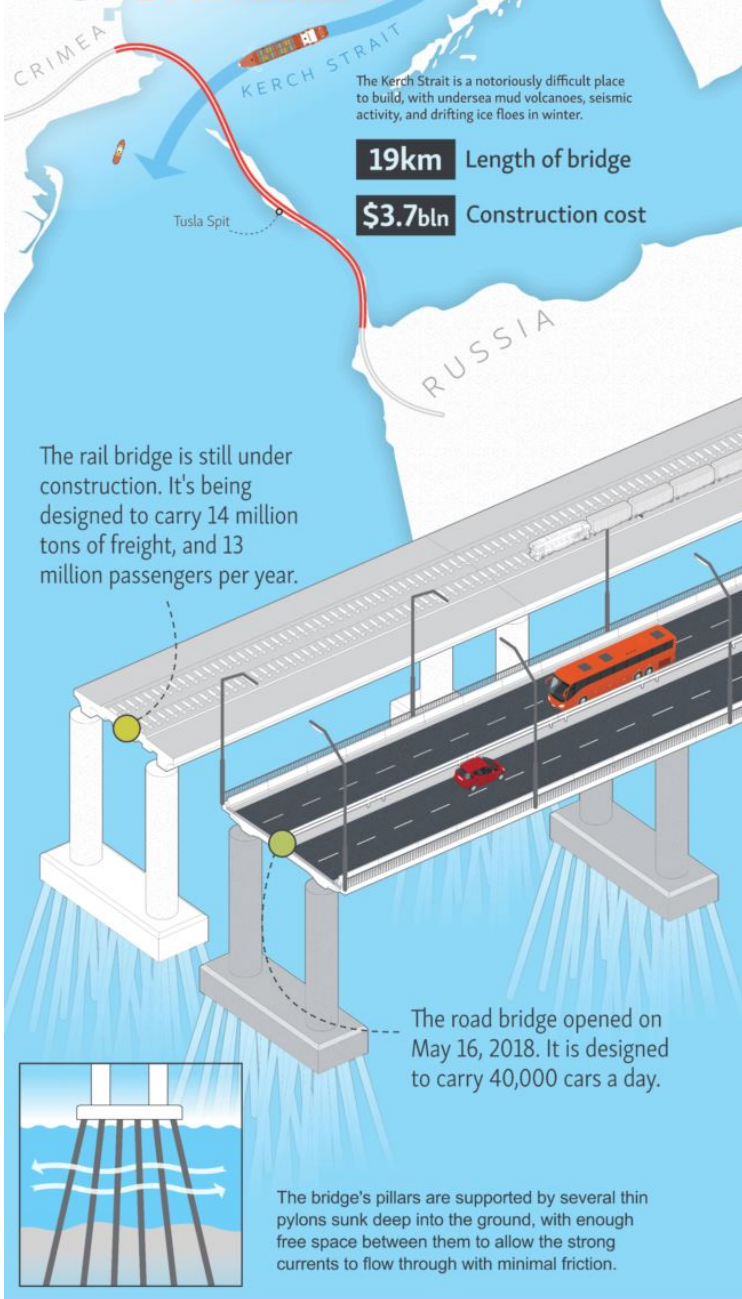
The 29-member NATO is currently pursuing a dual-track policy towards the Kremlin of defense and **deterrence** coupled with an offer of dialogue.

Tensions between NATO and Russia are at levels not seen since the Cold War, including over Moscow’s support for pro-Russian separatists in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Questions

1. List the who, what, where and when of the news item.
2. List three things the author assumes you know that an eighth-grade student might not necessarily know.
3. Look at the graphic below, which was included with the original article. How does this help the reader? (Think about question 2 above--does it provide knowledge you listed there?)
4. How did the U.S. and Europe react to Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine?
5. What approach is NATO taking toward Russian aggression in the region?

THE BRIDGE TO CRIMEA



RadioFreeEurope
RadioLiberty

By Carlos Coelho
Source: Avtodor (state-run construction company), RSCC
RFE/RL Graphics