# Ukraine Mourns 'Ghost of Kyiv' Pilot Lt Col Valentyn Korenchuk as Conflict Dynamics Escalate



**Ukraine Mourns Acclaimed 'Ghost of Kyiv' Pilot, Lt Col Valentyn Korenchuk**

KYIV, Ukraine - Ukraine paid its respects to Lt Col Valentyn Korenchuk, revered as one of the "Ghosts of Kyiv," on Wednesday, June 19, 2024. Serving in the 40th Tactical Aviation Brigade, Korenchuk, known as "Beekeeper," piloted a MiG-29 fighter jet and was lauded by the Ukrainian air force as the country's "best pilot."

Korenchuk's exploits were part of the legendary "Ghost of Kyiv" narrative, which emerged in the early days of the Russian invasion in February 2022. Initially believed to be a single ace who downed six Russian jets, the "Ghost" was later admitted to be a symbolic figure representing several pilots, including Korenchuk and Lt Col Vyacheslav Yerko, who also fought bravely.

**Further Conflict Dynamics**

The ongoing conflict saw new developments, with Ukraine accusing North Korea of aiding Russia's efforts. On the same day, Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak criticized North Korea’s alleged support for Russia in killing Ukrainian civilians, following a partnership agreement between Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un.

Increased hostilities were reported near Toretsk in the Donetsk region, resulting in fatalities and injuries. Ukrainian authorities also detained a man recruited by Russian agents on an online dating site, who allegedly tried to gather sensitive military information in Kharkiv.

Ukraine has also been proactive in documenting sexual violence by Russian forces, introducing a national registry that has already registered 303 cases.

**International Sanctions and Military Movements**

Russia's potential retaliation against Western assets was hinted at following the G7 summit's decision to use frozen Russian assets to fund a $50 billion loan to Ukraine. Meanwhile, an oil terminal in the Russian port city of Azov burned for over a day after a suspected Ukrainian drone strike.

**Beluga Whale Evacuation**

In a separate humanitarian effort, two beluga whales, Plombir and Miranda, were evacuated from the NEMO Dolphinarium in Kharkiv to the Oceanogràfic aquarium in Valencia, Spain. The operation was executed due to the intensifying conflict and deteriorating living conditions in Kharkiv. The whales endured a 36-hour journey and arrived safely in Spain on Wednesday morning.