

STORIES BY RISHAB REVANKAR
GRAPHIC BY ALICIA HANCOCK

Simferopol, Ukraine

According to CNN, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not committed to annexing Ukraine's Crimea region amidst the unfolding crisis in Ukraine. However, Putin insists on Russia's right to intervene militarily "as a last resort" and has mobilized sizable troop reinforcements. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Ukraine on March 4 and offered \$1 billion in U.S. loan guarantees to encourage Ukraine to integrate with the West and to help offset energy subsidies from Russia, The New York Times reports.

Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.

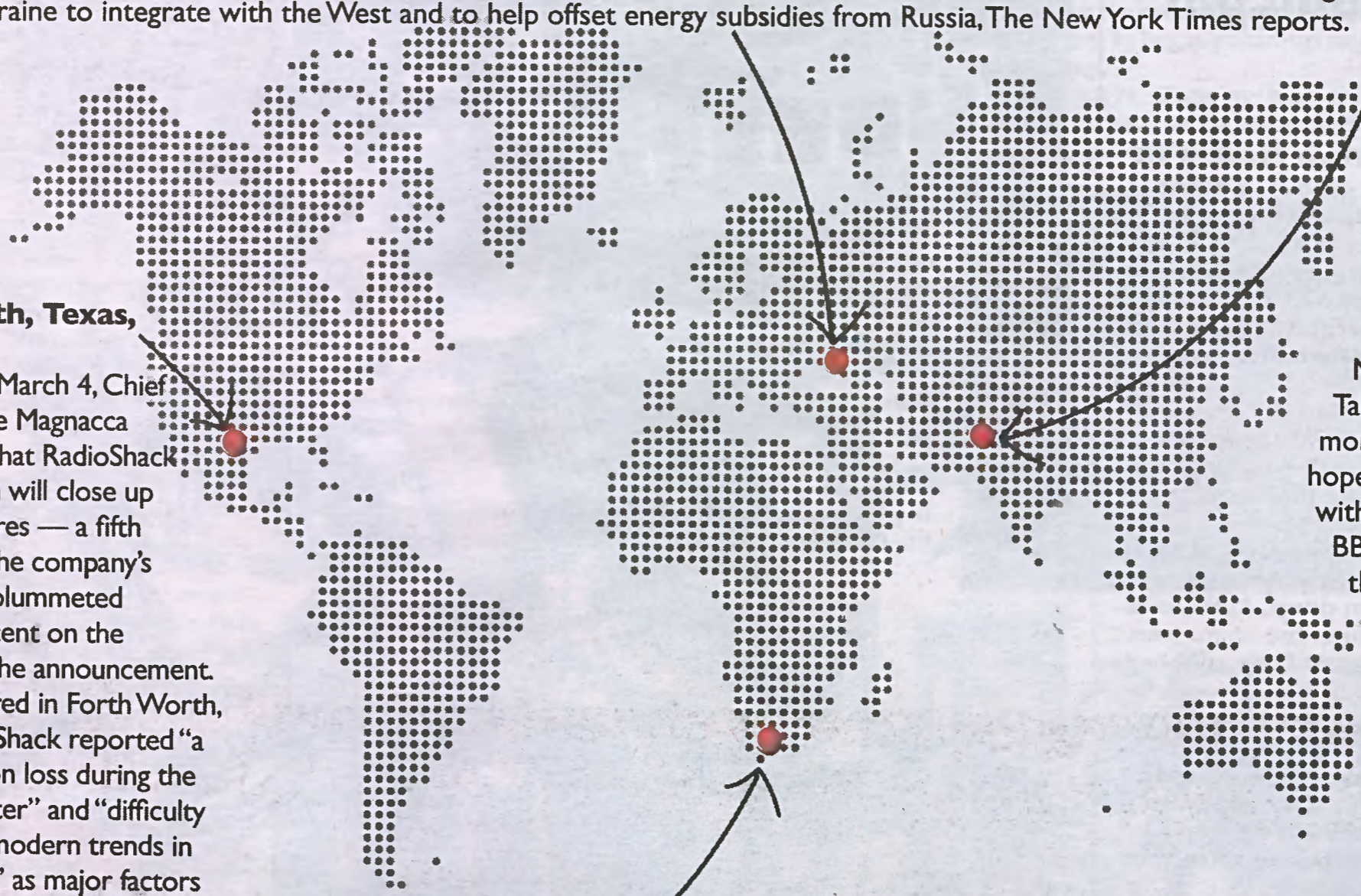
On Tuesday, March 4, Chief Executive Joe Magnacca announced that RadioShack Corporation will close up to 1,100 stores — a fifth of its total. The company's stock value plummeted over 24 percent on the morning of the announcement. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, RadioShack reported "a \$191.4 million loss during the holiday quarter" and "difficulty adapting to modern trends in the business" as major factors contributing to its decision to close stores. The Wall Street Journal reports. According to Yahoo Finance, RadioShack's primary competitors include: Best Buy, Walmart and Celco Partnership, a subsidiary of Verizon Wireless.

Pretoria, South Africa

Accused of murdering his former girlfriend and South African model Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day, 2013, Paralympian athlete Oscar Pistorius faces trial at a high court in Pretoria. On day two of the trial, Pistorius' neighbor Michelle Burger served as a witness for the prosecution, telling the judge that she was "awakened by screams, followed by gunshots, when Pistorius shot and killed his girlfriend at his Pretoria home," according to a report by CNN. Since his arrest last year, Pistorius and his defense lawyer maintain that Pistorius mistook Steenkamp for a burglar behind a locked bathroom door when he fired shots.

Islamabad, Pakistan

"Today, we are seeing a big breakthrough," said Irfan Siddiqui, leader of the Pakistani government's negotiating team. On March 1, the Pakistani Taliban announced a month-long ceasefire, with hopes of reviving peace talks with the government, the BBC reports. In response, the government has agreed to temporarily halt drone strikes against the Taliban, one of which was responsible for the death of former Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud in November.



Ukrainian president ousted; what's next for the country?

BY IAN PENNY
STAFF WRITER

The situation resembles a Hollywood movie.

A ragtag group representing the people faces off against a tyrannical leader to secure its freedom through battling impossible odds and emerging victorious.

However, few films deal with what happens after the revolution.

Ukraine now faces such an odyssey.

"Life for Ukrainian citizens has always been difficult because (the country is) still developing," said Bridgewater College first-year Kamilla Voznuk, a Ukrainian-American dual citizen, in an email interview. "People are scared, and there is no government to assure them that things will be okay."

A botched trade deal with the European Union in November sparked the protests against former President Viktor Yanukovich, who was ousted from office on Feb. 22. The interim Ukrainian government is now facing a series of challenges.

One of the most pressing issues is the economic situation. Despite

having a \$15 billion lending deal with Russia, Ukraine will face massive shortfalls in the future.

Potential aid from the EU and the U.S. via the International Monetary Fund, which could resolve Ukrainian budget woes, is complicated by the gas subsidies the nation receives.

"Ukraine is getting cheap gas from Russia," said Assistant Professor of Economics Natalya Shelkova. "The EU wants to level the playing field in energy (and establish a level market price)."

Although aid programs from the West may cause initial economic harm by increasing energy prices, opening Ukraine to trade would strengthen the nation's ties with Europe and encourage more efficient energy use.

On March 1, the Russian government authorized a military deployment in Ukraine. Russian troops had been spotted earlier in Crimea, an autonomous republic within Ukraine, and seized the region.

Ukraine and Russia are now in a standoff, both militarily and diplomatically.

"The involvement of Russia will just fuel the fire because (the Ukraine and Russia) are already not on great terms," said Voznuk.

In a recent 90-minute conversation, President Obama cautioned Russian President Vladimir Putin over involvement in Ukrainian affairs, according to CNN.

"The United States is deeply committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine," said Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, in a press conference at the Verkhovna Rada on Feb. 27.

When asked if Putin was taking advantage of the recent events in Ukraine, Chris Ianine, first-year student and native of Moscow, answered, "Oh yeah, no doubt."

Residents of eastern areas of Ukraine are historically more connected to Russians both culturally and politically. In these areas, opposition to the new government in Kiev has found a voice.

"I highly doubt the country will split due to political disagreements," said Voznuk.

"Yes, Eastern and Western Ukraine are vastly different; however, you have to remember that the communist mindset still exists. Both sides depend on each other for resources, and we are far too similar in other aspects of our lifestyle to split based solely on political disagreements."

Should eastern sections of the

country gather enough support to break off from Ukraine, they could potentially be annexed by Russia.

"It would be just like West and East Germany," said Ianine.

Nonetheless, national unity seems to be a priority in Ukraine. The factions that fought against a corrupt system look to forge a better one in its place.



Citizens in Simferopol protest recent Russian troop deployment into Crimea.

SERGEI L. LOKIC/LOS ANGELES TIMES