Russian ruble rises to seven-year high

The Russian ruble hit 52.3 to the dollar on Wednesday. This is an increase of roughly 1.3% on the previous day and its strongest level since May 2015. That's quite a way removed from its crash to 139 to the dollar in early March, when the U.S. and European Union started rolling out unprecedented sanctions on Moscow in response to its invasion of Ukraine.

The ruble's stunning surge in the following months has given fuel to the Kremlin as "proof" that Western sanctions aren't working. "The idea was clear: crush the Russian economy violently," Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week during the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. "They did not succeed. Obviously, that didn't happen."

The ruble has actually gotten so strong that Russia's Central Bank is actively taking measures to try to weaken it, fearing that this will make their exports less competitive. The reasons for the rise are, to put it simply: strikingly high energy prices, capital controls and the sanctions themselves.

With Russia being the world's largest exporter of gas and the second-largest exporter of oil, its primary customer, the European Union, has been buying billions of dollars worth of Russian energy per week while simultaneously trying to punish it with sanctions.

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