

April 18th - April 30th, 2023
Ukraine Situation Report

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) continue to advance in the Donetsk oblast, while in the Zaporizhzhia oblast they are shifting to a defensive posture in anticipation of a Ukrainian counteroffensive. According to media reports, the Ukrainian army has already gained a foothold on the [left bank of the Dnipro](#) river in the Kherson oblast, pushing Russian troops back. According to Ukraine, as of 30 April the overall losses sustained by the Russian Federation (Russia) amount to over [190.000](#) soldiers killed. The head of the “Wagner” private paramilitary group, Yevgeniy Prigozhyn, made a [statement](#) announcing that the group is facing a shortage of soldiers and the group may shortly cease to exist, despite the conscription of tens of thousands of Russian prisoners.
- Russia continues to launch missile and drone attacks targeting Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure in cities located far from the front line. Military analysts believe that this signals that Russia is receiving a new delivery of drones from Iran. On the night of 19 April, Russia launched 12 [kamikaze drones](#) towards the Odesa oblast, with 10 of them downed. The previous night, 6 [drones](#) were shot down in the Zaporizhzhia oblast. On 21 April, the Ukrainian air defense system downed 8 out of 12 [kamikaze drones](#), while on 24 April, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) destroyed 9 Russian [unmanned aerial vehicles](#) (UAV), with 8 of them being attack drones. On the morning of 25 April, a [C-300](#) missile destroyed a local history museum in Kupyansk, killing 2 employees and injuring a further ten people. On the night of 27 April, Russia shelled Mykolayiv with cruise missiles [Iskander-K](#), which left one person dead and a further twenty-three injured. On 29 April, the Russian army fired 23 X-101 and X-555 [cruise missiles](#). 21 of them were downed by the Ukrainian air defense system along with three UAVs. One of the missiles hit a high-rise [building](#) in Uman, claiming the lives of at least 23 people (5 of them children).
- During the last two weeks, the cities of [Kherson](#), [Mykolayiv](#), [Kharkiv](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Dnipro](#), [Bilozerka](#), [Ochakiv](#), [Avdiivka](#), [Slovyansk](#), [Vuhledar](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Koatyantynivka](#), [Orikhiv](#), [Hulyaipole](#), [Nikopol](#), and [Vovchansk](#), as well as other settlements located close to the Russian border in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts, were subjected to missile and artillery shelling. [Experts](#) from the Ministry of Defense of Great Britain believe that Russia is changing tactics in terms of missile strikes, particularly its use of long range strikes. They also claim that Russia operates an inefficient targeting process and prioritizes perceived military necessity over preventing collateral damage including civilian deaths.
- On 26 April a further round of [prisoners swap](#) took place. Ukraine managed to return 42 soldiers and 2 civilians who had been kept in Russian captivity. Negotiations are currently being held to swap “all for all”.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- According to the official data [provided by juvenile prosecutors](#), 475 children have been killed, with 953 wounded with various degree of severity. 19.393 children are believed to have been deported. Ukraine gave the International Committee of the Red Cross a list with the names of [19.000](#) Ukrainian children kidnapped by Russia. According to statistics, over [7.000 Ukrainian soldiers](#) are considered missing. However, in reality this number is probably at least 60-65% higher. While some are kept captive, others are dead. In addition Russia holds over [20.000 Ukrainian citizens](#) captive. However, according to the Parliament's Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, this figure may be significantly higher as it was calculated based on requests by relatives. Since the start of the full-scale invasion [2235 people](#) have been returned to Ukraine.
- According to The Washington Post, Russia has lost [90-95% of its special forces personnel](#) during the war so far.
- According to the National Resistance Center of Ukraine (NRC), [a special program of medical examinations](#) is being implemented in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, for which 1,5 billion RUB has been allocated. Examinations are conducted by doctors who were brought to Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories. Most of the patients are advised to "undergo treatment" in Russia. The situation has caused outrage since parents of the examined children are not allowed to refuse the procedure, facing the threat of being deprived of parental rights. Since the beginning of the year 75.000 children have been examined in the Donetsk oblast, with 39.000 relocated to Russia. In the Luhansk oblast 94.000 children have been "examined", with 66.000 "diagnosed with pathology" and relocated to Russia. The NRC has also reported that in some cases doctors demand bribes from parents to prevent their child from being diagnosed with pathology.
- The Russian occupiers admit to killing Ukrainian prisoners of war after interrogation by [cutting their throats](#). The Ukrainian intelligence agency is investigating over 35.000 criminal proceedings regarding violations of the laws and customs of war.
- According to a [statement](#) made by the head of the State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management, Yevhen Kramarenko, over 95% of the exclusion zone of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant may be mined. Efforts to demine it may cause the displacement of the surface layer which is contaminated with radionuclides.
- Last March the Russian military [surrendered](#) twice as often as in December 2022. This trend may relate to Ukraine's forthcoming counteroffensive and the heavy losses incurred by the AFRF.
- Putin has signed a law according to which Ukrainian citizens, who reside in the occupied territories and who will retain Ukrainian citizenship until 1 July 2024, [can be deported](#). A paragraph on the deportation of those who "pose a threat to Russia's national security" is mentioned separately.
- Russian continues to steal from Ukrainian [civilians](#) by expropriating the grain harvest. For example, in the city of Berdyansk, the Russian occupation "authorities" are coordinating the process of removing stolen crops, loading them onto Russian cargo vessels. Russia continues to [place mines](#) in the territory of the Kherson oblast. The Konka and Dnipro rivers are also being mined. Cases of local residents being blown up by landmines have also been reported. The Russians continue to conduct

- [raids](#) on the homes of residents of Melitopol in the Zaporizhzhia oblast in order to find abandoned apartments. In the Zaporizhzhia oblast the Russian occupiers accidentally dug up a cattle burial site while digging trenches and [contracted anthrax](#).
- Almost all residents of the Mykolayiv oblast have returned home (400.000 people). Over [14.000 objects](#) have been destroyed in the oblast. Prefabricated houses are being constructed for those who have lost homes.
 - Russia continues to alter history. For example, education books no longer [mention Kyiv](#) as the capital of Kyivan Rus. Journalists from “Mediazone” have also noticed that the date when the Rus state was founded has been changed. In the 2016 edition the date was 882 “after Oleh united Novgorod and Kyiv”, while the new edition states 862 after Rurik was called to rule the principality in Novgorod.
 - The Russian project [Gulagu.net](#) has published a video with “Wagner” group fighters confessing to have killed Ukrainian children in Bakhmut and Soledar. One of the fighters admitted to having shot a girl aged 5 or 6 years old in the head. The fighters claim that they were ordered to kill everyone, i.e., men, women, pensioners and children. The mercenaries claim that Prigozhyn ordered them to exterminate all residents of the city. A man named Azamat Uldarov confessed to having killed 300-400 people, including approximately forty children, who were hiding in a 9-story building. Another former convict, Alexey Savichev, recalled being ordered (during a prisoner swap) to shoot civilians once journalists had left. They were ordered to shoot everyone aged 15+. 20-24 people were killed that day, ten of them were teenagers aged 15 and 17. Those who disobeyed the order would be executed.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- Ukraine is regaining [electricity exporter](#) status. The government exported 89.700 thousand MWH of electricity after a 6-month break. The website of the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity, ENTSO-E, says that the largest amount of electricity was exported to Moldova, over 40.000 MWH. Poland has received 30.400 MWH, while Slovakia has bought 19.200 MWH.
- The Ukrainian government is determined to maintain social stability in Ukraine by carefully managing [prices on natural gas](#). The prices for the population will remain the same for another year. Over 12.4 million Ukrainian households, which are clients of Naftogaz Ukraine, are provided with natural gas based on an annual fixed plan. The plan will be valid from 1 May 2023 until 1 May 2024.
- The Ukrainian government has [approved](#) the Action Plan for 2023 and 2024 in terms of the implementation of the National Strategy for Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030. The Plan implies 15 ministries and other central executive authorities taking 472 measures aimed at creating barrier-free space. The intermediate goal is to ensure that the rebuilt infrastructure will fully comply with the standards of barrier-free space by 2024.
- Inside the ruling party two approaches to economic resilience are competing with one another — 1) strengthening fiscal discipline; 2) stimulating economic activities. The bone of contention is the package of changes in Ukraine’s tax system, or the “[Tax reform 10-10-10](#)”. The new tax model implies

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lower tax rates on the income of physical persons, on the tax on the income of businesses and on the VAT to 10%. The reform's main goal is to reduce the tax burden on the business sector and citizens, which may in turn boost the economy, attract investment and create new jobs. The reform could be implemented next year, should a relevant bill be supported by the Parliament by 15.

INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **“Multipolar world”**. Narratives are being promoted about Russia's implementation of a doctrine for a “multipolar world” along with China, India and other countries. Russia claims the end of US hegemony by using strong anti-American rhetoric. Putin has [spoken](#) about the trends of “a multipolar world” and the “fight against US hegemony” gathering pace.
- **The Western threat to Russian security**. Russian officials including Minister of Defence, [Sergei Shoigu](#), claim that in the war against Ukraine the combat potential and capabilities of almost all countries of the NATO countries were used against Russia since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine, and that the West had prepared for a confrontation with Russia well in advance.
- **Narratives are being spread about western sanctions imposed on Russia** failing to achieve their objective. Moscow claims that the goal of destroying the Russian economy has failed. The Kremlin continues to spread stories claiming that while Western sanctions have had no impact on the Russian economy, they have negatively impacted the economies of those imposing them. Vyacheslav [Volodin](#), Chairman of the Duma, has urged the West to think about the “interests of their citizens”. Official Russian narratives claim that the Russian [aviation](#) industry continues to develop despite Western sanctions. Anti-European messages abound. For example, Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council talks about the “collapse of Europe” that will claim many victims.
- **Anti-Polish messages are being circulated**, as well as threats regarding the potential use of “Uragans” and “Cyclones”. Russia does not even refer to Poland as a state. [Dmitry Medvedev](#) has called Poland a “formation” hostile to Russia. He has also [said](#) that there is no such country as Moldova. Kremlin Spokesman, Dmitry [Peskov](#) has said that NATO and its expansion are instruments of war and confrontation, which poses a threat to Russia.
- **Supporting Putin, political future of Russia. Russia's Presidential elections**. Messages are being spread about the sacred nature of the Russian authorities and the dedication of the “rulers of the people”. For instance, Patriarch Kirill [said](#) that “all rulers of Russia have sacrificed their lives to serving the people, none of them has betrayed them”. At the same time, Dmitry Peskov, [claims](#) that Putin enjoys perfect health, has no doubles and is brave (he does not hide in bunkers). A narrative about the “West” planning to interfere in Russia's presidential elections is being spread. The head of the Russian Central Election Committee, Pamfilova, has [predicted](#) a “high turnover” at the presidential elections of 2024, while also claiming that the West is already trying to “prevent them” from taking place. Russia refers to the elections as “a change of epochs”, which goes beyond the worldview issue. At the same time, while discussing the activities of political parties, Pamfilova spoke about “the

- unity” of all parties in view of the “special military operation” (SMO) and political unity. Putin [speaks about](#) Russian values, unity and the stability of the state authorities against a backdrop of threats.
- **Integration of the “new territories” into Russia. Rejecting Ukrainian identity.** The Russian President has [referred](#) to the “four new Russian regions” (Ukrainian territories that are temporarily occupied by Russia) as historical Russian lands, and their residents as natives for Russians. “[How do they differ from our people living in other parts of the country? They do not, they are part of our people](#)”. Earlier, on 20 April, at local governance convention Putin [stated that](#) allegedly “residents of the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts have been fighting over many years for the right to be together with Russia”. On 17 April, Putin allegedly [visited](#) parts of the occupied Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. According to local occupation authorities, the trip had not been [prepared](#) in advance.
 - **Russia has announced elections** in the “4 new Russian regions”. Also, Moscow has announced “security” measures are being taken to organize [the election process](#) in these territories. Laws have been signed related to these regions switching to “Moscow time”.
 - **Residents of Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories are being forced to acquire Russian citizenship.** Putin has [signed](#) a law which stipulates that Ukrainian citizens, stateless persons and those who have been holding the citizenship of the Donetsk or Luhansk People’s Republics since 30 September 2022, may be regarded as “foreign citizens or stateless persons permanently residing in Russia”. This step limits the ability of Ukrainian citizens to live in the occupied territories. The possibility of future deportations of Ukrainian citizens, who refuse to acquire Russian citizenship and are currently residing in the temporarily occupied territories, is being widely debated.
 - **Discrediting Ukraine and its government.** A number of Russian officials continue to use the rhetoric of the “goals of the special operation” in their public statements. For example, they speak about Russia’s fight against “Ukrainian Fascism” and “Eurofascism”, “the liberation of the Ukrainian people” from “modern Fascism” (a statement made by Pamfilova). Dmitry Peskov [insists](#) that the goals of the SMO remain unchanged, as well as Russia not allowing Ukraine to join NATO. Publications containing references to “Western media” are being published regarding the threat of a coup d’état in Ukraine and “Zelenskyy’s [authoritarianism](#)”.
 - **Glorification of the “SMO”. “SMO” as a “political elevator”.** Narratives about the heroes of the SMO and their political involvement have started to appear. For example, the official media have [reported](#) about a veteran of the SMO, who is a member of the United Russia, participating in the elections for the head of the Republic of Khakassia. On 24 April, Peskov [confirmed](#) that his son had participated in the SMO as a “Wagner” group fighter. He is presented as a war hero who [received](#) “a medal for courage”. Russia continues to glorify “the heroes” of the SMO, in particular in the education sector. In Pskov, “desks of the SMO fighters” have been installed in a school. Only A-graders are entitled to sit at them. Putin has also spoken about the need to [pass](#) new legislation aimed at offering social aid to the participants of the SMO. According to [statistics](#) provided by Russia, over 1.800 children of the SMO fighters were offered places in Russian universities in 2022. All SMO participants have [received](#) the status of combatants, including the Wagner group fighters.

- **Discrediting the Ukrainian army.** A narrative about Ukraine posing a threat to Russian security is being promoted. For example, a message was shared claiming that Ukraine was attempting to [bombard](#) the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant in Kurchatov with the help of a drone. Ukraine is also accused of [shelling](#) the Bryansk oblast and killing people. Statements made by Ukrainian officials and politicians are interpreted by Russian politicians in Crimea as “war crimes” that deserve to be looked into by the “[Nuremberg tribunal](#)”. The need for the so-called SMO is justified by these statements. Articles [are being released](#) about the degradation of the “Ukrainian army” and the failing counteroffensive.
- **Russia threatening to use nuclear weapons.** Russia is spreading official narratives bragging about its stocks of powerful weapons, and claiming it has the military edge of Russia, in particular, in terms of its nuclear arsenal. Narratives about the crucial role of nuclear weapons for Russia are being circulated. Dmitry Medvedev [opines](#) that nuclear weapons play a key role in Russia’s existence. He believes that the entire country pivots on these weapons. Nuclear threats continue to be made with narratives about the crucial role of nuclear weapons for Russia being circulated. He has also said that Russia might go nuclear first should Moscow feel “its existence is under threat”. Medvedev has also spoken about Russia possibly [using](#) a hypersonic missile.
- **“About the Russian Army’s victories and successes and the losses of the AFU”.** The large-scale Russian shelling of 28 April has officially been interpreted by Russia as a strike on the Ukrainian military. Moscow claims that “a control room” in [Mykolayiv](#) has been destroyed. Official messages about the steady [success](#) of the Russian army on the front, the destruction of Ukrainian military capacities (in particular, regarding the situation in [Bakhmut](#)) are being spread. Moscow claims that its troops have [advanced](#) by 100-150 km in Bakhmut. Russia insists on repelling all attacks of Ukrainian drones in [Sevastopol](#). The Kremlin has also talked about Ukrainian drones’ attacks in the [Kursk oblast](#). Russia is [sceptical](#) (speaking allegedly on behalf of Western countries) about the success of Ukraine’s potential counteroffensive that was due to begin in [late](#) April. The official Russian media have claimed that the AFU are not ready for a counteroffensive and that the deliveries of nuclear weapons and planes would not give Ukraine an advantage. According to [Medvedev](#), Russian tanks will “[dismantle](#)” their Western counterparts. He also maintains that Russia has sufficient tanks and missiles. On their Telegram channels, Russian war correspondents have said that Putin signed a decree on 20 April to sack a number of generals — General Alexandr Dvornikov, Colonel Generals Alexander Zhuravlyov and Rustam Muradov namely ‘[the generals who failed](#)’ in the army’s winter campaign in Bakhmut where it has been deployed in combat for 6 months.