

April 2024
Ukraine Weekly Situation Report

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Russian army continues to advance, primarily in the Donetsk province close to the city of Chasiv Yar and a few other settlements to the west of Avdiivka. According to Ukrainian analysts, Russia may attempt to capture Chasiv Yar before 9 May, having started attacks in this direction.** For their part, the Ukrainian forces have continued shelling Russian oil refineries and defense industry facilities after a short break. On 19 April, for the first time, Ukrainian troops [shot down](#) a Russian long-range strategic strike bomber (Tupolev Tu-22M3). Additionally, in April 2024 military airfields in the Russian cities of Morozovsk, Engels, Yeysk, Kursk, and occupied Crimea were hit.
- According to the Ukrainian government, **the losses incurred by the Russian Federation** (Russia) as of the end of April amounted to a total of [470.000](#) soldiers killed.
- **The Russian army continues to launch massive strikes on Ukrainian cities and villages with a strong focus on inflicting damage on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.** The cities of [Chernihiv](#) (an attack on 17 April on a highly-populated high-rise building located in the city centre claimed the lives of 18 people, and wounded some 80 civilians), [Odesa](#) (incessant shelling has damaged the seaport infrastructure of the city and the eponymous province), [Kharkiv](#) (following an attack on 22 April destroyed the city's TV), [Dnipro and Kryvyi Rih](#), [Mykolayiv](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Kherson](#), [Sumy](#), [Poltava](#), [Pokrovsk](#) (an office of the organisation *Doctors Without Borders* was destroyed), [Kostyantynivka](#), [Slovyansk](#), [Ochakiv](#), [Balakliya](#), [Huliaypole](#), [Kupyansk](#), and other settlements, as well as the settlements located on the Russian border in Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy provinces, have been subject to air attacks. In several settlements in Kharkiv and Donetsk provinces families with children are being forcefully evacuated because of a continuous risk of shelling.
- **Taking advantage of Ukraine's depleted air defence systems and the West's failure to speedily send missiles and other weapons to the country, Russia launched several [large-scale strikes](#) on Ukraine's thermal power generation facilities, effectively demolishing 80% of generating capacities of thermal power.** For example, during the night of 11 April Russia [completely destroyed](#) equipment at the Trypilska Thermal Power Station, the largest thermal power station in the Kyiv province. Other energy facilities in the Kharkiv, Sumy, and Lviv provinces have been seriously damaged.
- In April 2024, two rounds of exchange of the bodies of fallen soldiers took place. On 12 April, Ukraine returned the bodies of [99 fallen soldiers](#), while on 26 April the bodies of a further [140 soldiers](#) were returned. Efforts to identify the dead continue to be carried out for their families to be able to bury them.
- On 7 April 2024 another video was released featuring the **execution of Ukrainian prisoners of war by Russian fire squads**. In the video, the Ukrainian prisoners had no weapons and were not resisting. This act constitutes a [war crime](#). A relevant investigation has been launched.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- **According to the official data provided by juvenile prosecutors, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion more than 1854 [children have been affected](#) as a result of Russia's full-fledged aggression.** As of 30 April 2024, 545 children were killed with over 1309 wounded with various degrees of severity. Most children have been affected in the following provinces: Donetsk - 529, Kharkiv - 348, Kherson - 150, Dnipropetrovsk - 136, Kyiv - 130, Zaporizhzhia - 108, Mykolayiv - 104. 130,494 war crimes and crimes of aggression have been registered, as well as 17,222 crimes against Ukraine's national security.
- **Amid the full-scale invasion Russia is deporting *en masse* Ukrainian children from Ukraine's occupied territories.** Seven children and their families have left the temporarily occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts.. Some families have witnessed to Russian marauding, forced passportisation, and violence against Ukrainians. Children have been forced to follow the Russian curriculum at schools. Ukraine has managed to return a further three children from the occupied areas of the Kherson province, as well as an orphan and a family with two children. Since the beginning of 2024, 66 children have been returned to Ukrainian-controlled territories from the occupied territories of Kherson province.
- **The Russian army continues to inflict severe damage on the environment.** Many scientists opine that countless birds, in particular those included in the Red Data Book (*an official national red list of the threatened animals, plants, and fungi that are protected by the law in Ukraine - translator's note*), are under threat of extinction. The birds succumb to explosions, while their nests are burned down, forcing them to find new nesting places. The conditions of the birds included in the Red Data Book are expected to become catastrophic. In Zaporizhzhia, fish are dying *en masse* following strikes on the Dnipro Hydroelectric Station. Water samples have shown increased levels of certain chemical compounds. The Russian occupier's fleet has led to dolphins increasingly coming to shore. During March 2024 alone, almost 140 Black Sea dolphins were washed up on the coast of the Krasnodar Territory (Russia). Among other things, Russia has destroyed approximately 80% of the national natural park *Sacred Mountains*. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Russians have completely destroyed 60.000 hectares (600 square kilometers) of forests in the occupied territories, which amounts to 14 billion UAH. Anthropogenic changes taking place in the behaviour of migrating birds attests to major changes in the environment taking place, especially in combat zones. Currently, thousand-strong flocks of waterfowl are flying through Odesa province. This change will result in negative consequences both for the environment and for people.
- **The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) is facing an emergency.** The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, has said that the ZNPP is dangerously close to an suffering an [accident](#). On 7 April, the IAEA announced that a drone had detonated on the premises of the ZNPP. These attacks have set a dangerous precedent, increasing the risks of an accident at the power plant where nuclear safety has been jeopardized.
- **Russian aggression continues to destroy the historical and cultural heritage of Ukraine.** As a result of Russian aggression, 1,046 cultural heritage sites have either been destroyed or damaged since 2022. 1,974 cultural institutions have incurred financial losses. Over 20.000 cultural sites of national and local importance are located in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories. The damage inflicted by Russia has exceeds one 1 million stolen or demolished museum objects belonging to the Museum Fund of Ukraine.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- **The dynamics of the population's trust in President Zelenskiy.** According to [surveys](#), which were published in April 2024, over 60% of Ukrainians continue to support the President's policies. Just under a quarter of the respondents (22%) fully approve of them, with 41% inclined to give their approval. However, the support that peaked at 90% at the beginning of the war is gradually diminishing. In April 2022, 94% of respondents backed the President. In February 2023, the number stood at 91%. As of February 2024, the number of those who fully or partly did not approve of Zelenskyy's policies was 33%, whereas at the beginning of the invasion, it was merely 5%.
- **Personnel changes in the government.** [According to the opposition and the media, the pace of personnel change in the government has slowed.](#) In February 2024, after Valerii Zaluzhnyi's resignation, President Zelenskyy announced a major 'personnel reset' in the government. In April 2024, no changes of personnel took place.
- **The Action Plan regarding the implementation of the Law on Mobilisation.** In April 2024, the Verkhovna Rada [adopted](#) changes to Ukraine's Law of Mobilisation 'that aim to provide legal mechanisms for the further mobilization of conscripts to Ukraine's Armed Forces. The law will come into force on 18 May. At the same time, critics of the law claim that it fails to solve key issues, in particular those concerning the period of service, the mobilisation of conscripts residing abroad, etc. Some experts have [voiced doubts](#) about the complex action plan that would be drawn-up to ensure the effective implementation of the law. Updating by-laws concerning mobilization will be crucial to the implementation of the law. The Verkhovna Rada has also increased the number of personnel at the State Border Guard Service, adopting a bill on the mobilisation of prisoners in the first reading.
- **Adaptation challenges faced by government bodies.** There are unfinished projects on energy supply diversification for energy-deficient provinces (Odesa), which pose a threat of blackouts. The scale of damage inflicted on the energy sector has forced the Ukrainian government to face up to addressing the [major changes](#) needed in the energy system that were not solved prior to the war, due to a lack of political will. Since the beginning of the year, the Ukrainian government has allocated 30 billion UAH to the [construction of fortifications](#). Some media outlets [cast aspersions on](#) the activities of the State Logistics Operator responsible for army procurements (food, ammunition, etc.).

INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **About negotiations.** 'There are no preconditions for negotiations'. Russia has set in motion a new mobilization rhetoric regarding the continuation of hostilities. Moscow is not interested in ending hostilities (to freeze them) including potential talks with Kyiv (a thought expressed by Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov). Different Russian officials (Dmitry [Peskov](#), Press Secretary to President Putin) have stated that there are no preconditions for negotiations with Kyiv. At the same time, Putin has [claimed](#) that Russia will always agree to hold talks 'but not in a format that would impose any schemes on Russia that do not reflect reality'. The [Russian Orthodox Church](#) also abandoned attempts to establish an Easter truce due to the position of Ukraine.
- **About the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.** Russia has not expressed any readiness whatsoever regarding the liberation of Ukrainian territories and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial

integrity. Sergei Lavrov has [said](#) that security guarantees in previous peace agreements signed by Russia regarding Ukraine have never applied to Crimea and Donbas.

- **Support for the combatants of the so-called ‘Special Military Operation’ (SMO). Russian political elites.** [Putin](#) has spread the narrative about Russian political parties having to support ‘combatants of the SMO’. These combatants are referred to as personnel resources of the Russian government.
- **Russia resists West’s plans.** Anti-western narratives about attempts made by the West to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia continue to circulate. However, in the Russian public space opinions are expressed (by Sergei [Shoigu](#), Russian Minister of Defence), claiming that all the goals of the SMO will be achieved. At the same time, the willingness of Western countries to increase the weapon’s output of their defence industries is fiercely [criticised](#). Russia is spreading long-established narratives through its official propagandist sources, claiming that ‘the West is [fighting](#) Russia with the help of Ukraine’. The adoption of the bill on US aid for Ukraine has evoked a [negative](#) response from Russia. Moscow claims the aid ‘will cause a prolonged confrontation’. According to official Russian narratives (spread by Sergei [Shoigu](#)), the US is deliberately dragging Ukraine into the war.
- **Russian Citizens support the President.** In Russia, narratives and data abound about the all-Russian support of Putin and his policies. According to the [data](#) provided by the Fund of Public Opinion, 8 out of 10 (80%) Russians tend to rather approve of the Russian President’s work. 79% of the respondents trust him.
- **‘Russia liberates Europe from Nazism’.** A considerable number of Russian internal narratives are dedicated to the victory of the USSR in WWII. Accordingly, informational parallels are actively being [drawn](#) between the so-called ‘SMO’ and the liberation of European countries from ‘the nazi ideology’.
- **Anti-European narratives.** ‘Europe is destroying Ukraine’. Through its propaganda channels Russia is disseminating stories about European heads of state and government fighting Russia through Ukraine.
- **Discrediting Ukrainian political leadership.** Russia (through Dmitry [Peskov](#)) continues to spread the narratives about President Zelenskiy losing his [legitimacy](#) because presidential elections have been postponed due to martial law. Furthermore the [narratives](#) are being circulated about ‘the genocide’ of the Ukrainian population due to the mobilization conducted ‘under the pressure of the West’. As is tradition, the Russian propaganda space is [circulating](#) narratives about corruption and embezzlement of Western military aid by the Ukrainian President’s team.
- **‘About victories of the Russian army and losses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine’.** Mobilisation narratives continue to be coined. The Kremlin (through Dmitry Peskov) has [announced](#) Russia’s victory in the so-called ‘SMO’. The Russians are endlessly [spreading](#) information about victories achieved with Russian weapons after destroying ‘Western equipment’. They also assert that that panic is growing among the Ukrainian military at the front (claimed by [Peskov](#)), which gives ‘confidence in Russia’s victory’. Sergei Shoigu has [claimed](#) that Russian troops have the initiative along the entire line of contact. Also, narratives are being pushed about the Russian army’s territorial gains in Ukraine. For example, since the beginning of the so-called ‘SMO’, 403 square kilometers of new Russian regions have been captured. Russia is invariably [spreading](#) propaganda about the ‘heroic deeds’ of the Russian military in the zone of the so-called ‘SMO’.
- **Shelling of Ukrainian energy infrastructure. ‘Retribution strikes’.** In April the Russian military [announced](#) that it had [launched](#) massive and group strikes with ‘high-precision weapons and drones on the fuel, energy, military and industrial complexes of Ukraine’ as well as ‘on foreign mercenaries’. These

large-scale missile strikes are justified as a ‘retribution for the attempts to inflict damage on oil, gas and energy facilities of Russia’.. At the same time, Russia denies carrying out attacks on civilian infrastructure or residential districts of Ukrainian cities.

- **About the vulnerability of energy objects (the ZNPP).** Russia [claims](#) in its official communications that it retains complete control over security at the ZNPP, while ‘Enerhodar has become the 31st nuclear city of our country’. Russia [accuses](#) Ukraine of launching drone attacks on the premises of the temporarily occupied nuclear power station.