

Ukraine Monthly Situation Report

April 2026

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- **In April, the Ukrainian side partially regained the initiative by using a large number of UAVs capable of striking targets 70–150 kilometres from the front line.** This disrupted the Russian army's logistics in the Donetsk region significantly, as Ukrainian UAVs began [patrolling the skies](#) over the Donetsk–Selidove and Donetsk–Mariupol corridors, as well as other important logistics routes. Ukrainian drones continued to destroy air defence and electronic warfare systems, taking out a significant amount of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) equipment and personnel in the process.
- **At the same time, the Russian army continued to advance on various sections of the front, deploying assault troops that suffered high casualties even before reaching Ukrainian positions.** By the end of April, the Russian army had lost [approximately 1,332,000](#) troops. In April, these losses were offset by AFRF reinforcements. The ceasefire announced by the Russian side for Easter applied only to airstrikes and missile-drone strikes; ground assaults and the use of drones continued along the line of contact.
- **The Russian army continues to attack Ukrainian settlements with cruise and ballistic missiles, aerial bombs, and attack drones.** In April, Russian forces attacked [Kyiv](#), [Lutsk](#), [Kharkiv](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Odesa](#), [Dnipro](#), [Rivne](#), [Kherson](#), [Mykolaiv](#), [Chernihiv](#), [Sumy](#), [Cherkasy](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), [Pavlohrad](#), [Nikopol](#), [Shostka](#), [Pryluky](#), [Bila Tserkva](#), [Sloviansk](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Korosten](#), [Hlukhiv](#), and other settlements. In March and April, Ukrainian air defence systems destroyed a record number of Russian air assault weapons. However, there was a shortage of resources to destroy ballistic missiles. This is why some air targets still reached their intended targets. The affected targets included transportation and energy infrastructure, residential buildings, educational institutions, ambulance crews and reservoir dams.
- **The Ukrainian Defence Forces struck several key Russian oil and gas facilities, and this massive destruction of oil refining and loading infrastructure significantly reduced Russia's export potential and prevented it from capitalising on rising global oil prices.** The targets included oil terminals in the ports of Ust-Luga, Primorsk, Novorossiysk and Feodosia; oil refineries in Tuapse, Kstovo, Syzran and Novokuybyshevsk; the Sivash, Rakushechnoe and Valery Graifer drilling platforms; the Krymskaya and Samara oil pumping stations; the Perm oil refinery and pumping station; the Gorky oil terminal; and several other facilities. In Tuapse and Perm, where the damage was most extensive, an environmental crisis arose because firefighters could not quickly extinguish the fires or contain the oil spills. The Ukrainian Defense Forces also destroyed or damaged several ships and [helicopters](#) in Russian territory.
- **Two prisoner-of-war exchanges took place in April.** The first, timed for Easter, occurred on 11 April, when [175 military personnel and 7 civilians](#) returned to Ukraine. On 24 April, [193 military personnel](#) returned to Ukraine, most of whom had previously been held in Chechnya.
- As part of [repatriation efforts](#), 1,000 bodies were returned to Ukraine on 9 April. According to the Russian government, these bodies belong to Ukrainian servicemen. Each body must undergo

identification so relatives can bury them properly. In turn, the bodies of 41 Russian servicemen were transferred to the Russian Federation.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- **Russia is systematically destroying Ukraine's cultural heritage and undermining its information space by targeting cultural sites, media outlets and cultural elites.** Since the start of the full-scale invasion, Russia has [killed](#) 349 artists and 137 media professionals, indicating a deliberate effort to destroy Ukraine's cultural and intellectual elite. As of April 2026, 1,723 cultural heritage sites and 2,524 cultural infrastructure facilities have been [damaged or destroyed](#), 518 of which have been completely destroyed. Russia has [attacked](#) media offices at least 72 times and television infrastructure 24 times across 12 regions, restricting the population's access to information. New strikes on cultural sites were recorded in April: a historic 19th-century estate was [destroyed](#) in the Kharkiv region on 7 April; cultural heritage sites, including an art museum, were damaged in Dnipro [on 15 April](#); and a dormitory of the music academy in Odesa was attacked, wounding five students and destroying part of the building.
- **The environmental consequences of Russia's actions are becoming systemic.** In the Sea of Azov, occupying authorities are [planning](#) a mass jellyfish harvest that threatens to disrupt the ecological balance and destroy fish stocks. Following a Russian strike on 27 April, an oil spill [occurred](#) in the Odesa region, spreading 700 metres along the Black Sea coast and harming wildlife. Total environmental damage from the war now [exceeds](#) 126 billion euros and includes large-scale contamination of land, water and air. In Crimea, a massive fuel [oil spill](#) has led to the mass death of birds and the poisoning of the marine ecosystem. Meanwhile, the occupying authorities are failing to take adequate response measures.
- **The occupation model of governance is accompanied by the systematic repression of the civilian population and the curtailment of their rights in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT).** In Rostov-on-Don, two Ukrainians detained in Mariupol were [sentenced](#) to 26 years in prison on charges of "terrorism" and "espionage". In Sevastopol, a former Ukrainian Armed Forces soldier was unlawfully [sentenced](#) to 18 years in prison for "treason". In Russia, two captured "Azov" fighters were each [sentenced](#) to 18 years, while another's sentence was increased to 29 years. The occupying authorities are [threatening](#) Mariupol residents with home confiscation for lacking Russian documents and have filed approximately 8,000 lawsuits seeking property seizure. Residents in the Zaporizhzhia region [remain](#) without mobile service, which makes it impossible to access emergency services and communicate. In Melitopol and Berdiansk, the collapse of the banking system has [blocked](#) payments for goods and access to funds, creating humanitarian difficulties.
- **Russia is intensifying the colonisation of the TOTs.** In the Kherson region, the occupying authorities are [developing](#) the Azov Sea coastline for commercial projects intended for Russians. Meanwhile, they are delaying the restoration of housing for locals, offering them only temporary and unsuitable living conditions. They are also transferring land and infrastructure to meet the needs of the military and displaced persons from Russia.
- **The occupation policy systematically involves children in military practices through deportation, militarisation and psychological pressure.** Since the start of the full-scale war, 699 children have been [killed](#), 2,457 have been wounded, and over 19,500 have been deported to Russia and Belarus. Some of these children are being held in camps or put up for adoption. Meanwhile, Ukraine has [repatriated](#) over 2,100 children. Europol has [identified](#) 45 deported children and gathered data on the routes they took, the individuals involved and the places where

they are being detained. In the TOT of the Kherson Region, the number of [cadet classes](#) has increased from 9 to 20 to prepare children for service in the Russian Federation's security forces. The constant presence of armed security personnel in schools [creates](#) an atmosphere of fear and control. The occupying authorities are [implementing](#) Russian educational standards involving the militarisation of education and ideological control over children. This includes drill training and military-patriotic courses. In the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, students are being [denied](#) deferments en masse and forcibly mobilised into the Russian Federation's army under the pretext of "data verification".

- **Russia's war against Ukraine is systematically endangering the lives of civilians.** According to Amnesty International, Russian attacks have [killed](#) at least 14,999 civilians and wounded 40,601 more. Strikes on densely populated areas and critical infrastructure show signs of war crimes. Since the start of the war, mines and explosive remnants of war have [affected](#) 1,431 people, including 147 children. Over 100,000 km² of Ukrainian territory [remains](#) potentially mined, posing a long-term threat to the population. Reports also document cases of torture, enforced disappearances and the detention of civilians and prisoners of war in inhumane conditions in the TOT. Concurrently, 619 cases of attacks on representatives of the Civilian-Military Coordination Commission have been [recorded](#) in the context of rising internal tensions amid the war.
- **Attacks on energy infrastructure systematically undermine basic living conditions, causing widespread power outages and psychological exhaustion among the population.** Russian strikes in April [caused](#) power outages in at least six regions, including Donetsk, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Odesa and Zaporizhzhia. In the Mykolaiv region, strict power rationing schedules were [implemented](#), supplying electricity for only 2 hours with outages lasting up to 6 hours due to grid damage. According to [sociological data](#), 51% of the population experienced peak emotional exhaustion in winter 2026 due to power outages, surpassing stress levels observed at the beginning of the large-scale invasion.
- **Russia is escalating its hybrid terror campaign against Ukraine and Europe.** In April, the Security Service of Ukraine [exposed](#) a State Border Guard Service agent who was collecting data on Ukrainian air defence systems, UAV units and energy facilities to plan strikes in the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions. The SBU also [detained](#) an IT specialist who created fake social media and financial accounts for Russian intelligence agencies to recruit spotters. The Security Service [detained](#) 4 more enemy agitators in various regions of Ukraine. Ukrainian and European law enforcement agencies [uncovered](#) an international Russian intelligence network [planning](#) contract killings, sabotage and terrorist attacks in Ukraine and EU countries. This network specifically targeted Ukrainian journalists, military personnel, pro-Ukrainian activists, and Russian opposition figures. Separately, an FSB agent was [arrested](#) in Odesa for planning the murder of a Special Operations Forces officer. Russian intelligence services have also stepped up the recruitment of children through [online games, Telegram, TikTok](#) and Discord. In the Kirovohrad and Odesa regions, attempted terrorist attacks at schools were [prevented](#). In Zakarpattia, a 15-year-old student who opened fire at a school was also [recruited](#) through an online game. Meanwhile, Russian propaganda has [disseminated](#) over 500 pieces of content to discredit Ukraine's defence industry cooperation with the West. It has [ramped up](#) a TikTok campaign featuring AI-generated videos promoting "peace at any cost" and territorial concessions.
- **Russia is using occupied territories to plunder Ukraine economically and illegally export resources.** Between January and April 2026, Russia's shadow grain fleet [illegally exported](#) goods from Ukraine's occupied ports nearly 50 times. In total, over 850,000 tonnes of grain were exported, primarily from Sevastopol, Mariupol, and Berdiansk.

- **In the spring of 2026, Russia sharply [intensified](#) its attacks on the Ukrainian railway.** Over 200 attacks were recorded in March alone, and since the start of the full-scale invasion, there have been about 5,000 strikes on railway infrastructure. These attacks have resulted in damage to over 25,000 facilities and the deaths of at least 39 railway workers.
- **Russia [poses](#) long-term risks to nuclear safety in Ukraine and Europe.** On 26 April, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant lost its external power supply for the 15th time since the occupation began due to the disconnection of the "Ferosplavna-1" line. The plant operated on backup diesel generators for over an hour, once again increasing the risk of nuclear and radiation accidents.

RUSSIAN NARRATIVES AND INFORMATION WARFARE

- **About negotiations and "peace" on exclusively Russian terms.** Traditionally, the Russian Foreign Ministry states that Moscow is prepared for both negotiations and continued warfare. They claim that the "[ball is in the court](#)" of the West and Kyiv. Lavrov [indicates](#) that resuming negotiations is not the top priority and emphasises that the West has turned Ukraine into a "trigger for a global threat". While Russia maintains an appearance of openness to dialogue, it insists on an agenda that amounts to Ukrainian capitulation. The "Kyiv regime" and EU countries are accused of allegedly lacking the political will for peace ([Zakharova](#)). Further escalation is evident: on 21 April, Putin announced the establishment of a security zone along the border with Ukraine. "We know how this will all end," [Putin said](#) regarding the outcome of the special military operation, adding that the "goals" will be achieved. Putin reportedly agrees to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but such talks can only occur in the final stages of the agreement. ([Lavrov](#))
- **Russia is using the war in Ukraine as part of its "unity" policy.** Putin [stated](#) that Russia's unity is necessary to achieve the goals of the special military operation. Russian officials constantly express anti-European rhetoric in the context of support for Ukraine ([Shoigu](#)). However, the domestic situation is increasingly geared toward a long war, with efforts to encourage recruitment and expand and extend financial incentives for contract soldiers.
- **Nuclear signals and the logic of escalation.** In April, Russia continued to use the nuclear issue as a political tool by arguing that its response to Western actions is inevitable. Russian sources [issued warnings](#) that the deployment of nuclear weapons near Russian borders, particularly in Finland, would lead to a new escalation. Some statements directly linked Western actions to the risk of a broader military and political crisis. President Alexander Lukashenko stated that Russia will use nuclear weapons to [protect](#) Belarus.
- **Justification of strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure.** In April 2026, the Russian military and media [explained](#) the strikes by focusing on the phrase "strikes on military or dual-use facilities". Reports [emphasised](#) the destruction of aviation industry enterprises, drone production facilities, and warehouses, as well as gas and energy infrastructure facilities that allegedly supply Ukraine's military-industrial complex. These strikes are taking place against the backdrop of Russia's preparations for a spring/summer offensive.
- **Denial of Ukrainian agency and identity.** In April 2026, Russian officials continued to describe Ukraine not as an independent nation but as a territory where the "natural rights" of Russian-speaking, Orthodox and Russian culture-affiliated groups were allegedly "violated". Lavrov explicitly [stated](#) that the Ukrainian Constitution is being "spat upon", and that the Russian language is effectively banned in education, culture, the media, and even daily life. Following this logic, language and church issues are elevated to the status of key prerequisites for any

settlement. This is an attempt to impose the thesis that Ukraine has lost its legitimacy as a modern political community because it has allegedly renounced its "true" cultural and religious foundations. This is precisely why Russian discourse so often bundles the language issue, the church, "Nazism" and the "root causes of the conflict" into a single package.

- **Discrediting the Ukrainian political leadership.** In April, the main line of attack against the Ukrainian leadership was a combination of three arguments: inability to negotiate, foreign control, and extremism/neo-Nazism. After the Easter ceasefire, Zakharova [stated](#) that Kyiv had not demonstrated "political will for peace" and that Zelenskyy and his allies were showing "complete inability to negotiate". In other comments that same month, the Ukrainian leadership was called a "[neo-Nazi regime](#)", and support for it was described as dragging external actors into the conflict. According to Lavrov, Satanism is currently "[flourishing](#)" in the West and Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made this statement at a reception marking Orthodox Easter. This rhetoric serves a practical purpose: if Ukraine's leadership is portrayed as illegitimate and incapable of negotiating, then Kyiv's refusal to accept Russian terms is not presented as a rational political position. Instead, it is seen as proof of the "regime's extremist nature". This creates a propaganda justification for continuing the war, despite Russia's declared readiness for negotiations.
- **Russia's policy on the TOT/the so-called "territorial realities".** In April, the Russian Foreign Ministry reiterated that "territorial realities" are a [mandatory](#) element of any settlement. Lavrov explicitly speaks of the need to "respect the will of the residents of Crimea, Donbas and Novorossiya", and in other statements, these territories are described as places where Russia is prosecuting the "Kyiv regime's" crimes under its own criminal code. Thus, the occupation is presented not as a temporary state of war but as a completed political and legal transformation of the region.
- **Official internationalisation of Russian military recruitment.** In April 2026, Russia enshrined the involvement of foreigners in the war not only in practice but also in law. On 3 April, regulations [took effect](#) that stipulate that foreigners and stateless individuals who serve under contract or participate in combat operations as part of the AFRF can no longer be deported administratively from Russia. This is a clear institutional signal that a foreigner's participation in the war on the side of the Russian Federation is grounds for legal protection within the Russian system. At the same time, regional and municipal authorities explicitly [extended](#) financial incentives to foreign citizens in April. For instance, in [Rostov-on-Don](#), one-time payments were offered upon signing an initial contract with the Ministry of Defence, not only to city residents, but to foreigners as well. This indicates that the internationalisation of recruitment has transitioned from a covert practice to an openly administered component of the Russian Federation's mobilisation policy.