

Ukraine Monthly Situation Report February 2026

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) continue offensive operations along key sectors of the front in the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv regions, while employing infiltration tactics using small groups moving on foot or on motorcycles/quad bikes. Armoured vehicles are used less frequently. Assault operations are accompanied by massive shelling and air attacks on frontline towns. On 27 February, in particular, shelling of Kostiantynivka, where thousands of civilians still reside, involving the use of phosphorus munitions was recorded. **Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Defence Forces are conducting [successful offensive operations in Zaporizhzhia region](#), breaking through Russian defensive lines near Stepanivka.** This advance may disrupt Russia's 2026 campaign in Zaporizhzhia, which aimed for the occupation of Orikhiv and a push toward the outskirts of the regional centre. By the end of February, [total Russian military losses](#) exceeded 1,266,000 personnel.
- **The AFRF continue to carry out strikes against Ukrainian towns and cities using cruise missiles, aerial bombs and kamikaze drones.** In December, towns and cities under attack included [Kyiv](#), [Kharkiv](#) (where, for the first time since 2022, the city was attacked by a fibre-optic [FPV drone](#)), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Kropyvnytskyi](#), [Odesa](#), [Mykolaiv](#), [Dnipro](#), [Kherson](#), [Sumy](#), [Trostianets](#), [Konotop](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), [Nikopol](#), [Burshtyn](#), [Vilniansk](#), [Komyshuvakha](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Sloviansk](#), [Druzhkivka](#), [Lozova](#), [Bohodukhiv](#), [Yahotyn](#) and other settlements. Throughout February, energy infrastructure remained the primary target, with the pace of destruction [exceeding](#) that of all previous years of the full-scale war.
- **The drone component of warfare continues to evolve across Ukraine, Russia and their partners.** In February, Russian forces were observed for the first time using a "Geran"-type strike drone as [a carrier for an FPV drone](#). If the experiment proves successful, this combination may be scaled up, allowing FPV drones to deliver additional strikes, including against air defence systems.
- **Two developments in February significantly complicated communications and command within Russian forces.** On 4–5 February, following an agreement between the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence and SpaceX, [illegal Starlink satellite terminals](#) operating in Ukraine (including in territories occupied by Russian forces) were disabled. This significantly undermined Russia's ability to use such terminals for frontline communications and for drone navigation targeting Ukrainian critical infrastructure. Several days later, Russian authorities created additional problems for their troops [by slowing down the Telegram messaging platform](#), which is widely used by soldiers of both armies for coordination. Deprived of convenient means of communication, Russian forces were forced to rely on less practical and more expensive solutions such as Wi-Fi bridges, a search for Ukrainian Starlink terminals, and even recruiting agents in Ukraine to register Starlink terminals and transfer them to use by the AFRF.

- On 5 February, another [prisoner of war exchange](#) took place: 150 Ukrainian military personnel and seven civilian detainees returned to Ukraine. On 26 February, the bodies of 1,000 fallen Ukrainian [military personnel were repatriated](#).

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- As a result of Russian attacks, at least 686 children [have been killed](#) and more than 2,300 [injured](#), accompanied by the [destruction](#) of 1,700 schools and hospitals across the country. Every third Ukrainian child (nearly 2.6 million) [has been](#) displaced, while almost 20,000 minors [have been](#) illegally deported to Russia and Belarus for militarisation and ideological indoctrination. Ukraine has so far [managed to return](#) only about 2,000 abducted children.
- Russia is systematically transforming the education system in occupied territories into a tool of wartime propaganda through the forced militarisation and ideological indoctrination of Ukrainian children. Occupiers [introduce](#) ideological school subjects about "Russian values" and [involve](#) the church to promote the perception of war as a "spiritual duty". Educational institutions are simultaneously [used](#) as military headquarters and detention facilities for civilians. Children are [subject](#) to [militarisation](#) from preschool age through special toys, training in shooting and drone operation, and direct recruitment [propaganda](#) for contract service in the AFRF under the guise of "patriotic education". In [Crimea](#) and the [Donetsk region](#), students are forced to produce protective equipment for the frontlines. Parents resisting Russian educational programmes face [threats](#) of loss of parental rights or deportation of their children. Despite the critical state of infrastructure, students [are compelled](#) to attend lectures on the "unity of Russia" in [unheated facilities](#), while the cost of fuel for generators is shifted directly onto families.
- Russian attacks stimulate the expansion of evacuation measures but simultaneously increase risks to family unity and highlight failures in support for IDPs. In the Donetsk region, more than 200 children [remain](#) in settlements under mandatory evacuation orders (41 of them in active combat zones); 87 children were evacuated within a week. Human rights activists [are calling for](#) a veto of Law No. 4775-IX, warning of the risks of effectively forced evacuation of civilians, family separations, expanded grounds for termination of parental rights, militarisation of procedures and possible use of property without clear compensation guarantees. Experts also [note](#) the absence of a unified strategy for IDP integration and coordination, which deepens housing and economic vulnerability among displaced people.
- Over four years of the full-scale war, more than 2,500 environmental incidents [have been recorded](#), with damages exceeding UAH 6.3 quadrillion. Military operations and related fires [have generated](#) 311 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent emissions, causing USD 57 billion in climate damage. Ukraine [has lost](#) control of 272,000 hectares of protected marine areas due to the war. Russia's energy attacks have forced civilians to rely on generators, further [polluting](#) the air with toxic emissions and greenhouse gases.
- Russia is deliberately destroying Ukraine's cultural heritage and cultural elite. Over four years of full-scale aggression, 1,685 cultural heritage sites and 2,483 cultural infrastructure facilities have been [destroyed](#) or damaged (507 completely destroyed). 35,482 museum artifacts have been stolen, while over 1.7 million remain in occupied territories under threat. Direct damage to the cultural sector is estimated at USD 4.2 billion, while total sectoral losses exceed USD 31 billion. The war has [claimed the lives](#) of 346 artists and 132 Ukrainian and foreign media professionals, constituting a systematic attack on freedom of expression and cultural continuity. As of February 2026, the verified archive "The Unwritten" [contains](#) 289 names of

literary figures killed during the Russian–Ukrainian war, documenting the scale of generational loss and attempts to erase their voices from Ukraine's cultural space.

- **In February, Ukraine marked the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion and 12 years of resistance to the occupation of Crimea**, which is the date marking the beginning of systematic Russian repression and attempts to forcibly eliminate independence. Since then, the aggressor has [committed](#) over 211,000 war crimes, [killing](#) more than 15,000 civilians (including over 684 children) and 55,000 Ukrainian [defenders](#), while direct infrastructure damage has [reached](#) USD 195 billion, including the destruction of 14% of housing, thousands of hospitals and schools. Russian terror has [triggered](#) a global demographic crisis, with Ukraine [losing](#) around 10 million people due to migration and occupation, fertility rates falling below one child, and six million refugees remaining abroad.
- **Russia has launched a large-scale campaign of internal terror and destabilisation in Ukraine.** Terrorist attacks coordinated from Russia using improvised explosives targeted police stations and military recruitment centres in [Lviv](#), [Dnipro](#), [Mykolaiv](#) and [Kolomyia](#), killing one police officer and injuring dozens. Russian intelligence services [recruit](#) perpetrators remotely via Telegram, targeting financially vulnerable individuals and minors to carry out [car bombings](#) and attacks on public facilities. Simultaneously, a wave of more than 2,000 anonymous bomb threats [swept across](#) 22 regions of Ukraine, disrupting the operation of schools, banks, and critical institutions. Internationally, Russian propaganda [uses](#) AI and fabricated reports disguised as Western media to discredit Ukrainians ahead of [the Olympic Games](#).

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- **A KIIS poll conducted in late January–early February shows the dynamics in [public attitudes toward state institutions](#).** Trust in the President remains stable at 61%. Among those who trust the President, 25% fully trust him, while 36% rather trust him (among the 33% who do not trust him, 17% do not trust him at all and 16% rather do not trust him). Among those who fully trust Volodymyr Zelenskyy, most would like to see him remain President after the war, while those who "rather trust" him tend to be more critical of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and are dissatisfied with certain actions and decisions.
- A Razumkov Centre survey conducted in February 2026 shows that the results of infrastructure attacks have primarily [affected trust](#) in local authorities. **46.5% of respondents believe local authorities bear responsibility for prolonged outages of electricity, water and heating following Russian strikes**, while 20.5% blame service providers. The survey also found that 75.2% of Ukrainians do not believe Russia would comply with a peace agreement if one were concluded.
- **A European Business Association survey conducted in February indicated [growing pessimism among entrepreneurs](#).** The key negative factors cited are shortages of qualified personnel (78%) and attacks on the energy system (82%). Around 39% of companies expect the economic situation to worsen by the end of the year.
- **According to the updated RDNA5 report published in late February, [the scale of damage and recovery needs for Ukraine has reached record levels](#).** Energy sector reconstruction alone will require more than USD 90 billion over the next decade, placing significant pressure on the state budget and increasing dependence on external borrowing.



- In February 2026, the security situation for Ukrainian civilians was characterised by a combination of large-scale infrastructure attacks and targeted terrorist incidents. Key threats include:
 - **Double-tap.** Remote detonation of explosives after emergency services arrive. The goal is to undermine trust in emergency calls and to demoralise police.
 - **Energy terror.** Systematic destruction of thermal power plants/combined heat and power plants during the winter period, resulting in a lack of heat and water. The goal is to break public resilience, spread distrust in the government, and ensure the growth of those who advocate "peace at any price".
 - **Attacks on logistics.** Increasing drone strikes on transport (buses) carrying civilian workers of critical infrastructure. The goal is to provoke labour shortages and hinder rapid repair capacity. Emerging attacks on passenger trains. The goal is to undermine trust in rail transport and population mobility potential.
 - **Information-sabotage threats.** Rising cases of recruitment of minors through messaging platforms to carry out arson and sabotage in the rear. The goal is to create frustration and panic and demonstrate the helplessness of law enforcement.

RUSSIAN NARRATIVES AND INFORMATION WARFARE

- **Negotiations and "peace" on Russian terms.** Russia is again promoting references to a peace concept agreed in Anchorage, without providing details ([Lavrov](#)). Repeated narratives stress Russia's interests in preventing the "deployment of any threatening weapons on Ukrainian territory" and guaranteeing the protection of "Russian and Russian-speaking people" ([Lavrov](#)). Russia's public messaging frames negotiations as possible but without "inflated expectations", with a long process in which Russia's key demands remain unchanged ([Peskov](#)). European capitals are portrayed as "pushing for war" and therefore should not participate in the process ([Peskov](#)). Alternative peace proposals are dismissed as "distorted" by Kyiv and European "patrons" to maintain the narrative that only Russia's plan is legitimate and everything else is manipulation. ([Lavrov](#)). Communication emphasises the "working" nature of meetings without concessions and complexity as an excuse for lack of progress. ([Lavrov](#)). In February, Russia promoted the idea that any foreign forces/contingents in Ukraine pose a threat to Russia, which Moscow would treat as a legitimate target. ([Zakharova](#)).
- In February, the religious discourse from the Russian Orthodox Church continued reinforcing the narrative of a "values war", where peace/compromise with the West is undesirable because the West represents a civilisation that "normalises sin" ([Patriarch Kirill](#)).
- **Nuclear signals/threats and escalation rhetoric.** Russia continues to use nuclear rhetoric as a tool of deterrence and blackmail against the West, while normalising public discussions about nuclear deterrence in Europe. Statements include claims that Russia would use nuclear weapons if the fate of the country were at stake ([Medvedev](#)). At the same time, calls for the use of nuclear weapons continue (the fact that Russia does not dare to use nuclear weapons is a sin), with EU countries being named as the main adversary. ([Karaganov](#), Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy). Russia has also accused France and the United Kingdom of allegedly transferring a nuclear warhead to Ukraine (Naryshkin).
- **Delegitimisation of Ukraine and its government ("regime", "coup", "root causes").** Traditional Russian narratives, the position of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([Lavrov](#)) in February regarding Ukraine: Ukraine is portrayed as not a fully-fledged entity, but rather a



"regime" that emerged as a result of a "coup"; this is presented as the key "root cause" that must be "eliminated". The position of the State Duma in February is to constantly discredit the Ukrainian leadership; this serves as an argument as to why negotiations "cannot be equal" or why any of Ukraine's demands should not be considered. ([Volodin](#))

- **TOTs / "territorial realities" as a precondition for "settlement."** In February, Russia publicly stated that "settlement" refers to talks with territory as the main subject of negotiation, tied to "the demands of the Russian Federation", and that the negotiation process itself is closed and controlled, with a minimum of public details to avoid leaks ("silence regime"). In this framework, the territorial component is presented not as a subject of compromise, but as a mandatory acceptance of the "realities" that Moscow is promoting as a basic condition for agreements ([Peskov](#)). Territorial demands are not negotiable as a compromise. The key issues in the negotiations are territories, and they are linked to "the demands of the Russian federation" ([Peskov](#)).
- **"Russian-speaking rights" as a prerequisite for the peace plan / imposing a "humanitarian" bloc as a condition.** The negotiation track is legitimised by the thesis of "Russian-speaking rights", which the Russian Federation promotes as an essential component of its plans ([Lavrov](#)). Russia removes the possibility of compromise in the linguistic and religious sphere, declaring it "not a subject for negotiation" ([Lavrov](#)).
- **Justification of strikes on energy and civilian infrastructure ("response to terrorist attacks", "objectives achieved").** Russia systematically presents its attacks on Ukraine's energy sector as a "response" to "terrorist attacks" and normalises the thesis that "the objectives have been achieved", thereby shifting responsibility for the humanitarian consequences ([Russian Ministry of Defence](#)).