

Ukraine Monthly Situation Report March 2026

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- **In March, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) launched their main offensive in the Donetsk and Kharkiv regions, as well as in other parts of Ukraine.** The number of assaults has increased in the Dobropillia and Huliaipole sectors, leading to a sharp rise in Russian army casualties. In some areas of the Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions, meanwhile, the Ukrainian Defence Forces have launched counteroffensives. As of the end of March, the Russian army has lost [approximately 1,300,000](#) servicemen.
- **The Russian army continues to attack Ukrainian settlements with cruise and ballistic missiles, aerial bombs and attack drones.** The following settlements were among those struck in March: [Kyiv](#), [Kharkiv](#), [Chernihiv](#), [Zhytomyr](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Odesa](#), [Mykolaiv](#), [Dnipro](#), [Kherson](#), [Ivano-Frankivsk](#), [Ternopil](#), [Vinnytsia](#), [Sumy](#), [Hlukhiv](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), [Nikopol](#), [Voskresensk](#), [Izmail](#), [Starokostiantyniv](#), [Kramatorsk](#) and [Sloviansk](#). The Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions, which are generally considered to be in the rear and the safest among Ukrainian regions, were also shelled in March.
- **The new tactic involves attacks that can last for many hours, both day and night, paralysing life in cities. Energy and transportation infrastructure remain priorities. In particular, attack drones have repeatedly struck passenger trains in various regions. Several river dams have also been damaged, primarily in the Donetsk region. This will complicate the water supply during the warmer months.** Attacks on the water supply system are expected to [intensify](#) over the coming months. Residential infrastructure has also been affected; maternity hospitals have been attacked three times this month in Ivano-Frankivsk, Odesa and Sloviansk. On 24 March, sites on the [UNESCO](#) World Heritage List were shelled in Lviv.
- **The Ukrainian Defence Forces have struck several key facilities in Russia's oil and gas industry. These include oil terminals in the ports of Ust-Luga and Primorsk in the Leningrad Oblast; the [Yaroslavl Oil Refinery](#), one of the largest in Russia; the [Kirishi Oil Refinery](#); and several other facilities.** These attacks have significantly impacted Russia's ability to export oil and petroleum products amid rising prices due to hostilities in the Middle East. Additionally, the Ukrainian Defence Forces are destroying valuable Russian air defence systems nearly every night in Russia and the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) of Ukraine. This opens up strategic targets in the Russian rear to Ukrainian drones and missiles. For instance, an A-50 long-range airborne early warning and control aircraft was [struck](#) during an attack on an aircraft repair plant in Staraya Russa on 17 March. Strikes were also carried out against defence industry enterprises in Taganrog, Bryansk, Togliatti, Chapayevsk, Cherepovets, Smolensk, Vyborg and Nizhnekamsk.
- **Russia's war against Ukraine continues to spill over into Europe.** For instance, on 23 March, following a massive missile and drone attack on Ukraine, the [Isaccea–Vulcanesti cross-border power line in Moldova was shut down](#). If this strategy proves successful, we can expect to see it expanded with the use of FPV drones to inflict additional damage, particularly against air defence systems. On 17 and 31 March, Russian drones entered Moldovan airspace. Additionally,

throughout March, drones (either Russian or Ukrainian ones diverted off course by Russia) entered the airspace of Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- **Russian strikes are increasingly disrupting the daily lives of civilians by targeting transportation, housing and critical infrastructure.** On 11 March, a Russian drone [struck](#) a passenger minibus in Kherson, injuring 20 people, including a teenager, and destroying the bus. In the Kharkiv region, the Proliska humanitarian mission has [suspended](#) social transportation services due to constant attacks on civilian transport. Previous strikes on an ambulance and a scheduled bus resulted in the deaths of medical personnel and three civilians, as well as injuries to several others. In the Zaporizhzhia region, Russia is [carrying out](#) massive shelling — up to 800–971 strikes per day — on dozens of settlements. They are using aircraft, UAVs, MLRS and artillery. This has [resulted](#) in civilian injuries and widespread destruction of housing and infrastructure. In Chernihiv, a high school was [destroyed](#), and approximately 24,000 books were lost in the library. In Lviv, a drone attack [injured](#) over 30 people and damaged residential buildings, critical infrastructure and architectural landmarks. From 26 to 27 March, Russia [attacked](#) a Naftogaz gas production facility in the Poltava region. The attack caused the facility to shut down, resulting in a fire and cutting off gas supplies to over 5,000 people.
- **The Russian Federation is intentionally targeting Ukrainian children through killings, deportations, forced displacement and militarisation in the TOT.** Since the start of the full-scale invasion, 688 children have been [killed](#), 2,392 have been wounded and at least 23 cases of sexual violence have been documented. Thousands of educational and medical facilities have also been destroyed, including 4,505 educational institutions and 2,551 medical facilities. In March, the forced evacuation of children [began](#) in certain areas of Sloviansk due to constant shelling following an attack that [killed](#) 4 people and wounded 20, including a teenager. In the TOT, particularly in Crimea, cases of missing children are being [recorded](#) without proper investigation, which increases the risk of human trafficking. The occupying authorities are [recruiting](#) up to 20,000 teenagers to participate in Zarnitsa 2.0, a military-patriotic game that includes combat training. Schoolchildren are systematically [selected](#) and prepared for service in the AFRF through educational activities and competitions under military supervision. Educational institutions are [forced](#) to use the Sferum/MAX messenger app to digitally surveil children, parents and teachers. In Donetsk Oblast, kindergartens facing the threat of having their electricity and heat cut off [forced](#) parents to cover the costs themselves, shifting the responsibility from the occupying authorities to families.
- **Russia is intensifying its campaign to destabilise Ukraine from within by combining espionage, intimidation, and information and psychological operations.** In Kyiv, a Russian espionage network was [exposed](#). Under the coordination of the Russian General Staff, the network had been planning to assassinate military personnel and volunteers using explosives, weapons and access to classified databases. In Zakarpattia, Russian special services posing as law enforcement officers and "activists" [threatened](#) representatives of the Hungarian community in an attempt to stoke tensions between Ukraine and Hungary. On 30 March, Ukraine was [hit](#) with 1,216 anonymous bomb threats targeting government buildings, educational institutions, banks and businesses. This attack paralysed operations and is considered yet another Russian cyberattack.
- **Russian attacks on the railway are disrupting logistics and turning civilian transportation into a zone of constant risk.** Russia regularly struck trains and infrastructure in March. Train drivers were

[injured](#) when a commuter train was hit in the Kharkiv region. On the Odesa railway, a conductor was [killed](#) and a passenger was injured during an evacuation. Massive drone attacks have [damaged](#) locomotives, depots, stations and port infrastructure, causing power outages and destroying facilities. On 31 March, a Russian strike on Sloviansk [damaged](#) the locomotive depot and train station, injuring employees. One employee is in critical condition. Since early March, at least 18 strikes on the railway have been [recorded](#), damaging over 40 facilities, including passenger cars. In response to growing threats, emergency train stops and passenger evacuations have been [implemented](#) along the routes. These measures have caused delays and complicated population movement.

- **Russia is deliberately destroying water and energy infrastructure, which creates cross-border environmental threats and risks a humanitarian crisis for civilians.** An oil spill occurred in the Dniester River after Russia struck the Dniester Hydroelectric Station in Novodnistrovsk. Moldova then [declared](#) an environmental emergency and [issued](#) warnings about excessive pollution levels and the threat to its water supply. On 23 March, Russian aerial bombs [destroyed](#) the Raihorodok Dam on the Siverskyi Donets River. This rendered it impossible to fill the Siverskyi Donets–Donbas Canal. Consequently, the Donetsk region now has [water reserves](#) for only about two weeks. The region's cities have been forced to implement water rationing [schedules](#).
- **The occupiers are systematically destroying Ukrainian culture and its cultural heritage.** The occupying administration in Yalta is [promoting](#) illegal construction on Polikurovsky Hill. This development is destroying the historical environment and causing particular damage to the protected areas near Chekhov's White Dacha and the site of architect Krasnov's demolished house. Since the start of the full-scale war, Russia has [killed](#) 346 artists and 135 media workers. On 24 March, a drone attack [damaged](#) part of the Bernardine Monastery Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Lviv, as well as the Prison on Łacki Street museum. On 1 March, a missile strike [damaged](#) a dormitory and the main building of the National Kotlyarevsky University of Arts in Kharkiv.
- **Russia is systematically restructuring the TOT according to a colonial governance model.** Russia is [restructuring](#) the occupied territories to support its logistics and resource plundering efforts, investing in infrastructure such as roads, railways, and ports, as well as coal, grain and mineral extraction. Meanwhile, millions in unpaid wages are [accumulating](#) at seized Ukrainian enterprises, and strategic facilities, including the Berdiansk port and industrial plants, are falling into disrepair. In [Mariupol](#) and [Crimea](#), occupying forces are encouraging migrants from Central Asia to settle in the area. This displaces local residents and allows the occupying forces to exploit the newcomers as cheap labour and a reserve for mobilisation. Digital control in the TOT is [intensifying](#) through the blocking of social media and VPNs, as well as the monitoring of Telegram groups. Meanwhile, schools are being forced to use Russian messaging apps to collect data on students, parents, and teachers. Food shortages in Oleshky are [worsening](#) due to isolation and a lack of supplies. The occupation administration has distanced itself from solving these problems. In the Kherson region, Ukrainian land is being [transferred](#) to the Russian military. In Mariupol, utility disconnections are being [used](#) to force property owners to re-register, which will lead to the seizure of their homes. Compensation for destroyed houses has [become](#) a corrupt scheme. In Berdiansk, men are being [detained](#) and forced to sign contracts with the Russian military. In the Kherson region, raids and detentions are being [carried out](#) to **eliminate the pro-Ukrainian population.**

RUSSIAN NARRATIVES AND INFORMATION WARFARE

- **About negotiations and "peace" on exclusively Russian terms.** In March, Russia showed no signs of moving towards a compromise. On 3 March, Sergey Lavrov explicitly [rejected](#) the idea of a ceasefire while Europe continued to supply Ukraine with weapons. Later in March, the Russian Foreign Ministry linked "peace" to a new world order that would take into account Russia's interests, "the rights of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine," "territorial realities" and "the right of peoples to self-determination." This so-called peace was not proposed as a mutual compromise but rather as an acceptance of Russian demands. D. Medvedev [stated](#) that he wants to dispel the illusions of "all those who link the possibility of resolving the conflict" to V. Zelenskyy. Russia will not recognise Zelenskyy as a "legitimate party to the negotiations, much less a signatory to an act of capitulation". Negotiations are possible only if the outcome enshrines the Russian Federation's core political gains: restrictions on Ukraine's domestic policy, recognition of the occupation, and the special status of the Russian language as an international condition. Notably, anti-Ukrainian statements about Ukraine's alleged "terrorist nature" are being widely [promoted](#) in various official Belarusian propaganda sources.
- **Nuclear signals and the logic of escalation.** In March, the nuclear issue did not disappear from the Russian Federation's official discourse. On 4 March, M. Zakharova [brought the topic](#) of nuclear weapons in Europe back into the public sphere, emphasising the need for Russia to "take this into account." In other words, she maintained the framework of escalatory [deterrence](#) against the West. This aligns with the message that Russian officials promoted in late February: any increase in Western military involvement could escalate the conflict. The actions of the United States, the United Kingdom and France — all of which possess nuclear weapons — are provoking an arms race. Russia is [cultivating](#) an atmosphere of nuclear uncertainty to pressure European capitals and deter aid to Ukraine.
- **Justification of strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure.** In March, TASS and the Russian Ministry of Defence [continued](#) their usual pattern of legitimising the strikes by [presenting](#) them as a "response" to alleged Ukrainian "terrorist attacks". They made no mention of the [shelling](#) of churches in Lviv, which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but rather of alleged military-industrial complex facilities, fuel and energy infrastructure, transport infrastructure and airfield infrastructure that supposedly support the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Russian Ministry of Defence's March summary reports feature the standard formula of massive, combined retaliatory strikes, absolving Russia of responsibility for the humanitarian consequences and normalising attacks on critical infrastructure.
- **Denial of Ukrainian agency and identity.** In their March statements, S. Lavrov and the Russian Foreign Ministry once again employed the old narrative of a "coup" in Kyiv, "putschists", and the allegedly unaccounted-for "right to self-determination" of [Crimea](#) and Donbas. They [describe](#) Ukrainian statehood as having an "illegitimate" origin and the occupied territories as having already seceded from the Ukrainian political body. This logic directly serves to deny the existence of a fully formed Ukrainian political nation and Ukraine's right to regain control of its territories. S. Lavrov constantly [promotes](#) the idea that control over Ukrainian identity is a requirement of the so-called "Nazi regime". The issue of the Russian language and the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (and the growing role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine) is constantly emphasised as a supposedly mandatory condition for negotiations. The Ukrainian government is labelled a "junta", meaning it is constantly delegitimised.
- **Russia's policy on the TOT/ the so-called "territorial realities".** In March, Russia continued to [argue](#) that any future settlement must consider "territorial realities" and "the right of peoples to

determine their own destiny". In an official briefing by the Russian Foreign Ministry made public in late March, this formula was again combined with "the rights of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine," deliberately merging the territorial and humanitarian-linguistic issues into a single negotiating condition. The 12th anniversary of the so-called Crimean "referendum" was [marked](#) as the anniversary of Crimea's "reunification" with Russia. This suggests that Russian sources continue to normalise the annexation of Crimea as a finished and legitimate act. Propagandistically, Russia frames the occupation of Ukrainian territory as the "reappropriation" of Crimea's identity and denial of its Ukrainian affiliation. Aksyonov and Zakharova present the "Crimean Spring" as the defence of "our identity," a symbol of "unity" and "patriotism." This frames the annexation as a natural return to the Russian political and cultural sphere rather than an occupation. The propaganda [narrative](#) claiming that "the return of Crimea has become a key 'point of consolidation' for Russia and Russian society" is gaining traction. According to research, the overwhelming majority of Russians view the consequences of Crimea's annexation positively.

- **Discrediting the Ukrainian army.** In March 2026, Russian officials and state media repeatedly used the following narratives to discredit the Ukrainian army. The Armed Forces of Ukraine are "terrorists" who deliberately target civilians and civilian infrastructure and are "[Nazis](#)". During a 12 March briefing by the Russian Foreign Ministry, Zakharova [described](#) Ukraine's actions as alleged "terrorist acts against civilians".
- **Official internationalisation of Russian military recruitment.** The Russian army is signing contracts with foreign mercenaries, and politicians have begun [discussing](#) the internationalisation of the Russian war. Upon request from other states, Vladimir Putin [signed](#) a law prohibiting the extradition of foreign citizens who are contract soldiers in the AFRF and have participated in combat operations.