



Situation Room

**** UKRAINE CRISIS ****

Period under review: from 11 March 2022 to 13 March 2022.

[This report is based on publicly available sources to describe a changing situation. Information subject to change.]

Situation analysis recap:

- On 11 March, Russian troops launched new attacks on the western part of Ukraine, where more and more people have since taken refuge. Russia has bombed the western Ukrainian city of Dnipro for the first time, and new Russian attacks are being reported from the Ukrainian cities of Ivano-Frankivsk, Luck and the capital, Kyiv. Attacks have also continued in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, where, according to the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, 1582 civilians have died since the invasion began. He called it "the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet". Official Ukrainian sources have also warned of the possibility that Belarus may join the Russian offensive, but Belarus continues to reject the accusations. Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, said in a statement that the US had no evidence of involvement of Belarusian troops, but did not rule out the possibility. The US has also strongly denied Russian accusations that the US is developing biological or chemical weapons in Ukraine. This issue was even raised at the UN Security Council emergency meeting where some members expressed their concerns that Russia could be using this accusation as a pretext for its own use of such weapons in Ukraine.
- Also on 11 March, at a meeting of the Russian Security Council, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, approved the possibility that around 16 000 pro-Russian rebels, presumably most of them from the Middle East, could join the fighting in Ukraine. The idea was welcomed by Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, who said that the US also supports sending mercenaries to fight alongside Kyiv's army in Ukraine. On the same day, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced a fourth package of sanctions against Russia. French President, Emmanuel Macron, added that a fourth package of sanctions does not rule out anything, even a ban on Russian gas imports and the exclusion of key Russian banks like Sberbank and the energy conglomerate Gazprom from the SWIFT international banking system.
- On 12 March, Russian forces continued bombing the Ukrainian cities of Mykolaiv, Dnipro, Krivograd and Mariupol, where bombs also hit a mosque where around 80 people, including children, sought shelter. On the same day, the Ukrainian army announced that Russian forces had seized the eastern outskirts of Mariupol, intensifying armed pressure on the strategic port in the Sea of Azov, which could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula. On the same day, Ukraine reported that Russian soldiers fired on civilians as they were attempting to evacuate the village of Peremoga, near Kyiv. The Russian side claims that Ukrainian forces are planting mines in residential areas and destroying key infrastructure, including roads and bridges, leaving civilians without electricity, food and water. Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, said in a video address that he is confident of a Ukrainian victory. He also said that Russian forces can only gain Kyiv if they level it to the ground by bombing it.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and French President, Emmanuel Macron, held a 75-minute telephone conversation on 12 March. The three were supposedly talking about how to end the war, but the leaders agreed not to disclose the content of the talks to the public. Meanwhile, US President, Joe Biden, restated his position that US forces will not fight in Ukraine, as this would mark a beginning of a third world war, but also added that they will defend every inch of NATO territory.

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- On 13 March, Russian forces continued their attacks in western Ukraine. Missiles were reportedly falling on a military base near Lviv and the Polish border. US National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, said that the West could respond with all its might if Russia attacked NATO territory. An attack on the Alliance would trigger Article 5, which states that an attack on one member of the Alliance is an attack on all allies. The US reiterated its warning against the use of chemical weapons, saying it would be a move that would cross all boundaries of international law. On the same day, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said he expected the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine to worsen, while denying Moscow's accusations that the US was secretly producing chemical or biological weapons in Ukrainian laboratories.

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