



Situation Room

**** UKRAINE CRISIS ****

Period under review: from 17 March 2022 to 20 March 2022.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- On 17 March, fighting continued in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, where, according to the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, Russian forces reportedly bombed a theatre where hundreds of civilians had taken refuge. On the same day, the Ukrainian side exchanged 9 captured Russian soldiers for the mayor of Melitopol. A British intelligence report said that the Russian invasion is not going as planned and has stalled on all fronts.
- On 17 March, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said that Russia was ready to negotiate the neutrality of the Ukrainian state, while stressing that Moscow still had the intention to meet the objectives of the military operation in Ukraine. On the same day, the US National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, and the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, General Nikolai Petrushev, talked on the phone in the first high-level contact between the two countries since the invasion began.
- On the night of 18 March, evacuations were carried out from the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, where more than a thousand people left the city by bus and car. The mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, has said that he expects a Russian attack on Kyiv similar to those in Mariupol and Kharkiv. Explosions were also reported from the city of Lviv, in western Ukraine, where Russian forces were reportedly bombing a military depot. NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, on a visit to Berlin, said that the Alliance supports the Ukrainian forces in upholding the right to self-defence enshrined in the UN Charter. The German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, also expressed his support, while stressing that NATO will not get involved in a military conflict. On the same day, the US President, Joe Biden, and the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, held a video meeting. President Biden warned China of the consequences of helping Russia.
- On 19 March, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence announced that Ukraine had lost access to the Sea of Azov, and with it the access to the Black Sea. In Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine, Russian bombs also hit a school. According to the UN, around 3.3 million people are believed to have fled the country. On the same day, barracks in the southern town of Mykolaiv was destroyed by six Russian missiles. Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, called on Russia in a video message, to hold immediate peace and security talks with Moscow. Russia's original plan to invade Ukraine has failed, he says, and it is trying to exhaust the country by bombing civilians.
- On 19 March, Russia announced that a hypersonic missile was used for the first time in Ukraine, destroying an arms depot in the west of the country. President Putin, presenting the weapons, described the missiles as invincible.
- On 20 March, Russian missiles hit an art school in Mariupol, where around 400 people sought shelter. The Russian side claims that Russian troops have broken through Mariupol's defences and are inside the city. The Russian army then closed a ring around the town, encircling it. In a video conference, President Zelensky pointed out that the bodies of Russian soldiers are piling up and that no one is retrieving them. Speaking to CNN, President Zelensky again stressed negotiations with Russia as the only way to end the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Turkey reports that Russia and Ukraine have made progress in negotiations to stop the invasion and that both sides are close to an agreement. According to Russian reports, Russian forces fired a second hypersonic missile, destroying a fuel depot in southern Ukraine.

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Analysis by: **Žiga Štucin**

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