



## Situation Room

### **\*\* UKRAINIAN CRISIS \*\***

**Period under review:** from **14 March 2024** to **15 April 2024**.

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

### **Situation analysis recap:**

- (14 March) The German parliament voted against supplying Ukraine with the Taurus missile system, in line with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's concerns over the potential escalation of war and against opposition efforts (CDU, CSU). Chancellor Scholz claims that only German soldiers could operate this system, which would involve Germany in the war. Moscow has repeatedly warned the West against delivering modern weapons systems such as the Taurus to Ukraine. The Taurus missile system is considered one of the most advanced weapon systems used by the German military. It can be launched from aircraft, travels at nearly the speed of sound, and can reach targets up to 500 kilometres away.
- (20 March) Ukraine carried out drone attacks on Russian oil facilities. Drones targeted refineries in several Russian regions (Krasnodar Krai, Samara, Kaluga, Oryol...), causing fires and reducing production. These attacks and previous attacks on Russian ports were intended to cause economic damage affecting Russian oil exports and military logistics. Although such strikes can have at least short-term effects, sustained operations of this type require significant financial resources.
- (26 March) Ukraine launched a missile and drone attack on the Russian Black Sea Fleet, this time hitting the amphibious assault ship *Konstantin Olshansky*. Since the start of the war, Ukraine has managed to sink or disable up to a third of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Ukraine announced that more similar attacks would follow.
- (28 March) Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed pilots at one of the Russian airbases. During his speech, he emphasised that: "Russia has no plans to attack any NATO country and will not attack Poland, the Baltic states, or the Czech Republic." Putin further added that after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S.-led NATO alliance expanded eastward toward Russia, but Moscow had no plans to attack NATO. When asked about the F-16 fighter jets that the West promised to send to Ukraine, Putin said that such planes would not change the situation on the battlefield and claimed that Russia would be able to destroy and deliver aircraft. He warned that the F-16s could also carry nuclear weapons and added that if any aircraft used airports in third countries to conduct strikes, those airfields would become legitimate targets. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba released his comments on the speech, claiming that F-16s will be delivered within a few months. Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands are among the countries that have pledged to deliver F-16s to Ukraine, and other countries have promised to help train Ukrainian pilots to use them.
- (28 March) According to the Russian Secret Service, Sergei Naryshkin, the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), visited North Korea. Naryshkin met with the Minister of State Security of North Korea, Ri Chang Dae, to discuss the international situation, regional security, and strengthening cooperation between

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Russia and North Korea. Both countries have repeatedly denied criticism of their ties and maintain that the cooperation does not violate international agreements.

- (30 March) At the conference of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (27-28 March 2024), led by Patriarch Kirill, participants discussed an ideological document that allegedly further aligns the church with the political narratives of the Kremlin. The document refers to the Russian war in Ukraine as a sacred mission to defend "Holy Russia" from Western influence and emphasises the importance of spreading Russian nationalism. The document calls for the legalisation of the concept of a "Russian world" that includes ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians, and it promotes traditional family values and a restrictive migration policy as possible solutions to the demographic crisis in Russia. Although the Kremlin did not offer full public support to the document, the ideological direction of the Russian Orthodox Church holds significant symbolic and formal influence over Russian domestic politics.
- (31 March) The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) published a report describing additional preventative security measures Russia is implementing in the Black Sea. Based on satellite images, the MoD reported that four barges were spotted at the entrance to the port of Novorossiysk, positioned to restrict and protect the entrance. The port of Novorossiysk now plays a crucial role in preserving the vessels of the Black Sea Fleet because it is less exposed to Ukrainian attacks than its traditional base in Sevastopol. The report links these changes to the recent changes in leadership of the fleet and the efforts of the new commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral Sergei Pinchuk.
- (2 April) The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, signed a law lowering the age for mobilisation from 27 to 25 years of age. The Ukrainian parliament passed the bill in May 2023. However, Zelensky postponed giving his assent to it until, as he claimed, stronger arguments for its necessity were presented.
- (3 April) In a meeting with senior Ukrainian officials. NATO ministers advocated for a more significant role in coordinating aid to Ukraine, increasing efficiency and making the process less dependent on short-term voluntary offers.
- (4 April) Russia launched a significant drone attack on the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. According to Ukrainian sources, at least four people were killed, and up to 350,000 households lost power. Due to other attacks on the electrical infrastructure, the electricity supply in six Ukrainian regions was cut off by the evening.
- (5 April) The Russian Ministry of Defence announced that Russian forces have taken control of the village of Vodyane in the Donetsk region in the east of Ukraine.
- (5 April) Japan announced new sanctions against Russia. Japan's Ministry of Trade has banned exporting 164 products to Russia, including motor oil and optical equipment. It is also supposed to ban the import of Russian non-industrial diamonds.
- (5 April) Reuters reported heavy fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces near Chasiv Yar on Friday. Sources from Kyiv denied that Russian troops had reached the city suburb. Russian forces are slowly advancing in eastern Ukraine after capturing the town of Avdiivka in February. Ukrainian troops are attempting to

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consolidate their positions but are facing a chronic shortage of artillery ammunition. Ukrainian sources expressed hope that the US House of Representatives would pass the bill to provide aid to Ukraine, which has stalled for months.

- (6 April) Ukraine launched a drone attack on targets in southern Russia, allegedly destroying six Russian planes at the Morozovsk airbase in the Rostov region. The base houses Su-27 and Su-34 aircraft used on the front line in Ukraine. Russian sources claimed that all attacking drones were shot down. At the same time, a later investigation of satellite images by the Institute for the Study of War found no evidence of destroyed aircraft.
- (8 April) The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was informed on Sunday by authorities at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant that a drone was detonated on the site today detonated on the site of the plant. The Russian state news agency TASS blamed responsibility on Ukraine, a claim Ukraine has denied. With its six reactors, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is one of the largest plants in the world. Due to its location on the front, it has been hit previously, most likely unintentionally, by both sides. The IAEA urged both sides to exercise restraint.
- (12 April) British Defense Minister Grant Shapps presented to reporters the possibilities of the new, powerful DragonFire laser weapon. He spoke of its potential use in Ukraine in the fight against Russian drones. Shapps said the weapon could have a massive effect on conflicts in Europe and elsewhere. The DragonFire is due to be introduced by 2027, but the MoD wanted to accelerate development and production.
- (14 April) Ukrainian forces have advanced south of Kreminna and southwest of Donetsk city, while Russian troops have recently confirmed advances near Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut) and Avdiivka.

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