



Situation Room

**** UKRAINIAN CRISIS ****

Period under review: from 8 May 2024 to 15 May 2024.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- (8 May) In a coordinated assault on Ukraine's energy network, Russian military forces launched a substantial attack using approximately 50 cruise and ballistic missiles along with over 20 drones. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, 59 out of the 70 missiles and drones launched were successfully intercepted. The strikes impacted energy infrastructure across several regions, including Poltava, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhzhia, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Vinnytsia. Ukraine's largest private energy provider, DTEK, confirmed that three thermal power plants were severely damaged, though further specifics were not immediately disclosed. The escalation follows an appeal by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last month for more air defense systems and ammunition from NATO allies to stave off additional Russian offensives. In response, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis suggested that Romania could provide Ukraine with the Patriot missile defense system, while Spain has pledged to supply anti-ballistic missiles. Russian operations targeting Ukraine's energy facilities are likely to persist, with the potential to severely disrupt national electricity production as Ukraine contends with a dwindling supply of air defense systems and munitions.
- (9 May) European ambassadors have reached a consensus to allocate \$300 billion from the frozen assets of the Russian central bank to bolster Ukraine's defense capabilities, pending a final endorsement at the ministerial level of the EU member states. The proposed allocation would see 90% of funds directed towards European military assistance for Ukraine, with the remaining 10% earmarked for other support. Additionally, the EU is preparing to introduce its 14th sanctions package against Russia, notably targeting the Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry for the first time. Given that last year, LNG imports from Russia constituted 16% of the EU's total, the new sanctions will likely aim to curtail Russia's LNG exports to non-EU nations. The EU is also contemplating measures against Russia's helium production, crucial for advanced manufacturing technologies. Russia, which strives to produce a third of the global helium supply, may see minimal impact from the new sanctions on its LNG sector, as existing sanctions already constrain its production and export capabilities.
- (10 May) Russia launched a new offensive near Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine, opening a new front in the war that had mostly been fought in the south and east until then. Hostilities have escalated in the border areas near Strilecha, Pylna, and Borysivka, following the incursion of Russian armored vehicles across the frontier at dawn. Ukrainian officials had long anticipated a resurgence in Russian military activities. In a recent interview with *The Economist*, the deputy head of Ukrainian military intelligence indicated that April and May could prove to be the most challenging months for Ukraine, amid ongoing negotiations in the US Congress over military assistance. Russia likely decided to open a new front due to the thinning of Ukrainian forces along the front lines and a critical shortage of munitions for Ukrainian artillery and air defenses.

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- (11-13 May) Over the weekend, Russian forces made incremental gains, seizing several villages in the Liptsy district, 30 km north of Kharkiv, and making their way into Vovchansk, 40 km to the east. The strategic objective behind these maneuvers remains uncertain: it is unclear whether Russia is attempting to divert Ukrainian reserves from the Donbas front or if it plans to concentrate its military efforts on Kharkiv, potentially aiming to retake the city of Kupyansk. Ukrainian officials contend that capturing Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, is improbable given the insufficient number of Russian troops in the area.
- (13 May) Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed the dismissal of long-serving Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Shoigu, who has been in office since 2012, oversaw an ambitious military modernisation program and military campaigns in Ukraine and Syria. However, his reputation suffered due to the perceived failures of the Russian military since the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and he was further tarnished by a corruption scandal involving his deputy. Shoigu is set to assume a new position as Secretary of the Security Council, taking over from Nikolai Patrushev. He will be succeeded by Andrei Belousov, the president's former economic adviser and a capable economist. His tasks will likely include rationalising the extensive defense budget for the needs of the prolonged war in Ukraine and coordinating cooperation between various departments to expand defense industry capacities and rebuild the heavily weakened Russian military.
- (14 May) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Kyiv. During the visit, he confirmed that part of the \$61 billion military aid package had already arrived, with more on the way. In light of long-range missile attacks that caused widespread power outages across the country, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasised the urgent need for additional air defense systems.
- (15 May) Several Ukrainian politicians conducted a visit to Washington, attempting to lobby the US Congress for permission to use American weapons for attacks inside Russia. They argued that the current restrictions hamper their military response to the renewed Russian offensive near Kharkiv. US officials insist that the weapons remain intended exclusively for defense within Ukraine's borders. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom lifted similar restrictions on the use of British weapons in Russia. Fierce fighting continues in the Kharkiv region. Ukrainian units have withdrawn from several villages near the Russian border to "more tactically advantageous positions," according to a Facebook post by the Ukrainian Army. Ukrainian officials have used such terms in the past to avoid using the word "retreat".

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