

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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RUSSIA USES TACTICS OF FEAR, HUMANITARIAN SITUATION WORSENS

On March 7, Russian troops [shelled](#) Mykolaiv, including residential areas of the city, with cluster rockets, Conflict Intelligence Team [said](#), recalling that the use of multiple rocket launchers and cluster munitions on residential areas is considered a war crime. The possible purpose of this shelling is to suppress resistance. On the previous day, the Russian Ministry of Defense [announced](#) its intention to launch strikes on Ukrainian defense industry facilities "as part of the tasks of 'demilitarization' of Ukraine.

On the same day, an airstrike by Russian troops on a bakery plant in Makarov, Kyiv Region, [killed](#) 13 people. Russian servicemen shot and [killed](#) the head of Gostomel, Yuriy Prilipko, who was delivering humanitarian aid, and wounded the head of the city of Bucha, Anatoliy Fedoruk. At least 21 people, including two children, died as a result of the [aerial bombardment](#) of residential areas in Sumy. Since the beginning of the war Kharkiv has been under constant shelling, the city has suffered considerable destruction, but Russian troops were not able to capture it. More than 600,000 people have been [evacuated](#) by trains, and the roads to the outskirts of the city are overloaded. An attempt by the Russian military to seize the city of Izyum in the Kharkov region [failed](#), but the city is under siege, there is [no way to leave](#) it in an organized manner, a [hospital](#) was destroyed, and the locals need urgent humanitarian aid. Since the beginning of the war, [170 civilians](#), including 5 children, have been killed in Kharkiv oblast.

Residents of the temporarily occupied cities continue to [come out in rallies](#) against the Russian invaders. The Financial Times [quoted](#) European special services and analysts as saying that the Russian authorities instructed the FSB to prepare punitive operations in the captured Ukrainian cities in order to break the resistance of the population.

The humanitarian situation in the parts of Ukraine attacked by the Russian armed forces continues to deteriorate. Vorzel, Bucha, Gostomel, and a number of other settlements in the Kyiv region are practically [deprived](#) of communication with the outside world, they have run out of food and water in some places, and there is no electricity or heating. They have been seized by the Russian army, residents are not allowed to leave their homes, homes are shelled with various types of weapons, and humanitarian aid is impossible to deliver. The civilians are in fact [hostages](#). Fighting continues for the city of Irpen in the Kyiv region. Advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs Vadym Denisenko [said](#) that an attempt to organize a humanitarian corridor from Irpen, Bucha and Gostomel, partially captured by Russian troops, allowed to remove about 2 thousand people, but more than 4 thousand people still need to be evacuated from the surroundings of Kyiv. Photos of the evacuation can be found [here](#).

On March 8, the evacuation of civilians along the humanitarian corridor from Sumy [began](#). A total of about 5,000 people, including foreign students, were [evacuated](#) from the city. The evacuation corridor from Mariupol came under fire. The Russian Defense Ministry blamed Ukraine for the disruption of the humanitarian corridor, also [stating](#) that Ukraine refuses to agree on a plan for the "evacuation," the de facto forced removal, of city residents to Russia and Belarus. Mariupol authorities [noted](#) that Russian troops had tried to use a humanitarian corridor to break into the city.

On March 7, Mikhail Podolyak, advisor to the head of the presidential office, [said](#) that the Russian army has damaged or destroyed 202 schools, 34 hospitals, and more than 1,500 residential buildings, including apartment buildings, since the war began. More than 900 Ukrainian settlements have been completely deprived of electricity, water, and heating. [According to Ukrainian Defense Minister Alexei Reznikov](#), more than 400 civilians were killed and more than 800 wounded, but the data are incomplete. Similar figures are [reported](#) by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR). It is noted that a much higher level of casualties, in particular, may be in Volnovakha, Mariupol and Izyum. Most of the civilian deaths or injuries were caused by the use of explosive devices with a large kill zone, including heavy artillery and multiple rocket launchers, as well as missile and air strikes. The Russian army has resorted to a policy of intimidation, shelling humanitarian corridors, 400,000 people have been taken hostage in Mariupol alone. More than 2 million people have [left](#) Ukraine since the beginning of the war.

US INTELLIGENCE: PUTIN MAY SEEK TO ESCALATE HOSTILITIES

According to US intelligence, Russia has already deployed to Ukraine almost 100% of the grouping that had been assembled for the invasion, a Pentagon spokesman

[said](#) on the condition of anonymity on March 7. He also added that at the moment there are no signs that Russia is going to send any reinforcements to Ukraine. In addition, the US does not see much progress by the Russian army in the offensive, despite some successes in southern Ukraine.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby [told](#) CNN that the US Defense Department has intelligence confirming that Russia is trying to recruit Syrians with experience in street fighting, hoping it will help capture Kyiv.

Meanwhile, US intelligence community leaders [suggest](#) that Vladimir Putin may be seeking to escalate hostilities in Ukraine despite military setbacks and economic difficulties caused by international sanctions, with no sudden changes in Russia's nuclear policy at this time. As of March 8, the number of Russian servicemen killed during the invasion of Ukraine [could range](#) from 2,000 to 4,000. The number of captive Russian servicemen is not specified, while representatives of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry [stated](#) that all of them will be taken and kept in one place and will [work](#) to restore Ukraine's economy. It is stressed that Ukraine will clearly observe all norms of international humanitarian law.

Although [officially](#) only contract servicemen of the Russian army are involved in the military actions, there are numerous [evidences](#) of participation of conscript soldiers. The head of Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg [describes](#) how Russians are trying to find their loved ones in the war in Ukraine.

ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE RUSSIA ON INTERNATIONAL ARENAS

On March 7, Ukraine's lawsuit against Russia [started](#) at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The lawsuit concerns Russia's use of a fictitious pretext to genocide the residents of the DPR and LPR to start a war, as well as committing an act of genocide against the residents of Ukraine. The main purpose of the meeting was to plan further steps for fixing, assessing, investigating the crimes and preparing for the trial itself. Ukraine [asked](#) the court to take interim measures, obliging Russia to stop the military actions. The text of Ukraine's representative at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Anton Korinevich, can be found [here](#). Russia [refused](#) to participate in the March 7 hearing, for which Ukraine was scheduled to appear – the Russian Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that the court "lacks jurisdiction in considering the issue of a special military operation."

The UN Security Council held a [meeting](#) on March 7, one of the main topics was the humanitarian situation in the war zone in Ukraine. UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths [said](#) that the United Nations needs safe corridors to deliver food and medicine to the residents of Ukraine who need it most. He stressed that civilians in cities such as Mariupol, Kharkiv, Melitopol and others are in dire need of assistance, especially life-saving medical supplies.

Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Sergey Kyslytsya at the meeting showed a printout of a post on the Twitter account of the Russian Embassy in Great Britain – a [quote](#) from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov: "The

purpose of the Russian military operation is to stop any war that could unfold on Ukrainian territory or could start from there".

Russian permanent representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya actually [accused](#) the Ukrainians of shelling themselves.

On March 7, the OSCE special monitoring mission [announced](#) the end of the temporary evacuation of international members from its area of operation and the termination of monitoring.

On 7 March, the third round of talks between Ukraine and Russia took place. The previous one ended with an agreement to open humanitarian corridors, but it was disrupted due to shelling by the Russian armed forces. Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of the Ukrainian presidential office, announced the second round of negotiations with representatives of "a country that still believes that in the 21st century it is possible to beat out some results by force for a long time," noting that the goal of the Ukrainian side is to show that this is impossible. At the end of the negotiations, the Ukrainian delegation announced "small positive progress" on the issue of humanitarian corridor logistics. There has been no progress on other issues, according to the final statements; the Russian side noted that its expectations were not met. Bellingcat investigative journalist Hristo Grozev [reported](#), citing the words of two unnamed sources close to the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, about Russia's demands at the negotiations, in particular, the appointment of pro-Russian Verkhovna Rada deputy Yuri Boyko as the head of Ukrainian government (Vladimir Zelensky will remain the formal president in this scenario), recognition by Ukraine of the so-called "LDPR" and annexation of Crimea, and also refusal to join NATO. Ukraine responds to Russia's ultimatums with a categorical [refusal](#).

US BANS RUSSIAN OIL AND GAS IMPORTS, WEST INCREASES SANCTIONS

On March 8, US President Joe Biden [banned](#) imports of Russian oil and gas to the United States. Earlier the oil companies [Shell](#) and [BP](#) refused to buy oil and gas from Russia.

The UK is going to become independent of Russian energy carriers by the end of the year. In the European Union there was [announced](#) a plan to reduce the demand for Russian gas by two thirds by the end of the year. In addition, they have developed a draft plan to abandon Russian fossil fuels until 2030. "We must become independent of Russian oil, coal and gas. We simply cannot rely on a supplier that directly threatens us," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [said](#) that Germany is looking for alternative energy supply options together with its EU partners, but "it cannot be done overnight". At the same time, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban [said](#) that sanctions against Russia should not include a ban on energy imports.

The European Commission has [prepared](#) a new package of sanctions against Russia and Belarus in connection with the invasion of Ukraine and is currently in the process of agreeing their implementation. Another number of oligarchs and Russian parliamentarians will be added to the sanctions list; there is also a ban on the export

of marine technology from the EU to Russia and increased monitoring of cryptocurrencies to avoid their use to circumvent sanctions.

[Japan](#) expanded sanctions against Russia. Another 20 Russian businessmen and officials, including presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov, first deputy head of the presidential administration Sergei Kiriyenko, deputy head of the presidential administration Dmitry Kozak, and head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov, were added to the sanctions list. New personal sanctions were imposed by [Canada](#) and [Australia](#). Russia is now [ahead](#) of Iran, Syria, and North Korea in the number of citizens and companies subject to sanctions. About 230 international companies have already [left](#) the Russian market or have announced their intention to do so.

Analysts at Morgan Stanley, an American financial corporation, [predict](#) a Russian default in mid-April.

Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have [called](#) on Interpol to immediately suspend Russia's access to its system.

Also, members of the US Congress [continue to press](#) the administration of President Joe Biden to facilitate the immediate transfer of fighter jets to Ukraine from NATO countries and Eastern Europe, and the World Bank has decided to [provide](#) Ukraine with \$723 million in emergency financing to help the government provide critical services to residents, including hospital salaries, pensions and social programs for vulnerable populations.