



Summary (As of 1330 Hrs UTC)

As of mid-day Friday February 25, maritime ports in Ukraine are closed as per orders from the Ukrainian military.

As of 25 February, there have been a number of reports regarding the targeting of several commercial vessels offshore Ukraine. RIA Novosti quoted a message from the border service stating that at 1100 hrs UTC on 24 February Russian civilian cargo ships *SGV FLOT* and *SERAPHIM SAROVSKIY* were subjected to a missile attack by the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Sea of Azov, 21 nautical miles off Mariupol. These reports continue



to be unverified and Russia has in the past used misinformation with the intent of creating a pretext or justification for continued military action. Sources report that it is unlikely that Ukraine could have launched an attack on two Russian cargo vessels offshore Mariupol. Reports have also indicated that the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier *MV YASA JUPITER* suffered damage to its bridge area whilst drifting approximately 50 nautical miles south of Odessa. A statement released by the Turkish General Directorate of Maritime Affairs disclosed, “following the information that a bomb hit a Turkish-owned *YASA JUPITER* with the Marshall Islands flag off the coast of Odessa, which came to AAKKM, it was learned during the meeting that there was no request for help, that the ship was in transit to Romanian territorial waters, that there was no loss of life and that it was safe.”

On the Ground

Russian forces have continued their attack on Ukraine, with on the ground reports indicating that they are closing in on the capital, Kyiv. The situation continues to be fast-moving. As of 25 February, Russia is now in full control of significant parts of Ukraine. On 24 February, Ukraine’s air defences and other military infrastructure were targeted, and columns of Russian tanks have since moved rapidly into position.

On Friday, Russian troops reached Obolon, the northern part of the capital Kyiv, according to Ukrainian officials. On Friday morning, the city came under a sustained barrage of airstrikes, which blew out windows in some apartment blocks and left craters in the city streets. The Russian Defence Ministry has reported that its forces have taken control of the key Hostomel airfield near Kyiv, adding that 200 Russia helicopters and a landing force were used to seize it and that Kyiv was effectively “blocked from the West.” The Russian Defence Ministry has also claimed that 200 troops from Ukraine’s special units were killed, adding that there were no Russian losses, though these reports remain unverified and the Ukrainian military has so far not commented. Reports currently indicate that the main Russian advances are towards the city centre from Ivankiv to Kyiv’s north-west and Chernihiv to the north-east. Gunfire has been heard in the central government area of the city, near the presidential office. The Ukrainian government has called on its citizens to make Molotov cocktails and to defend the city. Late on 24 February, Russian troops seized control of the Chernobyl nuclear plant, with Russia’s defence ministry stating that it had captured the plant to “protect it,” adding that it was doing so to ensure that “nationalistic groups and other terrorist organizations cannot use the situation in the country in order to stage a nuclear provocation.”



Elsewhere in Ukraine, citizens continue to flee the country as Russian forces advance. Reports indicate that on an island in the Black Sea, thirteen border guards were killed after they refused to surrender to a Russian warship. Meanwhile those unable to flee have sheltered in underground metro stations in Kyiv and Kharkiv. An overnight curfew was imposed in Ukraine though metro stations remained open to serve as bomb shelters. The United Nations has reported that at least 25 civilians have been killed and 102 injured in airstrikes across the country. The UK however has reported that 450 Russian soldiers, 194 Ukrainians, including 57 civilians, have been killed since Putin's invasion on 24 February. Regionally countries have started to welcome refugees from the Ukraine crisis. Hungary has reported long queues of cars on the Ukrainian side of its border. Neighbouring Poland has also reported that more than 1,000 Ukrainians have arrived by train in the city of Przemysł. Poland has waived the requirement to quarantine or present a negative COVID-19 test for people arriving from Ukraine. Many of those who have arrived in the last 24 hours have stayed at a train station on camp beds as hotels are fully booked. Poland has set up nine reception points for Ukrainians crossing the border where they can receive food, medical assistance, and information.

As of Friday, Ukrainian airspace remains closed, with a number of international airlines cancelling flights for the next few weeks. In response to Thursday's invasion of Ukraine, the British government has banned Russian flagship carrier, Aeroflot, from touching down in Britain as part of a series of sanctions against Moscow. In response, the Russian regime has banned all UK-linked planes from entering its airspace. Meanwhile British Airways and Spanish carrier Iberia have announced that they are rerouting flights away from Russian airspace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has stated that he is Russia's number one target, as he called on Putin to negotiate. Despite Russian troops closing in on the capital, the Ukrainian leader has remained in his office. He has also accused European leaders of taking insufficient action to slow Russia's advance and has called on citizens across the European Union to protest and to force their governments into more decisive action.

In Russia on Thursday, thousands of anti-war protesters took to the streets to protest Putin's decision to invade Ukraine. Like most around the world, Russians were shocked to wake up and learn that their leader had ordered a full-scale assault on its neighbour. Many protesters stated on Thursday that they felt depressed and broken by the news of Russian military action in Ukraine. The demonstrations across Russia were met with a heavy police presence. In Moscow, police blocked off access to the Pushkinskaya Square in the city centre after opposition activists called people to gather there. Police also dispersed smaller groups, ordering them to clear the area through loudspeakers. In St Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, riot police officers rounded up at least 327 people who came to the Nevsky Prospekt, the city's main thoroughfare. Reports indicate that overall, some 1,300 people were detained across the city. While Putin in recent years has crushed any domestic challenges to his authority, in 2021, discontent with Russia's economy and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic saw opposition groups hold some of the largest anti-Putin protests in years. A prolonged war in Ukraine, coupled with a high loss of Russian soldiers, and further dwindling of the Russian economy could push more demonstrators to the streets creating a problem for Putin as he attempts to maintain an iron grip on his own people.

Advisory

The security situation across Ukraine remains fluid and is likely to rapidly deteriorate in the coming days. As of 24 February, all commercial operations at Ukrainian ports have been suspended by the order of the Ukrainian military. There are also unconfirmed reports that Russian vessels are blocking access to Ukrainian waters at the northern edge of the Romanian EEZ. Any vessels currently within Ukrainian Ports are advised to leave immediately if deemed safe to do so. Vessels should ensure that they are broadcasting on AIS and clearly state their intentions across VHF. Any vessels challenged by Russian military vessels should comply fully with instructions. Further, MS Risk advises all commercial operators to avoid transiting or any operations within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia within the Black Sea. No attempt should be made to access the Sea of Azov. Commercial operations within the EEZ of Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania are currently unaffected. As the situation continues to develop in Ukraine, there remains a high degree of uncertainty in regards to the freedom of navigation throughout the wider Black Sea.



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