

Summary (As of 1430 Hrs UTC)

As of 10 March, Ukrainian ports remain closed as the war in Ukraine has severely impacted shipping in the Black Sea and has had broad consequences for international transport and global supply chains. Dozens of cargo ships remain stranded at the Ukrainian port of Mykolaiv, according to shipping trackers. There continues to be a high risk of collateral damage for any ships transiting in the Black Sea. The International Maritime Organization is set to hold an emergency session on 10 - 11 March to address the war's impact on the shipping community following requests from numerous governments.



Advisory

MS Risk continues to advise any vessels currently within Ukrainian Ports to leave immediately, if it is deemed safe to do so. Vessels should ensure that they are broadcasting on AIS and clearly state their intentions across VHF. In the event that any vessel is challenged by Russian military vessels, they are advised to comply fully with instructions. MS Risk further advises all commercial operators at this time to avoid any transit or operation within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia, notably in the vicinity of the Crimean Peninsula within the Black Sea. As of 10 March, the Black Sea ports of the Russian Federation are functioning normally. All transit inbound Western thermals should be made out with Ukrainian and Russian EEZ south of the Crimean Peninsula. While Commercial operations within the EEZ of Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania remain unaffected at this time, the Romanian Ministry of Defence has announced that Russian military vessels are diverting and stopping commercial ships en-route to Ukrainian ports north of Romania's EEZ. Consequently, such vessels are advised to void transiting within 50 nautical miles of the north-east extremity of the Romanian EEZ. Any vessels transiting through this region are advised to maintain close contact with national and local maritime authorities. Any incidents or suspicious activity should be reported via their respective national channels and to the local maritime authorities.

On the Ground

Day 15 since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began. In the last 24 hours, Ukrainian cities have continued to come under heavy shelling from Russian forces. Humanitarian corridors are being set up. Four people, including two children, were reportedly killed after a residential building near the city of Kharkiv was shelled during the night by Russian forces. A maternity and children's ward was bombed in Mariupol, with Ukrainian officials calling the attack a war crime. The US has reported that Moscow has had to deploy conscript troops to Ukraine, despite Putin's assurances, even this week, that it would not happen. Additional private companies have announced their pledge to end business in Russia as the country's economic isolation continues. US officials meanwhile are warning that Russia is growing increasingly desperate and could resort to chemical weapons attacks against civilians in the coming days.

Overnight 9 - 10 March, four people including two children were reportedly killed after a residential building near Kharkiv was shelled. The attack occurred in the village of Slobozhanske. Rescuers are expected to continue search operations on Thursdays to locate bodies. In a separate incident, a shopping mall was set ablaze from bombardment in central Kharkiv. No casualties were reported in that attack. Reports indicate that the Ukrainian military has launched a counter attack against Russian forces to defend the city of Kyiv. In the region of Sumy, overnight strikes

targeted the north-eastern city of Okhtryak, killing at least three people. The regional state administration head Dmytro Zhyvytsky reported that the Russians had bombed just after midnight, targeting residential neighbourhoods as well as utilities, like a gas pipeline.

Ukraine on Thursday will open several humanitarian corridors to help civilians leave cities besieged by Russian forces, including the southern city of Mariupol. The regional governor has reported that evacuees have already started leaving the north-eastern city of Sumy under a local ceasefire. In the southern city of Mariupol, the city remains virtually cut off from the outside world, with residents trapped with no running water or heat. According to a Telegram post from the city council, bombs are reportedly falling on homes again in the city. A separate social media post by Ukraine's deputy prime minister has indicated that a humanitarian convoy trying to reach the south-eastern city has also had to turn back because of the fighting. A Ukrainian presidential advisor has disclosed that Russia is deliberately blocking the evacuation of civilians from the city because it has failed to seize the strategically-important port. In recent days, the city has been the site of fierce fighting. On 9 March, a maternity hospital was bombed, with Ukrainian officials reporting that three people, including a child, were killed. While internationally, the bombing of the hospital has been condemned, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed what he called a "pathetic outcry" over the attack, stating that the Russian delegation had told the UN Security Council three days ago that the hospital had been "taken over" by Ukrainian radicals and that "all the mothers and nurses were chased out of there." He further said that public opinion was being manipulated worldwide.

On 9 March, reports emerged that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant's electricity had been cut off, after Russian forces took control of the plant last month. While Chernobyl is no longer a working power station, it was never fully abandoned in the wake of the world's worst nuclear accident, and still requires constant management. Reports have also emerged that Belarusian authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko has instructed Belarusian specialists to ensure that power is supplied to the Ukrainian plant, which is located near the border with Belarus. While Ukraine warned on Wednesday that there was a danger that radiation from the plant could leak due to the power cut, the UN nuclear watchdog has said that the outage would not impact safety.

The Ukrainian defence ministry is reporting that Russia's advance has slowed. It has reported that Russia's advance in the direction of Kyiv has been restrained. In the eastern region of the country, defence forces continue to deter the Russian offensive in Donetsk, Slobozhansky and parts of the Tavriya operational districts, and are defending the cities of Kharkiv and Okhtryka. In the south, the defence of the port city of Mariupol continues. Ukrainian forces have also fended off the Russian offensive in the directions of the city of Kryvyi Rih, Mykolayiv, Voznesensk and the settlement of Novovorontsovka. The Ukrainian defence ministry has also reported that in the last two days, Ukrainian fighter jets and anti-craft missile units have destroyed four Su-25 attack aircraft and two Russian helicopters, adding that the number of cases of desertion and looting amongst Russian forces has significant risen.

To date, US officials estimate that between 5,000 - 6,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine since the war began on 24 February. Ukraine however has reported that more than 12,000 Russian service personnel have died. Russia has so far acknowledged 498 fatalities

Regional and International Reporting

Ukraine has reported that the first round of talks between the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine failed to yield progress on a ceasefire. Talks were held in Turkey on 10 March, with Dmytro Kuleba disclosing after the meeting that the demands his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov had made amounted to a surrender. Kuleba disclosed that while the worst humanitarian situation in the country was in Mariupol, with residents trapped for days in freezing temperatures without electricity or water, Russia had not committed to establishing a humanitarian corridor there, adding that it had also not responded to proposals for a 24-hour humanitarian ceasefire across Ukraine. He further disclosed, "I want to repeat that Ukraine has not surrendered, does not surrender, and will not surrender," adding that he was willing to continue meeting. Meanwhile Lavrov offered no concessions and repeated previously made demands that Ukraine be disarmed and accept neutral status, adding that Moscow was waiting for a reply from Kyiv. He further maintained that his country's military operations were going to plan, while accusing the West of fuelling the conflict by supplying weapons to Ukraine. He also noted that Russia would cope with Western sanctions and "come out of the crisis with a better psychology and conscience." During the press conference shortly after the

meeting, Lavrov also repeated Russia's claim that the Pentagon was using Ukrainian territory to develop pathogens that could be used to create biological weapons. The US has called the assertion "preposterous," with Lavrov also alleging that Ukraine had been preparing an attack against two Russian-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine. Earlier, Moscow reported that Ukrainian forces had transported some 80 tonnes of ammonia in the country's north-east, without providing evidence. This comes as Western officials, including the US, have warned that Russia could use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine to create a "false flag" operation - effectively a misleading operation blamed on the other side usually used to justify a supposed counter-attack.

US Vice President Kamala Harris arrived in Poland late on Wednesday just a day after Washington rejected the country's plan to transfer military jets to the US, rather than directly to Ukraine. During a press conference with Polish President Andrzej Duda, Vice President Harris disclosed that the US is prepared to defend every inch of NATO territory as she also announced that a US delivery of patriot systems had been made to Poland. On 9 March, the US rejected Poland's offer of 20 MiG fighter jets for the war in Ukraine, over fears that the move could escalate tensions in the region.

European Union leaders are set to meeting in France for a two day summit on 10 - 11 March to discuss Ukraine's possible future membership, imposing further sanctions on Russia, and a new common defence policy.

About MS Risk

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VIRTUAL SECURITY DIRECTOR SERVICE

- For clients lacking a full-time security executive

References are always available.

More information is found at www.msrisk.com

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