

Ukraine Crisis Update (14 March 2022)



Summary (As of 1700 Hrs UTC)

As of 14 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. The UK Defence Ministry has reported that Russian naval forces have effectively cut Ukraine off from maritime trade by controlling its Black Sea coast.

In its latest intelligence update, the MoD reported that Russian naval forces have established a blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea coastline, warning of the potential for further amphibious assaults by Russian forces in the coming weeks. It noted that one such operation had already occurred in the Sea of Azov and also indicated that Russian naval forces continue to carry out missile strikes against targets throughout Ukraine.



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 11 March, the Black Sea ports of the Russian Federation are functioning normally. All transit inbound Western terminals 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

On day 19 of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, fighting on the ground has continued as Russian and Ukrainian representatives held talks, with Ukraine's negotiator stating that the dialogue focused on establishing a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Russian forces and security guarantees for Ukraine. On the ground, the capital Kyiv was targeted in a bombardment that saw at least one person killed after a block of flats was hit. Nearly three weeks into the invasion and more than 2.5 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the war began on 24 February, according to UN estimates. The Polish Border Guard reported on 14 March that more than 1.75 million people have entered Poland since the war began, though not all of those refugees are thought to be currently in the country. Estimates indicate that about one million refugees remain in Poland, with the rest having already left for other countries. On Sunday, 82,100 people crossed the border, according to the Border Guard agency, up from 79,800 on Saturday. As of 06:00 GMT on Monday, 18,400 had crossed the frontier.

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As of Monday 14 March, the assault on Kyiv is continuing as Russian forces attempt to encircle and cut off the capital city. One person has been killed and six others injured after the falling wreckage of a shot down Russian missile struck a residential street in Kyiv, according to Ukrainian authorities. The missile's debris destroyed a bus and set ablaze a residential building in the capital's Kurenivka district after being intercepted by Ukraine's air defences. The bus was not carrying any passengers at the time of the incident and was completely destroyed, according to Ukrainian officials. Elsewhere in Kyiv, Russian troops are now moving towards the city from multiple positions. Kyiv's city administration has reported that Russian shelling in a northern suburb of the city targeted the Antonov aircraft plant. The Antonov aircraft manufacturing facility is located at Sviatoshyn Airfield, about 10 km from the city centre. Initial reports had indicated that Antonov Airport had been shelled. A missile strike in the Donetsk region on Monday morning killed around twenty people and wounded nine others, according to Russia's defence ministry, though these claims have not been independently verified. The Kremlin has described the attack as a tragedy and an attack on civilians, adding that "it appears the bosses of Ukraine across the ocean are giving orders to the Ukrainian army." Ukraine has denied the accusation that it launched the attack. In the city of Dnipro, fighting is occurring to the north, east and south, with the city bracing for Russian troops to reach it. Many people have already left the town. Ukrainian Armed Forces have reported that in the last 24 hours, they struck down four planes belonging to Russian forces, adding that it had also launched "crushing strikes" on Russian field bases. In the city of Rivne, a TV tower was reportedly damaged as a result of a Russian missile attack. The head of the Rivne regional administration, Vitaliy Koval, has disclosed that relevant services are working at the scene. The TV tower is located some 15 km (9 miles) from Rivne. The UNIAN agency has reported that in the village of Stavische, in the Zhytomyr region, a missile attack targeted administrative buildings, adding that four people were injured and seven buildings were destroyed in the strike. On Monday, air raid sirens could be heard in many regions across the country, including in Lviv and Transcarpathia as well as Kharkiv and Odessa.

Talks resumed on Monday between Russia and Ukraine, with senior Ukrainian officials outlining the shape that the negotiations are taking. Ihor Zhovkva, who is the deputy head of office for President Zelensky, disclosed that he believes that Moscow's position is more constructive now than it had been previously, stating, "instead of giving us an ultimatum or red lines or asking Ukraine to capitulate, they now seem to start the constructive negotiations." In separate comments posted on Twitter, Ukrainian negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak stated that the fourth round of talks will focus on establishing a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Russian troops and security guarantees for Ukraine. However hours after the talks began, Podolyak disclosed that the talks were set to resume on Tuesday 15 March after a "technical pause." In a tweet, the Ukrainian presidential adviser disclosed that "a technical pause has been taken in the negotiations until tomorrow. For additional work in the working subgroups and clarification of individual definition. Negotiations continue..." On Monday, Podolyak also repeated Ukraine's position that its negotiators will refuse to begin discussing the shape of future relations with Russia until Moscow agrees to an immediate ceasefire first.

According to Ukrainian operators, Russian forces have damaged a high-voltage line connecting the former nuclear plant at Chernobyl to the power grid. Ukraine's state energy company has reported that the damage apparently occurred soon after electricity supplies to the facility were restored, though these claims have not been independently verified. Ukrenergo, Ukraine's state energy company, did not disclose whether the former nuclear plant had lost all external power as a result of the damage, adding that a repair crew must be given immediate access to the site, which is occupied by Russian forces, to inspect the damage. On Saturday, the UN's nuclear watchdog reported that Ukraine had told it earlier in the day that Russia is planning on taking full and permanent control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine. In a statement issued on Saturday night, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Ukraine's nuclear regulator Energoatom, had informed it that Russia plans to operate the facility under the management of its state owned nuclear company, Rosatom. Ukraine also alleged that staff members are being forced "to coordinate with the Russian forces on all operational issues, including technical matters," adding that "Russian experts had arrived at the site a few days ago to assess the radiation situation there." Russia seized the plant on 4 March after an intense battle with Ukrainian troops, though it has denied Saturday's reporting by the IAEA. On Monday, reports on the Telegram messaging service indicated that Russian troops had blown up ammunition in front of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. A subsequent message from Ukraine's nuclear energy company Energoatom disclosed that its not yet clear whether radiation levels have been affected by

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the explosion. The nuclear power station is the largest in Europe and is located around 550 km (342 miles) southeast of Kyiv.

Over the weekend, a Russian missile attack targeted a Ukrainian military base, around 25 km (15 miles) from the border with NATO member Poland. Some 134 were injured in the attack. Russia confirmed that it had carried out the strike, saying that it was targeting foreign mercenaries and weapons. It claimed that “up to 180 foreign mercenaries’ had been killed. On Monday, Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz disclosed that Sunday’s strike was an attempt to “threaten” NATO. At least 35 people were killed in the strike on Yavoriv training base, with Przydacz stating that Russia’s move was “highly provocative,” adding, “they surely knew this military base was placed very close to the Polish border...so of course the Russians knew what they were hitting and they wanted to threaten NATO...They wanted to send a message threatening NATO.” President Zelensky renewed calls for a no-fly zone after in the wake of the attack on Yavoriv. The US has ruled out a no-fly zone because it could mean NATO forces shooting down Russian aircraft to clear the skies, a move that would represent an escalation, which US President Joe Biden has described as World War Three.

Russia has continued an intense bombardment of cities and towns across the country, forcing some to bury civilians in mass graves, including in Mariupol. The Red Cross has reported that more than 2,100 Mariupol residents are now known to have been killed and that “time is running out” to save desperate civilians who still remain in the city. In Mariupol on Monday, some 160 private vehicles were able to leave the city along a humanitarian corridor that heads into the Russian-occupied town of Berdyansk, according to the city council. In the past week, several attempts to evacuate civilians in Mariupol have failed as plans to let them travel out of the city through the humanitarian corridors were abandoned because of continued Russian shelling.

The EU has condemned the alleged kidnapping of the mayors of two Ukrainian cities by Russian forces. The statement came after Ukrainian officials on Sunday announced that armed men had abducted Yevhen Matveyev, mayor of the south-eastern city of Dniprorudne. Hours after the abduction, Russian forces in another southern city, Melitopol, reportedly installed a new mayor after its first was also kidnapped. CCTV footage showed a man purported to be Ivan Fedorov, mayor of nearby Melitopol, being led out of a building on 11 March with a bag over his head. The alleged abduction of Melitopol’s mayor prompted hundreds of protesters to take to the streets. Galina Danilchenko, a former city council member, has since been announced as the new mayor. She has urged residents not to take part in what she called “extremist actions,” and has said that she is preparing to set up a “committee of people’s deputies” to run the Melitopol. A curfew has been announced in the city and protests have been banned.

On Sunday, residents in the city of Kherson staged another demonstration against the Russian occupation, despite Russian forces firing warning shots. Footage depicted people with Ukrainian flags chanting as Russian tanks passed by the rally. Meanwhile the regional council in the occupied city has voted to adopt a resolution affirming that Kherson will remain Ukrainian, according to local officials. The vote came amidst accusations by Ukrainian officials that Russia is planning a “pseudo” referendum on creating a breakaway “people’s republic.” Also on Sunday, officials confirmed the death of American journalist Brent Renaud, who was killed in the town of Irpin, near Kyiv. The town’s Mayor Oleksandr Markushyn has disclosed that journalists will no longer be allowed to enter the town. He further urged reporters and Ukrainian civilians not to post information online about military personnel, their equipment or anything that could indicate their location. Renaud is thought to be the first foreign reporter killed in the Ukraine conflict, though there has been at least one other journalist killed - a cameraman who died in the Kyiv TV tower attack on 1 March. Several others have come under fire, including a Swiss photographer who was shot at by presumed members of a Russian special commando shortly after he passed a checkpoint on a road towards the southern city of Mykolaiv on 6 March. US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan disclosed on Sunday that the US will impose “appropriate consequences” on Russia over the death of the US journalist. Elsewhere in the country on Sunday, at least one person was killed when an apartment block was destroyed by Russian fire in Chernihiv, according to local authorities. In the eastern region of the country, Russian troops have been trying to surround Ukrainian forces as they advance from the port of Mariupol in the south to the city of Kharkiv in the north, according to UK defence officials. In recent days, Kharkiv has suffered some of the heaviest Russian bombardment. In the south, an air strike in the city of Mykolaiv killed at least nine people on Sunday, according to local officials. In the Lviv area, explosions were reported in the city on Sunday, with Lviv military officials reporting that Russian forces carried out



an airstrike and fired eight missiles on the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre, which is located in the Yavoriv district, about 30 km northwest of Lviv. Explosions were also heard in the western city of Ivano-Frankivsk.

On Saturday afternoon, a drone was brought down by Ukrainian forces in Kyiv. The drone was said to contain a three kilogram explosive. It crashed in the Podil neighbourhood of the capital, sparking a small fire at a bank. In the south-eastern city of Mariupol, Russian forces on Saturday made further gains, capturing the eastern outskirts of the port city. Satellite photos taken on Saturday by a private US company showed extensive damage to residential and civilian infrastructure in the city. In the nearby town of Volnovakha, Ukrainian officials confirmed that their forces have left the town, which according to them has been completely destroyed. Elsewhere in Ukraine on Saturday, local officials claimed that Russian troops fired on a convoy of women and children who were evacuating a village near Kyiv. At least seven people were killed. In the city of Mykolaiv, there were load explosions that occurred through the night and into the early morning hours on Saturday, with Ukrainian forces continuing to hold back an advance by Russian troops. A number of civilian neighbourhoods were targeted by Russian shelling.

Regional and International Reporting

Russia's finance minister has accused foreign countries of wanting to force Russia into an "artificial default" through sanctions. In a statement, Anton Siluanov disclosed that "the freezing of foreign currency accounts of the Bank of Russia and the Russian government can be regarded as the desire of a number of foreign countries to organize an artificial default that has no real economic grounds." Russian officials meanwhile have continued their iron grip on access to independent media and social media sites. NetBlocks reported on Sunday that Russia appears to have banned Instagram from operating in the country. On the ground in Russia, anti-war protests have continued to take place. According to OVD-Info NGO, which monitors arrests during protests, police on Sunday detained 817 people during demonstrations in 37 cities across the country. Law enforcement in Moscow reported that they had detained approximately 300 people in the city centre for breaches of public order.

Protests were also held globally over the weekend, including in Berlin, Germany on Sunday where up to 30,000 demonstrators waved Ukrainian flags and held anti-war banners. Protests against Russia's invasion of Ukraine were also held in a number of countries on Saturday, including in the UK and Italy. On Sunday, dozens of pro-Russian demonstrators rallied in the Serbian capital of Belgrade, voicing their support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Demonstrators were seen waving Russian and Serbian flags, with some vehicles painted with the letter Z, which has become a symbol for Russia's war in Ukraine after being seen on military vehicles. The protest was reportedly coordinated by a Serbian far-right group. This comes after thousands of Serbians took to the streets of Belgrade on 4 March in a public show of support for Putin and Russia. Two days later, there was a large anti-war march. While Serbia voted in favour of a UN resolution condemning Russia's invasion, it has not joined the growing list of countries that have announced economic sanctions on Russia.

Russian spokesman Dmitry Peskov has disclosed that Russia's plans for the Ukraine operation will be "realized in full" and in line with the original timetable. The Kremlin also stated that comments from the US and EU about the operation not going as Putin would like have been noted in Moscow. This statement however was contradicted by a Putin ally on Monday. The chief of Russia's National Guard, according to a Reuters report, disclosed that Moscow's military offensive in Ukraine is not going to plan. Viktor Zolotov, who is an ally and former bodyguard of Putin, disclosed, "I would like to say that yes, not everything is going as fast as we would like," blaming Russia's poor progress on far-right elements hiding amongst the Ukrainian population. If confirmed, this would be the strongest acknowledgement to date from a Kremlin official that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been slower than expected.

The Kremlin spokesman also disclosed that Moscow had planned to avoid civilian casualties and to refrain from storming major population centres, including Kyiv. However, during remarks broadcast on Rossiya 24 TV, Dmitry Peskov disclosed that urban warfare will "inevitably lead to a large number of casualties among civilians," adding "the ministry of defence, while ensuring maximum safety of the peaceful population, does not rule out the possibility of placing under its full control major population centres...with the exception of zones used for humanitarian evacuations." He also disclosed that US and EU officials were "pushing Russia towards storming major cities in Ukraine with a view to place responsibility for civilian deaths on our country," adding, "we think that such a position is provocative."

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Russia's central bank announced Saturday that the Moscow Exchange will remain closed from 14 - 18 March. In a statement, it disclosed that the foreign exchange market, money market and repo market will remain open on those days, adding that a decision on trading next week will be made in the coming days.

China has said that claims by US officials that Russia has asked Beijing to provide it with military assistance in Ukraine is "disinformation." The US has said that China will face harsh "consequences" if it does help Russia. The Kremlin has also denied the claims stating that it has the resources to meet its goals independently.

In central London, members of an anarchist groups, the Anarchist Action Network, have occupied a property linked to Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska. The group says that they are occupying the mansion in Belgrave Square in protest against Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to show "solidarity" with the people of Ukraine and Russian citizens "who never agreed to this madness." The group says that the property will serve as a "refugee support, for people of Ukraine and people of all nations and ethnicity." During the afternoon hours on Monday, police with riot shields entered the property after the group took over it on Monday morning. Deripaska, a 54-year-old industrialist who founded the aluminium giant Rusal, was added to the UK government's sanctions list on 10 March. In France, activists claimed to have broken into a French villa purportedly owned by a former relative of Putin. Video posted online depicted a man waving the Ukrainian flag from the balcony of a villa said to be located in the western city of Biarritz. Another activist reported that while inspecting the village, he found documents that appeared to belong to Putin's former son-in-law Kirill Shamalov, and Russian oligarch Gennady Timchenko, a close friend of Putin's. According to local property records, the villa was once owned by Timchenko and later transferred to Shamalov.

Reuters has reported that India is considering taking up a Russian offer to purchase its crude oil and other commodities at discounted prices, amidst heavy Western sanctions against Moscow. India, which imports 80% of its oil, usually purchases about 2 - 3% of its supplies from Russia. However with oil prices on the rise, Reuters has reported that the Indian government is looking to reduce its energy costs. One official has disclosed that they were happy to take the discounted goods and says that India is not concerned about getting entangled in sanctions, adding that work is ongoing to set up a rupee-rouble trade mechanism.

Over the weekend, the leaders of France and the US held a call, with the White House stating that both countries will hold Russia accountable for its invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile during a separate call on Saturday, French President Emmanuel Macron disclosed that Putin did not show any willingness to end the war in Ukraine during a 75-minute phone call between the leaders of France, Germany and Russia. Russia's deputy foreign minister meanwhile warned the West that arms convoys delivering weapons to Ukrainian forces could become "legitimate targets" for Russia's troops.

Croatian authorities have reported that it still remains unclear who launched a military drone that crashed in the capital Zagreb on 10 March. Military investigators spent the day on 12 March digging out what's left of the drone from the crater that it caused in the city's Jarun district. The head of the military police has disclosed that the drone's black box has been recovered intact, which could help investigators pinpoint who fired it. Officials in Kyiv have denied responsibility for the incident.



About MS Risk

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VIRTUAL SECURITY DIRECTOR SERVICE

- For clients lacking a full-time security executive

References are always available.

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