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# **BRIEF**

## **Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Situational Updates**

### **ZEROFOX INTELLIGENCE**

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Classification: TLP White

Criticality: High

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitical & Physical

**April 7, 2022**



## Scope Note

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# Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Situational Updates

## Executive Summary

Russia's withdrawal from the Kyiv outskirts revealed significant destruction to the surrounding towns, including hundreds of dead civilians found in Bucha, Irpin, and Borodyanka. Western leaders responded by introducing new sanctions to target Russian banks and the family of top Russian officials. The Russian military is shifting forces to southeast, where its effort will focus on conquering the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Mariupol continues to hold out against the ongoing Russian siege, but the coast is blockaded by the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and Ukrainian forces cannot be resupplied.

## Analyst Commentary

Russia's military withdrawal from Kyiv and the surrounding towns at the end of March 2022 revealed significant devastation and a large number of civilian deaths. The striking images and videos of bodies left on the road in Bucha, a suburb of Kyiv, led Western leaders to quickly introduce punishing new sanctions against Russia and accuse Russian President Vladimir Putin of war crimes. Ukrainian officials say that they found more than 400 civilian bodies in the liberated towns of Bucha, Irpin, and Borodyanka, including some locals who were bound and executed. Many of the deceased were reportedly used to create traps and disguise improvised explosive devices.<sup>1</sup>

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky discussed Bucha during an address to the UN Security Council on April 5, 2022. He demanded that the UN hold Russia accountable for the alleged crimes and criticized the international body itself, stating that it should be disbanded if it could do nothing to guarantee Ukraine's security. On

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/06/bucha-barbarism-atrocities-russian-soldiers/>



April 7, 2022, the UN General Assembly voted to suspend Russia from its Human Rights Council for “gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights.”<sup>2</sup>

The Russian Defense Ministry has denied claims that it mistreated civilians in the towns it occupied near Kyiv. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused Ukraine of staging the civilian deaths to damage Russia’s reputation, and Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov claimed that the destruction in Bucha was caused by Ukraine shelling the city after Russia had already left.<sup>3</sup> Russia’s ambassador to the UN said that Ukraine was staging atrocities to manipulate international opinion.

In the days since President Zelensky spoke to the UN, Ukraine itself has been accused of war crimes. On April 6, 2022, *The New York Times* verified footage that appeared to show the Ukrainian military killing captured Russian soldiers near the village of Dmytrivka. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that it would present evidence of Ukrainian war crimes to international organizations, and a spokesman for the UN Secretary-General said that all allegations of war crimes would be investigated.<sup>4</sup>

As Russia shifts its forces to southeast Ukraine, more evacuated towns and cities will be recaptured by Ukrainian forces, and more scenes of destruction will likely be discovered. Civilian targeting was used by the Russian military as a tactic to support operations in Syria, and Russia has been credibly accused of doing the same in Ukraine. It creates panic in areas facing a Russian advance, puts pressure on officials to surrender and save civilian lives, and creates large refugee populations that cause political issues for local, national, and international governing bodies. Ukraine’s military has resisted Russian advances on multiple fronts, but the civilian toll of the fighting will continue to rise—especially in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which have been at war since 2014.

## International Response

The U.S. and UK governments announced new sanctions on April 6, 2022, prompted by the destruction found in Kyiv’s suburbs after the Russian evacuation. The White House announced action to freeze all Sberbank and Alfa Bank assets connected to the U.S. financial system, ban new investment in Russia by U.S. citizens, and prohibit Russian debt repayment with funds from U.S. banks.<sup>5</sup> The United States also expanded sanctions against the family of top Russian officials; President Putin’s daughters and the wife and daughter of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are among those being

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/un-vote-suspending-russia-human-rights-council-over-ukraine-2022-04-07>

<sup>3</sup><https://tass.com/politics/1431827>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/06/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#russia-pows-ukraine-executed>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/06/fact-sheet-united-states-g7-and-eu-impose-severe-and-immediate-costs-on-russia/>



sanctioned. UK sanctions will similarly freeze Sberbank assets and ban both new investment in Russia and imports of Russian iron and steel products. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss also announced the UK government's intention to end the country's use of Russian coal and oil.<sup>6</sup>

On April 6, 2022, EU diplomats failed to agree to new sanctions that included a proposed EU-wide ban on all imports of Russian coal. Approximately 70 percent of thermal coal imported by the EU in 2021 came from Russia. The sanctions proposed by the European Commission also included bans on Russian and Belarusian road transport and exports of semiconductors and advanced computers. EU representatives are expected to meet again on April 7, 2022, to discuss revised sanctions and means for implementation. Notably, the EU is still not discussing sanctions against Gazprombank, which acts as the main processor of payments for Russian natural gas.

Russian diplomats are being expelled from European capitals at an increasing rate. On April 5, 2022, alone, 90 Russian diplomats were expelled from Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Romania, and Spain. Latvia dismissed the Russian ambassador on April 4, 2022, and both Estonia and Latvia will close two Russian consulates by the end of the month. Germany, Poland, and Slovakia also kicked out Russian officials. More than 300 Russian diplomats have been expelled from embassies in EU countries since the start of the war in Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

## Physical Security Impacts

The Ukrainian military has regained significant territory in the north and northeast as Russian armed forces complete their withdrawal. Russia has fully withdrawn its military from around Kyiv and left behind destruction in Bucha, Irpin, and the other suburbs that it occupied. They have also withdrawn from Chernihiv, a large city northeast of Kyiv that Russian forces failed to capture in their attempted advance on the capital. The Sumy region may also be retaken by Ukrainian forces in the coming days, as the Russian military is believed to have withdrawn its troops from the region and sent them across the Russian border to Belgorod.

Ukrainian forces in Mariupol are divided and encircled but continue to hold out against Russian advances. Although the current environment in the city makes it difficult to verify information, there are reports that Ukraine has been able to resupply some of its forces in Mariupol. Nevertheless, the long-term prospects for Mariupol are not good, as it remains a point of focus for Russian operations in the Donetsk region. Russia's Black Sea Fleet has also blockaded the Sea of Azov and Ukrainian ports and prevented any sustained support from reaching Mariupol and other coastal cities.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-imposes-sweeping-new-sanctions-to-starve-putins-war-machine>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.ft.com/content/a41alc75-2705-400e-872d-9b1d4ea8e67c>



The Russian military is redeploying forces from Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy to Belgorod in anticipation of eventual deployment to the Donbas regions. Russia's political and military focus has shifted almost entirely to the Donbas—where the frontline is now located near Izyum, Severodonetsk, and Popasna. Ukraine has stopped earlier Russian efforts to push south from Izyum to collapse the southeastern salient behind Ukrainian forces, but Russian forces will continue to redeploy and accumulate in the southeast in an effort to push toward Slovyansk and Kramatorsk.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the Russian military withdrawal from north and northeast Ukraine, Russia maintains long-range missile capabilities that it continues to use on critical infrastructure in cities that are not on the front line. On April 3, 2022, cruise missiles struck an oil refinery and storage facilities in Odesa, and fuel depots in Lviv and Dnipro were struck by Russian missiles in late March. Since the start of war, Russia has consistently targeted critical infrastructure in distant cities to reduce Ukraine's capacity to sustain its war effort.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-6>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/03/odessa-ukraine-russian-strikes-port/>



## Appendix: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

### Red

#### WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

##### Sources may use TLP:

**RED** when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.

#### HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

##### Recipients may NOT share TLP:

**RED** with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.

### Amber

##### Sources may use TLP:

**AMBER** when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.

##### Recipients may ONLY share TLP:

**AMBER** information with members of their own organization and only as widely as necessary to act on that information.

### Green

#### WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

##### Sources may use TLP:

**GREEN** when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.

#### HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

##### Recipients may share TLP:

**GREEN** information with peers & partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.

### White

##### Sources may use TLP:

**WHITE** when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.

##### Recipients may share TLP:

**WHITE** information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.