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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Against the background of the Russian Ministry of Defence's (R MOD) ongoing military offensive in Ukraine and the resultant heightened tensions between the Russian government and NATO member states, this report aims to provide an overview of wider strategic developments relevant to these dynamics.

On strategic developments vis-à-vis R MOD's invasion of Ukraine, both R MOD and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (R MFA) warned foreign governments to evacuate Kyiv, stating that Russia would launch mass missile strikes on the city centre if Ukraine targets Moscow's Victory Day parade on 9 May 26. The warnings followed Russia's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire for 8 – 9 May 26. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had also announced a separate unilateral ceasefire that began on 6 May 26 but later said that Ukraine would respond symmetrically following the continuation of Russian strikes. While Russia has previously warned of retaliatory action in response to the violation of announced unilateral ceasefires, the specific nature of the warning is assessed as a new shift in Russia's rhetoric. Separately, Russia introduced a six-month ban, effective 29 Apr 26, on importing foreign radio-electronic equipment capable of transmitting or receiving signals from satellites, including Starlink terminals. The decree follows efforts by the Russian government to restrict mobile internet since at least May 2025, claiming the outages are a security measure against Ukrainian Ministry of Defence (U MOD) UAVs.¹ Multiple media outlets have however speculated that the outages are part of a broader campaign by the Russian government to restrict internet access in Russia.

On Russian activity in the Arctic and Baltic region, on 30 Apr 26, the Project 12700 Aleksandrit-class (NATO: Aleksandrit) minesweeper 'Polyarniy' was reportedly inducted into the Northern Fleet at the Baltic Fleet naval base in Baltiysk. The ceremony was overseen by Northern Fleet Commander Adm Konstantin Kabantsov. Russian sources stated that the minesweeper will support the protection and deployment of nuclear submarines, with plans to expand the fleet by up to 20 – 30 vessels by 2050.

On Russia's military-industrial complex, on 28 Apr 26, a Ukrainian research organisation published an investigation alleging that non-sanctioned Russian firm Morsvyazavtomatika is acting as a shadow contractor in the production of the Iskander-M (NATO: SS-26 Stone) SRBMs² missiles by using its civilian status to source high-precision foreign equipment and supply critical components to Votkinsk Plant under R MOD oversight. The report further claimed Russia is running a "Gladiator-Air Defence" modernisation programme to develop low-altitude UAV detection systems with specialised power units, while also highlighting a military equipment restoration base in St Petersburg as an important facility.

Several developments related to Russia's political and economic stability, most notably, Mintsifry³ announced potential restrictions and pricing changes on internet content accessed via a VPN,⁴ that would include separate pricing for access to international internet traffic primarily for mobile networks. While Russia's Ministry of Finance reported a rise in oil and gas revenues and extraction taxes Apr 2026, an opposition journalist highlighted that large state subsidies for refinery repairs and fuel price support meant only a "token" realised profit. The government-associated think tank TsMAKP⁵ also issued a press release in which it announced it had revised down Russia's 2026 – 2029 forecasts for oil, oil product and pipeline gas exports, citing U MOD strikes on ports and refineries, pipeline disruptions, and capacity constraints in pipelines and storage forcing reductions in output.

The below reporting has been derived from Russian language online local and regional social-media and news media content.

This is a commercially provided report based on open source information. Any comments expressed within the report are those of the provider and do not reflect the views of any other organisation or party.

¹ Uncrewed aerial vehicles.

² Short-range ballistic missiles.

³ Ministry of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media.

⁴ Virtual private network.

⁵ Centre for Macroeconomic Analysis and Short-term Projections.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS VIS-À-VIS R MOD'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

1. Russia warns foreign governments to evacuate Kyiv ahead of Victory Day

The Russian Ministry of Defence (R MOD) and Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (R MFA)⁶ issued statements on 4 May 26 and 6 May 26, respectively, urging foreign governments to evacuate diplomats and citizens from Kyiv⁷ due to the risk of mass Russian missile strikes in the event Ukraine targets the Moscow Victory Day parade⁸ celebrations on 9 May 26.⁹

The *R MOD* claimed that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had threatened to strike the Victory Day parade in Moscow and added that it would retaliate with a mass missile strike at the centre of Kyiv if Ukraine targeted the Victory Day parade and called for Kyiv's civilian population and foreign diplomats to leave Kyiv.¹⁰ [COMMENT: As previously reported on 28 Apr 26, residential buildings in Kyiv were damaged following a mass R MOD UAV¹¹ depth strike the same day.¹²]

On 4 May 26, *Zelensky*, via his official Telegram channel, announced a separate unilateral ceasefire starting from 0000hrs on 6 May 26. *Zelensky* stated that Ukraine would act symmetrically [if R MOD violates the ceasefire] and called for Russia's leadership to take real steps to end the war.¹³ In a follow-up post, on 6 May 26, *Zelensky* stated that following Russian strikes across multiple Ukrainian cities, Ukraine would respond symmetrically [by not complying with Russia's ceasefire].¹⁴

[COMMENT: The R MOD and R MFA warnings follow an R MOD announcement, on 28 Apr 26, that the Victory Day parade on Red Square in Moscow would be held in a reduced format due to the "current operational situation". This was assessed as likely to be a reference to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.¹⁵

While Russia has previously threatened retaliatory attacks in the event of unilateral ceasefire violations by Ukraine, previous specific threats from Russian officials and ministries of retaliatory attacks targeting central Kyiv in the event of a violation were not identified in open source reporting and is therefore assessed as a new shift in Russia's rhetoric.

In May 2025, President Vladimir Putin announced a similar temporary unilateral ceasefire between 8 – 10 May 25 to mark Victory Day. At the time, Putin stated that he expected the Ukrainian leadership to reciprocate, adding that should they violate, or not participate in the ceasefire, the Russian military would respond with force.¹⁶

2. Decree bans imports on foreign radio-electronic equipment

[CONTEXT: On 2 Feb 26, Ukrainian Minister of Defence Mykhailo Fedorov stated that the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence (U MOD) was working with Starlink satellite internet system owner and operator SpaceX to verify and whitelist all Starlink terminals in Ukraine, with the aim of restricting R MOD's access to the system.¹⁷

Since Feb 2026, R MOD elements have begun attempting various adaptations to mitigate communications problems caused by the blocking of non-whitelisted Starlink terminals in Ukraine, including using Wi-Fi

⁶ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/2103953/

⁷ Located at: 50.449909, 30.524560

⁸ Located at: 55.754238, 37.619632

⁹ See: 20260507-RUSSIA_SPOT_REPORT_MFA_Calls_for_foreign_diplomats_to_leave_Kyiv.

¹⁰ <https://mil.ru/news/a2acc623-cf98-4cf5-9049-354a0e15853e>

¹¹ Uncrewed aerial vehicle.

¹² See: 20260506-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Russian_Military_Offensive_on_Ukraine_192 (3).

¹³ https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/18877

¹⁴ https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/18908

¹⁵ See: 20260501-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_204 (1).

¹⁶ See: 20250502-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_153 (4).

¹⁷ See: 20260204-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Russian_Military_Offensive_on_Ukraine_179 (8).

radio bridges, alternative satellite internet services, stratospheric 5G platforms, and bribing or coercing Ukrainian nationals.¹⁸

On 8 Apr 26, Russian mainstream news outlet *Izvestia* reported that R MOD had established new units that coordinated the deployment of mobile radar stations with interceptor UAVs to counter Ukrainian UAVs entering Russian airspace.^{19]}

On 30 Apr 26, the official Russian state legislation portal *Pravo* uploaded a decree introducing a six-month ban [effective from 29 Apr 26] on imports of radio-electronic equipment used to transmit or receive signals from foreign satellites, unless authorised by the State Commission on Radio Frequencies.^{20 21}

On the same date, Russian opposition-oriented news outlet *The Moscow Times* claimed that the ban included Starlink terminals and had been introduced amid tightening control over the internet, citing data provided by Russian tech-focused media project Na Svyazi²² that showed mobile shutdowns had affected over 60 regions since May 2025.

[COMMENT: As previously reported, the Russian government has been restricting mobile internet since at least May 2025, claiming the outages were a security measure against U MOD UAVs. On 19 Jun 25, Deputy Head of the State Duma Committee on Information Policy, Information Technologies and Communications Andrey Svintsov was cited as explaining that recent internet outages (since May 2025) were due to U MOD tactics, which involved using Russian mobile internet to control its UAVs. Between Jun and Nov 2025, numerous press and social media outlets have however speculated that the outages are part of a broader campaign by the Russian government to restrict internet access in Russia.^{23]}

The Moscow Times cited [unnamed] “informed” Reuters sources that claimed Russian officials had studied internet control practices in China and Iran and had been tasked with finding ways to block large segments of the internet.²⁴

On 1 May 26, official Russian government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* stated that the restriction applied to goods classified under four Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) custom codes,²⁵ covering satellite terminals, base stations, and other equipment. The newspaper cited [unspecified] “experts” who claimed that the decision was aimed at combatting illegal imports of satellite equipment, since Starlink devices had been reaching Russia through unofficial channels and were even sold online until recently. It added that the “customs authorities” and [unspecified] “intelligence agencies” would monitor the enforcement of the ban.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta reported that the ban could also affect some of the latest mobile devices from Apple, Samsung, and other manufacturers that use satellite communications, claiming that there was uncertainty surrounding product code 8517 69 900 0, a broad category that includes “other” devices such as telephone equipment for cellular and wireless networks. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* cited an analyst at Moscow-based Mobile Research Group, Eldar Murtazin, as saying that this definition could formally cover consumer devices, but in practice they may not be affected because their satellite functions were not activated in Russia.²⁶

¹⁸ See: 20260218-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Russian_Military_Offensive_on_Ukraine_181 (5).

¹⁹ See: 20260417-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_202 (9).

²⁰ An interdepartmental coordination body operating under the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation. See: <http://archive.government.ru/gov/agencies/224/base.html>

²¹ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202604300055>

²² Rus: In contact.

²³ See: 20251114-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_181 (1, 13).

²⁴ <https://ru.themoscowtimes.com/2026/04/30/pravitelstvo-ogranichilo-vvoz-v-rossiyu-terminalov-starlink-a194333>

²⁵ The customs codes reportedly included: 8517 61 000 2; 8517 61 000 8; 8517 62 000 9; and 8517 69 900 0.

²⁶ <https://rg.ru/2026/05/01/postavki-starlink-v-rossiu-zapreshcheny-gadzhety-apple-i-samsung-pod-voprosom.html>

DEVELOPMENTS VIS-À-VIS RUSSIAN ACTIVITY IN THE ARCTIC AND BALTIC REGION

3. Northern Fleet receives new minesweeper

On 30 Apr 26, *R MOD*'s official Telegram channel reported that a ceremony (Images below) had taken place, on an unspecified date [at the Baltic Fleet (BF) naval base] in Baltiysk²⁷ to induct the Project 12700 Aleksandrit-class²⁸ [NATO: Aleksandrit] minesweeper 'Polyarniy' into the Northern Fleet (NF), with the ceremony presided over by NF Commander Adm Konstantin Kabantsov.²⁹



On the same day, *Izvestia* reported that the 'Polyarniy' was the NF's second Project 12700 minesweeper, joining the 'Afanasiy Ivannikov'. Prior to its induction, the vessel had reportedly undergone a series of tests at BF training areas [NFDK]. *Izvestia* also cited commentary by the following military experts:

- Cpt 1st Rank Vasily Dandykin said that such minesweepers were essential to protecting Russian naval bases, including the nuclear submarine bases in Kamchatka³⁰ [belonging to the Pacific Fleet], and "in the north" [likely implying NF bases in the Kola Bay³¹ area]. Dandykin also noted that Project 12700 vessels were equipped with [unnamed] uncrewed mine-hunting systems and added that the 'Polyarniy's' induction into the NF was particularly relevant given increasing naval activity in the Arctic.
- Dmitry Boltenkov noted that the NF planned to form a group of four [Project 12700] minesweepers, with "several" older vessels gradually being decommissioned.

Izvestia cited [both] experts as saying the main objective of NF minesweeping vessels was to ensure the safe departure of nuclear submarines from their bases, and to escort them to deployment areas.

The outlet further noted that the 'Polyarniy' was the Russian Navy's tenth Project 12700 Aleksandrit-class minesweeper. Another vessel, the 'Dmitry Lysov', was currently preparing for tests and would join the NF upon completion, a further five vessels were reportedly under construction. *Izvestia* cited Deputy Commander of the Russian Navy Vice Adm Igor Mukhametshin as stating in [early Dec³²] 2025 that at least 20 – 30 Project 12700 minesweepers would be built by 2050.³³

²⁷ Located at: 54.644510, 19.902184

²⁸ The Project 12700 minesweeper has an 890-tonne displacement, measures 61m by 10m, reaches 16.5kt, and carries a crew of 44, with thrusters enabling high manoeuvrability and a monolithic fibreglass hull designed to resist naval mines. It is equipped with an AK-306 CIWS, machine guns, and advanced systems including sonar, an integrated bridge, and automated anti-mine controls to establish anti-mine operations. See:

<https://iz.ru/2088963/roman-kretcul/chem-zaymetsya-tralschik-proekta-aleksandrit-v-arktike>

²⁹ https://t.me/mod_russia/63067?single

³⁰ Located at: 52.915996, 158.498476

³¹ Located at: 69.259125, 33.333127

³² <https://vz.ru/news/2025/12/5/1378831.html>

³³ <https://iz.ru/2088963/roman-kretcul/chem-zaymetsya-tralschik-proekta-aleksandrit-v-arktike>

4. Tu-95MS strategic bomber patrol over international waters of Barents and Norwegian Seas

On 30 Apr 26, R MOD's official Telegram channel reported that [at least two] Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) Tu-95MS [NATO: Bear-H] strategic bomber aircraft (Image right) had carried out a planned flight over international waters of the Barents³⁴ and Norwegian seas.³⁵



R MOD stated that the flight had lasted over seven hours, during which crews had practised aerial refuelling. R MOD stated that the fighter escort had been provided by crews of Su-30SM [NATO: Flanker-H] multi-role fighter aircraft, and that at certain stages of the route, the strategic bombers were intercepted by fighter aircraft of [unspecified] foreign states.³⁶

[COMMENT: On 8 May 26, Norwegian-based and western Arctic-focused news source *Barents Observer*, cited a spokesperson of the Royal Norwegian Airforce, who stated that two Norwegian F-35 aircraft on NATO Quick Reaction Alert readiness identified the two Tu-95MS strategic bombers, with at least one observed carrying a Kh-101 (NATO: AS-23 Kodiak A) ALCM,³⁷ and two Su-30SM multi-role fighter aircraft in the international waters over the Barents Sea on 30 Apr 26.³⁸]

MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AND CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

5. Ukrainian researchers publish investigation exposing Russian military-industrial complex entities

On 28 Apr 26, Ukrainian research organisation the *Institute for Social Dynamics and Security 'KRONOS'* published an investigation into how the Russian military-industrial complex (MIC) was adapting in the face of "severe international sanctions", which included how the non-sanctioned entity LLC³⁹ NPK Morsvyazavtomatika⁴⁰ (INN: 7842327352) was operating as a "shadow contractor" involved in the production of Iskander-M [NATO: SS-26 Stone] SRBMs.⁴¹

KRONOS claimed that Morsvyazavtomatika was operating as a "front company" that exploited its civilian status to pass compliance checks with European and Asian suppliers to obtain "high-precision metalworking equipment", including "European computer numerical control (CNC) machines". Citing procurement contracts between Morsvyazavtomatika and JSC⁴² Votkinsk Plant⁴³ (INN: 1828020110), where the final assembly of Iskander-M SRBMs reportedly takes place, KRONOS reported that Morsvyazavtomatika was a key contractor within the supply chain that provided critical components for the missile. The research organisation cited a contract, dated 15 Oct 25, for the manufacture of a batch of 4,000 units of precision parts, including high-strength bushings, special brackets, rings, and metal nozzles, which were valued at 80.90 million RUB [approx. 792,600 GBP] as per a later supplementary agreement dated 30 Dec 25. According to KRONOS, the 258th Military Representation of R MOD, under the leadership of V. A. Kunshin, would have direct oversight over the execution of the contract.

In addition, the KRONOS investigation also claimed that Russia had launched a "strategic air defence modernisation programme under the codename 'Gladiator-Air Defence'". The programme's objective was

³⁴ Located at: 74.988395, 37.106367

³⁵ Located at: 68.215650, 4.566510

³⁶ https://t.me/mod_russia/63070#

³⁷ Air launched cruise missile.

³⁸ <https://www.thebarentsobserver.com/security/norwegian-f35s-track-russian-bombers-carrying-longrange-cruise-missile/450184>

³⁹ Limited liability company.

⁴⁰ Located at: 59.823412, 30.528715

⁴¹ Short-range ballistic missile.

⁴² Joint stock company.

⁴³ Located at: 57.051444, 53.985182

to create non-linear radar countermeasure systems capable of detecting UAVs at low altitudes, and that the main contractor for the project was St Petersburg-based company JSC NPP Radar MMS⁴⁴ [INN: 7814027653⁴⁵]. *KRONOS* claimed that JSC NPO Almaz⁴⁶ (INN: 7712040285) was the customer responsible for development, and it added that particular attention was being devoted to developing uninterruptible power supply units ABP-27-24-3 and UPS-54-400-48 as the in-development radar systems consumed a vast amount of energy.

KRONOS also identified a Military Equipment Restoration Base⁴⁷ at 57 Karaevskaya Street, St Petersburg, as an “important” facility.⁴⁸

RUSSIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

6. Ministry of Digital Development considers introducing charge for VPN users

On 28 Apr 26, the *Association of Communications Companies* (ACC)⁴⁹ published an official response, dated 27 Apr 26, from the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media (Mintsifry) to an enquiry from the ACC for clarification on Mintsifry’s plans regarding potential restrictions and pricing changes on internet content accessed via a VPN.⁵⁰ The Mintsifry reply stated that:

- Mintsifry was considering the introduction of separate pricing for [access to] international [internet] traffic, and that such measures may be implemented primarily for mobile networks, with no decision taken yet regarding fixed-line internet.
- Mintsifry equated the use of VPNs that do not restrict access to “blocked” online content [banned in Russia] to international traffic [and would therefore be implementing roaming like charges]. The blocking of VPN services providing access to online resources banned [in Russia] could be carried out centrally through the [Centre for Monitoring and Control of] Public Communication Networks.⁵¹
- Mintsifry, together with [unspecified] authorised bodies, was taking measures to restrict the work of such VPN services, and failure to comply with these requirements would result in Roskomnadzor⁵² restricting access to such resources.
- Regarding additional charges for international traffic, Mintsifry stated that the specific parameters of a mechanism for [charging] users of mobile phone communication services were currently being developed.⁵³

[COMMENT: Establishing controls over internet access and usage in Russia has been a longstanding focus for the Russian government, as reflected by the state’s introduction of the “Sovereign Internet Law” on 1 Nov 19.⁵⁴ As per previous reporting, since early 2025 the Russian authorities have attempted to increase

⁴⁴ Located at: 60.035000, 30.283062

⁴⁵ <https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-eC7dmjtHpHrs2eS3n2Y2Js/>

⁴⁶ Located at: 55.807744, 37.508750

⁴⁷ Located at: 59.823842, 30.525481

⁴⁸ <https://ksdsi.org/en/blog/yaderna-triada-rf-spetsialne-rozsliduvannya-kronos-dynamics-za-napryamkom-cybint-2>

⁴⁹ The Association of Communications Companies (ACC) is a Russian communication industry organisation dedicated to protecting the business interests of industry members. See: https://aks-rus.ru/?page_id=6

⁵⁰ Virtual private network.

⁵¹ The Centre for Monitoring and Control of Public Communications Networks is a subsidiary of Russian state media regulator Roskomnadzor, the official objective of which is to ensure the stable operation of the Russian internet. The centre reportedly monitors network connectivity, counters cyberattacks and manages the risks of disconnections from foreign root servers. See: <https://portal.noc.gov.ru/ru/cmuf/>; https://vk.com/wall-76229642_270751

⁵² Russia’s state media regulator Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor).

⁵³ <https://aks-rus.ru/?p=2130>

⁵⁴ Russia’s “Sovereign Internet Law” comprises a set of legislative amendments made to the “Federal Law on Communications” that came into effect on 1 Nov 19. They require all telecommunications companies in Russia to install “technical equipment” provided by Roskomnadzor, which was to be

control over the internet via several initiatives, including controlled mobile internet shutdowns,⁵⁵ limiting access to social media and messaging apps,⁵⁶ and, most recently, limiting VPN usage.⁵⁷

In Mar 2026, Russian business-orientated newspaper *Kommersant* cited an independent IT and artificial intelligence expert who claimed that 39% of Russian citizens used VPN services.⁵⁸ It is assessed as likely that the proposed charges, if implemented, would affect a large proportion of the Russian population. As previously reported on 29 Mar 26, a small protest against internet restrictions was held in Moscow. It was assessed that this protest, and requests for similar protests across Russia, demonstrated large-scale opposition to such restrictions.^{59]}

a. **Putin comments on internet outages.** On 23 Apr 26, the official website of the Russian Presidential Administration, *Kremlin.ru*, cited President Putin as acknowledging that [mobile⁶⁰] internet outages were occurring in large cities and claimed they were linked to efforts to prevent terrorist threats. Putin emphasised that the security of Russian citizens would always be top priority and called for the authorities to properly explain the reason for such outages to those affected by implementation.

Putin also instructed the head of Mintsifry, Maksut Shadayev, to develop a mechanism to ensure that payment systems and other important services, such as [the state services portal] Gosuslugi and medical appointment [systems] were not affected and continued to operate during internet restrictions.⁶¹

On the same day, pro-government news outlet *Gazeta.ru* noted that it was the first time Putin had [directly] commented on the ongoing internet restrictions.⁶²

[**COMMENT:** The whitelist system managed and updated by Mintsifry was created in 2025 and is supposed to provide access to a list of approved online resources including Gosuslugi and some mobile payment services.⁶³ Previous reporting has indicated that despite these measures mobile internet restrictions have impacted payment systems and services on the whitelist.^{64 65}

used to control internet traffic in response to threats. The law also stipulates that the equipment can be used to filter internet traffic and limit access to websites banned in Russia. On 31 Jul 25, President Putin signed another bill updating regulations on internet usage, which while purportedly intended to fine searchers for “extremist material”, also involved additional restrictions for VPN users.

See: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/01/11/2019/5d5b1cb49a794777b009bd6; <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/608767-7>

⁵⁵ See: 20251114-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_181 (1) and 20260313-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_197 (10).

⁵⁶ See: 20260213- RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_193 (11) and 20260320-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_198 (9).

⁵⁷ See: 20260410-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_201 (7).

⁵⁸ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/8551281>

⁵⁹ See: 20260402-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_200 (9).

⁶⁰ The Russian government has been restricting mobile internet since at least May 2025, claiming the outages were a security measure against U MOD UAVs. On 19 Jun 25, Russian mainstream media outlet News.ru reported that Deputy Head of the State Duma Committee on Information Policy, Information Technologies and Communications Andrey Svintsov explained that recent internet outages (since May 2025) were due to U MOD tactics, which involved using Russian mobile internet to control its UAVs. Between Jun and Nov 2025, numerous press and social media outlets have speculated that the outages are part of a broader campaign by the Russian government to restrict internet access in Russia. See: 20251114-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_181 (2, 13).

⁶¹ <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/79600>

⁶² <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2026/04/23/22833043.shtml>

⁶³ On 7 Aug 25, Interfax cited Shadayev, who claimed that Mintsifry and Russia’s communications companies had prepared the technical framework for a whitelist of necessary and popular online resources, which would allow Russians to access them via mobile internet during restrictions. According to Mintsifry’s official site, the whitelist comes into effect only during mobile internet restrictions initiated due to UAV strikes and does not affect wired internet. The list of accessible resources is frequently updated by Mintsifry, with the online platforms required to have all their hardware based in Russia. According to multiple Russian tech-focused sites and media, when in effect, mobile internet blocks work by restricting access to all online content outside of the whitelist, determining the requested resource and whether to allow or block access via Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) analysis. See: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/1040184> ; <https://digital.gov.ru/official-position/belyi-spisok-ispolzuetsya-tolko-pri-ogranichenii-mobilnogo-interneta> ; <https://digital.gov.ru/news/v-belyi-spisok-vklyucheny-novye-servisy#> ; <https://www.securitylab.ru/blog/personal/SimplpeHacker/356404.php?ysclid=mnpy7d8slx899367924> ; <https://dominternet.ru/blog/belyi-spisok-interneta-v-rossii-chto-vhodit-i-kak-rabotaet/>

⁶⁴ See: 20260313-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_197 (10).

⁶⁵ <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/19/03/2026/69bbcf389a7947df6d73a405>

Given the assessed large-scale opposition to internet restrictions in Russia, it is assessed as possible that Putin was seeking to allay mounting concerns over the internet restrictions. On 14 Apr 25, Bloomberg reported that “a public backlash over tightening internet restrictions in Russia” was forcing the Russian authorities to reconsider the crackdown amidst concerns it was “hurting” President Putin’s support.⁶⁶

As previously reported, on 17 Apr 26, the state-owned ‘Russian Public Opinion Research Centre’ VTsIOM’s latest figures for Putin’s approval rating (66.7%) indicated a decline for the sixth consecutive week. On 13 Apr 26, Russian celebrity blogger Victoria Bonya published an 18-minute video address “to Putin” on Instagram, in which she alleged that [Putin] was unaware of the many issues facing Russians, one of the most pressing being internet restrictions.⁶⁷

7. Latest Ministry of Finance figures show excess oil and gas profits

On 6 May 26, the official website of the *Russian Ministry of Finance*⁶⁸ (MinFin) published its latest statistics on state oil and gas revenues indicating that the Russia had recorded overall oil and gas proceeds of approx. 855.6 billion RUB [approx. 8.38 billion GBP] in Apr 2026, compared to approx. 617 billion RUB [approx. 6.04 billion GBP] in Mar 2026. In addition, the *MinFin* results showed that the state had collected approx. 916.8 billion RUB [approx. 8.98 billion GBP] in taxes for oil and gas extraction in Apr 2026, compared to 442.9 billion RUB [approx. 4.33 billion GBP] in Mar 2026.⁶⁹

On the same date, Russian opposition journalist Farida Rustamova posted, via her Telegram channel *Faridaily*, that the MinFin results for Apr 2026 were the first to reflect the full impact of the war in Iran [that began on 28 Feb 26⁷⁰] on Russian oil and gas revenues, as they comprised taxes for oil and gas extraction collected in Mar 2026. The channel however noted that the increase in revenues had been offset by higher expenses, with the state having paid over 350 billion RUB [approx. 3.43 billion GBP] in subsidies to oil companies in Apr 2026. *Faridaily* reported that this sum had been spent to cover the cost of modernisation and repair works at oil refineries, which was “particularly important” in the context of U MOD strikes [See para. 8], and to maintain low oil prices for consumers, and as a result the state had only recorded “token” excess profits of 21 billion RUB [approx. 205.69 million GBP].

Faridaily cited an [unnamed] MinFin source, who claimed that Russia’s excess profits from oil and gas revenues would be greater in May 2026. The source referenced a statement made by Minister of Finance Anton Siluanov [on 3 May 26⁷¹] that Russia would receive windfall profits of 200 billion RUB [approx. 1.96 billion GBP] due to higher oil prices, which the source claimed Siluanov expected to transpire in the results for May 2026.⁷²

[**COMMENT:** As per previous reporting, on 29 Jan 26, the state-owned Gazprombank’s *Centre for Economic Forecasting* (CEF) reported on the potential impact that persistently low Russian oil prices would have on Russia’s National Wealth Fund (NWF). It predicted that if oil were to trade at 49 USD (approx. 36 GBP) per barrel, NWF’s liquid assets, amounting to 4.1 trillion RUB (approx. 39.06 billion GBP) at the end of 2025, would suffice to compensate for reduced oil revenues for 1.3 years.⁷³

On 2 Mar 26, *Reuters* reported that prices for oil and natural gas had “surged” at the restart of trading that day, after strikes had disrupted shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and forced the shutdown of oil and gas facilities across the Middle East.⁷⁴ On the same date, the Russian pro-government online

⁶⁶ See: 20260417-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_202 (10).

⁶⁷ See: 20260424-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_203 (10).

⁶⁸ minfin.gov.ru.

⁶⁹ https://minfin.gov.ru/ru/statistics/fedbud/oil?id_57=122094-

[svedeniya o formirovani i ispolzovanii dopolnitelnykh neftegazovykh dokhodov federalnogo byudzheta v 2018-2026 godakh](https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/global-reaction-israeli-us-attacks-iran-2026-02-28/)

⁷⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/global-reaction-israeli-us-attacks-iran-2026-02-28/>

⁷¹ <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/27294153>

⁷² <https://t.me/faridaily24/2017>

⁷³ See: 20260206-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_192 (10).

⁷⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/oil-jumps-us-iran-conflict-escalates-disrupts-shipping-2026-03-01/>

newspaper *Vzglyad* cited energy expert Igor Yushkov, who claimed that Russian energy exporters could stand to gain from a protracted conflict in the Middle East as Russia would generate higher revenues from the sale of oil and gas.^{75 76]}

8. Government-associated think tank revises energy export projections

On 30 Apr 26, Russian government-associated think tank the *Centre for Macroeconomic Analysis and Short-term Projections*⁷⁷ (TsMAKP) published a press release on its official website titled ‘On changes to the parameters of the macroeconomic forecast in light of new geopolitical conditions’.

The *TsMAKP* stated that when updating the external factors affecting its baseline scenario for Russia’s social and economic development, the primary risks considered had been associated with extracting and exporting Russian hydrocarbons due to “new attacks on [Russian] port infrastructure and oil refineries”. It specifically cited strikes “at the end of Mar 2026” on “key Russian Baltic Sea ports”,⁷⁸ including Ust-Luga⁷⁹ and Primorsk;⁸⁰ damage to the Sheskhari Oil Terminal⁸¹ at the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk [inflicted by U MOD UAV strikes on 5 Apr 26⁸²]; and the suspension of gas exports to Hungary and Slovakia via the ‘Druzhba’ pipeline in Ukraine for a four-month period [between Jan – Apr 2026⁸³], which *TsMAKP* warned could resume “at any moment”. *TsMAKP* added that issues with oil shipments meant that the Russian state-controlled oil pipeline company Transneft’s “pipeline system” and reserve oil depots had reached full capacity, and extraction operations had therefore been reduced.

TsMAKP claimed that forecasts for the export of Russian oil and oil products in 2026 – 2029 had been revised down, with the export of such products expected to fall year-on-year in 2026. It reported that crude oil exports were expected to decline slightly from 2027 – 2029, while oil product exports were projected to remain relatively consistent. The export of Russian natural gas exports via pipelines in 2026 – 2029 had been revised down slightly due to potential transportation issues. Overall, *TsMAKP* concluded that oil and natural gas production had been lowered amid declining exports and slowing Russian economic growth.⁸⁴

[COMMENT: As per previous reporting, between 22 – 31 Mar 26, Leningrad Oblast Governor *Alexander Drozdenko* reported on U MOD UAV strikes on Leningrad Oblast, with infrastructure damaged including Russian oil and gas facilities.⁸⁵ On 27 Mar 26, *Drozdenko* announced that the region had introduced a “high alert regime” in response to the “unprecedented attacks”.⁸⁶

U MOD confirmed Ukraine had struck Transneft’s terminal at Primorsk Oil Loading Port⁸⁷ on 22 Mar 26 and Russian natural gas producer Novatek’s refinery⁸⁸ in Ust-Luga on 24 Mar 26.

⁷⁵ <https://vz.ru/news/2026/3/2/1398702.html>

⁷⁶ See: 20260402-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_200 (8).

⁷⁷ TsMAKP was founded in 2000 by current Russian Minister of Defence Andrey Belousov, and its current leadership includes his brother, Dmitry Belousov. Since its founding, the centre has reportedly developed long-term strategies for various state entities. However, despite its reported proximity to the government, TsMAKP is quite regularly cited as highlighting negative economic trends in Russian mainstream media. See: <http://www.forecast.ru/cef.htm>; <https://www.agents.media/think-tank-pravitelstva-nachal-obsuzhdat-kak-predotvratit-perestrojku-posle-zastoya/>

⁷⁸ See: 20260402-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_200 (1).

⁷⁹ Located at: 59.669995, 28.395711

⁸⁰ Located at: 60.338889, 28.719722

⁸¹ Located at: 44.707531, 37.845486

⁸² See: 20260408-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Russian_Military_Offensive_on_Ukraine_188 (4).

⁸³ According to reporting from *Reuters*, the pipeline was damaged following a Russian attack on a pumping facility in Jan 2026, and operations resumed on 22 Apr 26 following repairs. See: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/druzhba-oil-pipeline-can-resume-operations-zelenskiy-says-2026-04-21/>

⁸⁴ <http://www.forecast.ru/Forecast/2026/20260430escenario.pdf>

⁸⁵ https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9457; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9459; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9462; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9484; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9525; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9539; https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9539

⁸⁶ https://t.me/drozdenko_au_lo/9507

⁸⁷ Located at: 60.338889, 28.719722

⁸⁸ Located at: 59.770733, 28.467904

On 16 and 20 Apr 26, multiple U MOD and pro-U MOD sources posted that U MOD UAV strikes had targeted the Tuapse Oil Refinery,⁸⁹ Krasnodar Krai. Pro-U MOD sources reported that the strikes had caused extensive fires around the refinery and Tuapse Port,⁹⁰ whilst damage to the port and civilian infrastructure were also reported.^{91]}

9. Director of Sarmat ICBM manufacturer arrested on corruption charges

On 4 May 26, *Kommersant* reported that, on 30 Apr 26, the general director of JSC Krasnoyarsk Machine-Building Plant⁹² (Krasmach), Alexander Gavrilov (Image right), had been arrested on corruption and embezzlement charges. The newspaper claimed that Gavrilov was suspected of having embezzled “tens of millions of roubles” [NFDK] in public funds and of accepting a bribe worth 3 million RUB [approx. 29,413 GBP].



According to *Kommersant*, Gavrilov has been the director of Krasmach since 2018 and had recently submitted documents to run as a candidate for the United Russia Party⁹³ ahead of the upcoming regional parliamentary elections [due to be held on 20 Sep 26⁹⁴]. The newspaper reported that Krasmach is a subsidiary of the Makeyev Rocket Design Bureau,⁹⁵ which in turn is part of Russia’s state space agency Roscosmos and is the enterprise responsible for manufacturing the ‘Sarmat’ [NATO: SS-X-30] inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM).^{96 97}

[**COMMENT:** On 7 Oct 23, *R MOD* reported that Krasmach had begun manufacturing the first consignment of mass-produced Sarmat ICBMs.⁹⁸

The only officially reported Sarmat ICBM test launch was held on 20 Apr 22. On 23 Sep 24, an RS-28 Sarmat ICBM test launch was assessed to have ended in failure, amidst claims that the missile had exploded in its silo (likely between 19 – 21 Sep 24) at its testing site at Plesetsk Cosmodrome.⁹⁹ Subsequent satellite imagery of its testing site from mid-Sep 2025 suggested little progress has been made to repair it, with this likely postponing its testing schedule.¹⁰⁰

On 4 Nov 25, Putin stated that the in-development Sarmat ICBM would be placed on “experimental combat duty” at the end of 2025 and on full combat duty in 2026.^{101]}

⁸⁹ Located at: 44.101666, 39.098552

⁹⁰ Located at: 44.095500, 39.063950

⁹¹ See: 20260422-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Russian_Military_Offensive_on_Ukraine_190 (4).

⁹² Located at: 56.009531, 92.984633

⁹³ President Putin-aligned United Russia (UR) party.

⁹⁴ Russia’s legislative elections will see the election of 450 representatives to the lower house of Russia’s parliament, the State Duma. See: <http://t.me/cikrossii/5201>

⁹⁵ Located at: 55.112014, 60.140022

⁹⁶ The ‘Sarmat’ (Rus: Sarmatian) is a heavy inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), designed to replace the previous generation of silo-based, Soviet-designed heavy ICBMs, primarily the R-36 Voevoda (NATO: SS-18 Satan).

⁹⁷ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/8635167>

⁹⁸ See: 20231027-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_75 (5).

⁹⁹ Located at: 62.914437, 40.549175

¹⁰⁰ See: 20250926-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_174 (12).

¹⁰¹ See: 20251107-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_180 (8).

10. Head of soft-power agency Rossotrudnichestvo replaced

On 27 Apr 26, *Pravo* published two decrees signed by President Putin, discharging Yevgeny Primakov from his position as the head of Rossotrudnichestvo¹⁰² and appointing Igor Chayka (Image right) as Primakov's replacement.^{103 104}



[**COMMENT:** Primakov had headed Rossotrudnichestvo since 25 Jun 20.¹⁰⁵ In an interview, published on 8 Jul 25, Primakov stated that under his leadership Rossotrudnichestvo had been “actively” working to expand its presence in Africa despite the challenges posed by rising prices and a lack of funding.¹⁰⁶ In Jan 2026, Primakov stated that Rossotrudnichestvo had signed cooperation agreements with ‘Russia Houses’¹⁰⁷ in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), which were opened by “one well-known African private military company”, which was assessed as a likely reference to Wagner Group PMC.¹⁰⁸ He added that unnamed Wagner Group personnel in Africa had defected to the agency (over an unspecified timeframe).¹⁰⁹]

On the same date, *Kommersant* commented on the reshuffle, adding that Chayka had worked as Primakov's deputy for approx. one year, and prior to that had headed Rossotrudnichestvo's Public Council for “several years”. According to *Kommersant*, Chayka is the son of Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District Yuri Chayka.

The newspaper also cited a statement from Primakov, on 27 Apr 26 from his official Telegram Channel,¹¹⁰ in which he claimed that he had overseen “good but difficult years” as the head of Rossotrudnichestvo since his appointment in 2020. He added that Rossotrudnichestvo had been placed under “harsh” EU sanctions due to its “unconditional support” for Russia's geopolitical activities, and as a result, several Russia Houses had been closed or had their activities suspended. Primakov claimed that the world was “much bigger and more important” than [just] Europe and the US. *Kommersant* added that the presidential decree had not come as a surprise to Primakov, who had served for longer than all his predecessors, and noted Primakov's criticism of Russian government attempts to block¹¹¹ the messaging app Telegram [implying that this may be one of the causes of his removal].¹¹²

[**COMMENT:** According to the *Anti-Corruption Foundation*¹¹³ (FBK), Igor Chayka has organised and facilitated criminal and corruption schemes and has exploited his official position to further his family's business interests. FBK claimed that Igor Chayka's primary business activities include developing residential and commercial real estate in Moscow and Crimea, exporting food products to China, and working with the Russian Railways¹¹⁴ (RZhD).¹¹⁵]

¹⁰² Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) is the Russian government agency responsible for foreign aid and international cultural exchange.

¹⁰³ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202604270004>

¹⁰⁴ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202604270003>

¹⁰⁵ <https://tass.ru/encyclopedia/person/primakov-evgeniy-aleksandrovich>

¹⁰⁶ See: 20250711-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_163 (14).

¹⁰⁷ Russia Houses serve as hubs to promote Russian culture and education globally, typically managed by Rossotrudnichestvo. Despite this many officially non-government run Russia Houses and Partner Russia Houses also exist. This has been the case for many recently established Russia Houses in the Sahel as of mid-2025, which have functioned as de facto non-state entities, not directly under Rossotrudnichestvo's official oversight. See: <https://ria.ru/20251024/primakov-2050398863.html> ; 20250610-

AFRICA_OS_Report_Russian_PMC_Structure_and_Dispositions_in_Libya_and_the_Sahel (8).

¹⁰⁸ Private military company.

¹⁰⁹ See: 20260116-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_189 (11).

¹¹⁰ <https://t.me/evgenyprimakov/5136>

¹¹¹ See: 20260320-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_198 (9).

¹¹² <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/8624368>

¹¹³ A Russian non-governmental organisation founded in 2011 by late opposition politician Alexey Navalny to investigate and publicise high-level corruption, funded largely through public donations. It has been designated 'extremist' and effectively banned in Russia, with its staff facing prosecution and exile.

¹¹⁴ State-owned national railway company, operating both the rail infrastructure and the majority of freight and passenger services across the Russian Federation.

¹¹⁵ <https://chaika.navalny.com/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXYQbgvzxdM> <https://www.spisok-putina.org/personas/chaika-3/>

On 27 Apr 26, the official Telegram channel of *Rossotrudnichestvo* posted a statement from Chayka, in which he thanked Putin and acknowledged the trust placed in him at a time of international tensions. He added that a broad range of tasks awaited the agency, and that it was necessary to establish lessons learned from its accumulated experience, improve the efficiency of existing programmes, and integrate the efforts of state, civil and expert structures working on foreign humanitarian projects.¹¹⁶

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

11. Islamists and separatists launch large-scale joint offensive in Mali

[**CONTEXT:** Since Dec 2024, R MOD-controlled irregular formation Africa Corps (AC) began subsuming operational task lines of Wagner Group PMC in Mali, which had been present in the country since 2021 and officially departed the country in Jun 2025.^{117 118} Following initial AC deployments on 17 Jan 25, AC personnel numbers reached approx. 2,500, with reporting from 23 Feb 26 suggesting that the arrival of a further 1,000 personnel was expected, bring the total to 3,500 AC personnel.¹¹⁹]

On 25 – 27 Apr 26, multiple sources reported that, on 25 – 26 Apr 26, the A-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and the separatist Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) had conducted multiple attacks against government and military locations in Mali, that included Malian President Gen Assimi Goita's headquarters [assessed as the Koulouba Palace¹²⁰] and Modibo Keita International Airport¹²¹ in Bamako, and the residence of Malian Minister of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Gen Sadio Camara in Kati¹²², during which he was killed.^{123 124 125}

[**COMMENT:** Camara had played an important role in military cooperation between Russia and Mali, leading Malian delegations to Russia on several occasions. Notably, in Jun 2021, Camara met with Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Gen Valery Gerasimov.¹²⁶ Following the meeting, Wagner Group PMC operatives began deploying to Mali in Dec 2021.¹²⁷]

On 26 Apr 26, the official Telegram channel of AC claimed that approx. 10,000 – 12,000 JNIM/FLA militants had participated in the offensive and were allegedly supported by "Ukrainian and European mercenaries". AC further claimed that its personnel had held "all significant positions" and stated that it had provided the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) with both air and ground support.^{128 129} AC further claimed that "more than" 1,000 militants had been killed by FAMA/AC personnel.^{130 131}

[**COMMENT:** Following the initial phase of the offensive, JNIM and the FLA have overseen the peaceful withdrawal of FAMA/AC units from most military bases in Kidal Region. These personnel have subsequently been redeployed to strongholds in Gao¹³² and Timbuktu regions.]

¹¹⁶ <https://t.me/rossotrudnichestvo/30121>

¹¹⁷ See: 20230731-REGIONAL_OS_Report_Wagner_in_North_Africa_and_the_Sahel (2).

¹¹⁸ See: 20250610-AFRICA_OS_Report_Russian_PMC_Structure_and_Dispositions_in_Libya_and_the_Sahel (8).

¹¹⁹ See: 20260304-SAHEL_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_030 (8).

¹²⁰ Located at: 12.657700, -8.005100

¹²¹ Located at: 12.533900, -7.948800

¹²² Located at: 12.750740, -8.070460

¹²³ <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20260427-attaques-au-mali-apr%C3%A8s-la-mort-du-ministre-de-la-d%C3%A9fense-les-populations-inqui%C3%A8tes-malgr%C3%A9-un-certain-calme>

¹²⁴ https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2026/04/27/mali-s-junta-more-vulnerable-than-ever-after-weekend-attacks_6752867_124.html

¹²⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/27/timeline-how-mali-went-from-democracy-beacon-to-instability>

¹²⁶ See: 20210623-MALI_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_123 (5c).

¹²⁷ See: 20220105-MALI_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_150 (7).

¹²⁸ <https://t.me/KorpusAfrica2/162>

¹²⁹ <https://t.me/KorpusAfrica2/183>

¹³⁰ <https://t.me/KorpusAfrica2/162>

¹³¹ <https://t.me/KorpusAfrica2/183>

¹³² Located at: 17.161356, -0.134860

a. **AC withdrawal from areas in Northern Mali.** On 27 Apr 26, AC published statement asserting that FAMA/AC personnel stationed at Kidal had been evacuated following a “joint decision” with the Malian government. The statement added that [AC] personnel had “continued to carry out their assigned combat tasks” [in other unspecified areas of Mali, NFDK].¹³³

Multiple sources later circulated footage which allegedly shows AC personnel withdrawing from Kidal town¹³⁴ and heading towards FAMA’s base¹³⁵ in Tessalit,¹³⁶ Tessalit circle, Kidal Region. The same sources also noted that the withdrawal had been facilitated and overseen by the FLA and JNIM.^{137 138 139 140 141}

On 25 – 27 Apr 26, multiple sources reported that JNIM/FLA militants had also taken control of Tessalit, Gao, Bourem,¹⁴² Intahaka,¹⁴³ Tessit,¹⁴⁴ Ber,¹⁴⁵ and Lere¹⁴⁶ and Soumpi¹⁴⁷ with negotiations reportedly taking place with JNIM/FLA militants for the “peaceful” withdrawal of FAMA/AC personnel from Tessalit, Ber, and Lere and Soumpi.¹⁴⁸

[**COMMENT:** It is assessed as highly likely that FAMA/AC units had withdrawn from several locations in northern Mali to prevent becoming isolated by JNIM/FLA formations. In parallel, it is assessed as highly likely that JNIM/FLA enabled the alleged peaceful withdrawal of FAMA/AC personnel, and continue to negotiate for further withdrawals, to avoid surplus kinetic engagements.]

Despite AC’s claim of successfully supporting FAMA, it is further assessed as highly likely that the offensive has undermined the perceived effectiveness of security partnering with R MOD. Given claims that Gen Camara had been a key interlocutor between R MOD and the Malian government,¹⁴⁹ it is also assessed as likely that his death had hindered the ability of FAMA and AC to coordinate contemporary defensive actions against JNIM and the FLA.]

b. **Malian president meets Russian officials following offensive.** On 28 Apr 26, the *Government of Mali* reported that, on the same day, President Goita had received Russian Ambassador to Mali Igor Gromyko (Image right) and discussed “the current situation” and “good relations” between Mali and Russia. Gromyko also reportedly reaffirmed Russia’s commitment to Mali in its fight against “international” terrorism.¹⁵⁰



¹³³ <https://t.me/KorpusAfrica2/227>

¹³⁴ Located at: 18.446136, 1.405992

¹³⁵ Located at: 20.257499, 0.982918

¹³⁶ Located at: 20.200300, 1.012500

¹³⁷ <https://x.com/MilitaryDz/status/2048502774694858863>

¹³⁸ https://x.com/athmane_dza/status/2048368844528357553

¹³⁹ <https://x.com/SimNasr/status/2048463169715114332?s=20>

¹⁴⁰ <https://x.com/BrantPhilip/status/2048444922571665616>

¹⁴¹ <https://x.com/ayoubaaayoubaa2/status/2048433382988628179>

¹⁴² Located at: 16.956013, -.0436160

¹⁴³ Located at: 16.327500, -0.615600

¹⁴⁴ Located at: 15.226230, 0.287550

¹⁴⁵ Located at: 16.839826, -2.521614

¹⁴⁶ Located at: 15.717856, -4.903121

¹⁴⁷ Located at: 15.843618, -4.324563

¹⁴⁸ See: 20260429-SAHEL_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_038 (2b).

¹⁴⁹ See: 20251027-SAHEL_OS_Report_Impact_of_VEO_Activity_on_Russian_Influence_in_the_CES (7).

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/GouvMali/posts/pfbid02oxUVYHcC3FZuMRqUZVD8Zwv9NB2TxKYmEAhWUL7T4WQb3PWxpENYtLSMK9jntvdMI>

[**COMMENT:** From the released images of the meeting, five additional (assessed) Russian officials were in attendance. *Novosti Agentstva*¹⁵¹ on its social media platform 'X' account (assessed as likely linked to opposition-oriented Telegram channel Agesno.Novosti), claimed that the officials are:

- Russian Military Attaché in Mali Vladimir Yakush.
- Former Deputy Military Attaché in Hungary Ivan Brednev.
- Oleg Shapovalovskyy.
- Roman Kharchenko.
- Russian Embassy in Mali employee Samir Mirzakhonov.

Novosti Agentstva suggested that Yakush, Brednev, and Shapovalovskyy are Russian Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) operatives and that Kharchenko is a Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) operative.¹⁵² 'X' user *AEOW/INPACT*¹⁵³ further claimed that Kharchenko is a "key" AC operative.¹⁵⁴

c. **Multiple Russian officials acknowledge AC "casualties" in Mali.** On 28 Apr – 1 May 26, multiple official Malian and Russian outlets reported on a series of statements and engagements made by multiple senior Russian officials regarding the security situation in Mali following the 25 – 26 Apr 26 attacks. Notable comments included:

- On 28 Apr 26, Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Georgy Borisenko¹⁵⁵ acknowledged that there had been [an unspecified number of] "casualties" among AC units in Mali, and that [AC] personnel had repelled attacks "in most locations" [NFDK].¹⁵⁶
- On 28 Apr 26, during a press briefing held on the same day, Russian Presidential Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov reportedly stated that Russia considered it "important" to stabilise the situation in Mali "as soon as possible". Peskov reportedly did not respond to [unspecified] Russian media questions about whether AC had sufficient personnel to control the situation in Mali.^{157 158 159}
- On 30 Apr 26, multiple sources reported that, in a separate press briefing on the same day, Peskov stated that AC personnel would continue their activities in Mali due to "the needs of the Malian government".^{160 161 162}

[**COMMENT:** At the time of writing, no official statements regarding the number of AC casualties had been identified via official Russian sources.]

¹⁵¹ Novosti Agentstva ('X' handle @agent_media) is an 'X' user that has been active since Apr 2022. At the time of writing, the user had approx. 11,000 followers. The user produces content in Russian and claims to present "news that people in Russia are afraid to write about". The user's content is assessed to primarily display anti-Russian government sentiment.

¹⁵² https://x.com/agents_media/status/2049418958890000692

¹⁵³ AEOW/INPACT ('X' handle @aeowinpact) is assessed to be the official 'X' account for the "All Eyes on Wagner" project of European investigative organisation "Investigations with Impact", which, according to its website, seeks to investigate and disrupt "illicit and covert networks involved in activities threatening global security, human and information integrities". At the time of writing, AEOW/INPACT's X account had approx. 26,000 followers and had been active since Mar 2022.

¹⁵⁴ <https://x.com/aeowinpact/status/2049425572032331875>

¹⁵⁵ Georgy Borisenko was appointed as one of Russia's deputy ministers of foreign affairs on 20 Feb 26, after having previously served as the Russian ambassador to Egypt between 2020 – 2026.

¹⁵⁶ <https://tass.com/politics/2123333>

¹⁵⁷ <https://tass.ru/politika/27244025>

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/04/28/kremlin-calls-for-stability-in-mali-as-rebels-seize-kidal-and-target-capital-a92626>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2026/04/28/28356433.shtml>

¹⁶⁰ <https://afrinz.ru/en/2026/04/russia-to-continue-fighting-terrorism-in-mali-peskov-says/>

¹⁶¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/kremlin-says-russian-forces-will-stay-mali-to-fight-extremism-2026-04-30/>

¹⁶² <https://tass.ru/politika/27273371>

12. Russian defence minister visits Kyrgyzstan

On 28 Apr 26, the official website of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (SCO)¹⁶³ reported that, on the same day, the meeting of SCO member states' defence ministers had taken place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.¹⁶⁴ During the meeting, participants reportedly discussed regional and global security challenges and emphasised strengthening trust and cooperation between the armed forces of the member states, including through joint exercises.¹⁶⁵

On the same day, Russian state-owned news outlet *RIA Novosti* cited Russian Minister of Defence Andrey Belousov who, during the SCO meeting, had proposed that the SCO's joint counter-terrorism 'Peace Mission' exercises be continued, and that cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)¹⁶⁶ and Commonwealth of Independent States¹⁶⁷ (CIS) be strengthened. Belousov blamed the West for provoking [unspecified] conflicts and destroying the Euro-Atlantic [security] framework. He also referenced President Putin's proposal for a new Eurasian security framework and presented the SCO as an important part of achieving regional stability.¹⁶⁸

On 28 Apr 26, official newspaper of R MOD *Krasnaya Zvezda* reported that, on 27 Apr 26, during his visit to Kyrgyzstan, Belousov had inspected facilities at the Joint Russian Military Base, including the 999th Guards Airbase in Kant¹⁶⁹ (Image right). The airbase's commander reported on the level of modern equipment in units, and [ongoing] infrastructure development [NFDK].



Krasnaya Zvezda also reported that, on 27 Apr 26, Belousov held talks in Bishkek with Iran's Deputy Minister of Defence for strategic planning, Brig Talaei-Nik Reza. Belousov stated that Russia supported a diplomatic resolution [to the conflict between Iran, Israel, and the US], backed Iran's sovereignty, was ready to help resolve the situation, and expected continued mutual support between Russia and Iran. *Krasnaya Zvezda* also noted that, on the same day, Putin had met Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi in St Petersburg, where he reaffirmed Russia's commitment to strategic relations with Iran, and claimed Russia was ready to help achieve peace.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an intergovernmental organisation, designed to facilitate political, economic and security cooperation between its 10 member states: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, China, India, Pakistan, Belarus, and Iran.

¹⁶⁴ Kyrgyzstan is currently chairing the SCO. See: <https://rus.sectesco.org/20260330/2224881.html>

¹⁶⁵ <https://rus.sectesco.org/20260428/2288596.html>

¹⁶⁶ Russian-led multilateral security framework, of which Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are also members

¹⁶⁷ Commonwealth of Independent States, whose members include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

¹⁶⁸ <https://ria.ru/20260428/belousov-2089392115.html>

¹⁶⁹ Located at: 42.85959498, 74.84433507

¹⁷⁰ <http://redstar.ru/v-interesah-oboronnogo-sotrudnichestva/>

ANNEX A

Dated: 8 May 26

THE MONTH AHEAD

DATE	EVENT	SIGNIFICANCE
9 May 26	Victory Day	Victory Day is an important annual holiday in Russia that marks the USSR's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, and the event is marked with large-scale parades of R MOD personnel and equipment on Moscow's Red Square.¹⁷¹ On 28 Apr 26, R MOD announced that due to the "current operational situation", the Victory Day Parade in Moscow would not feature a column of military equipment nor a procession of cadet corps. Both the R MOD and R MFA have since issued warning to foreign governments advising that they civilians and diplomatic staff from Kyiv, in anticipation of mass strikes targeting central Kyiv in the event Ukraine violate a unilateral ceasefire and target the Victory Day parade in Moscow (See Para. 1).
22 May 26	Meeting of the CIS ¹⁷² Council of Heads of Government	The heads of government of CIS states will meet in Ashgabat,¹⁷³ Turkmenistan. 12 issues are planned for discussion, including various areas of economic cooperation, improving the effectiveness of interaction within the CIS, and the prospects for the development of rail transport in the commonwealth.¹⁷⁴ According to TASS, Russia will be represented by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.¹⁷⁵
26 – 29 May 26	International Security Forum	The International Security Forum, organised by the Russian Security Council, will take place at the Live Arena¹⁷⁶ complex and Patriot Central Park¹⁷⁷ in Moscow Oblast. The event is due to be attended by more than 180 delegations from foreign states and international organisations, and it will comprise a variety of sessions, meetings, and exhibitions.¹⁷⁸
28 – 29 May 26	Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) meeting in Astana	As the current chair country of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Kazakhstan will host the next Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) meeting, which will reportedly address the "complex [economic] challenges" faced by EAEU members states.¹⁷⁹ SEEC meetings are a high-level forum for EAEU heads of state to discuss trade and macroeconomic policies, sign documents and expand international economic cooperation.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ Located at: 55.754167, 37.619544

¹⁷² Commonwealth of Independent States, whose members include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

¹⁷³ Located at: 37.935190, 58.378977

¹⁷⁴ <https://belta.by/politics/view/povestku-ocherednogo-zasedaniya-soveta-glav-pravitelstv-sng-obsudili-v-minske-777756-2026/>

¹⁷⁵ <https://tass.ru/politika/27036873>

¹⁷⁶ Located at: 55.706606, 37.355687

¹⁷⁷ Located at: 55.566221, 36.823172

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/isf26/>

¹⁷⁹ <https://caspianpost.com/kazakhstan/kazakhstan-s-astana-set-for-eurasian-economic-council-meeting>

¹⁸⁰ <https://bigasia.ru/v-rossii-sostoyalos-zasedanie-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta/>

3 – 6 Jun 26	St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF)	SPIEF is a prominent annual Russian business event that aims to be a platform for discussing and proposing solutions to the most serious global economic challenges. It will be held at the ExpoForum Convention and Exhibition Centre ¹⁸¹ in St Petersburg. ¹⁸²
7 Jun 26	Parliamentary elections in Armenia	Armenia's parliamentary elections are expected to be highly competitive and crucial in determining the country's future course. Incumbent Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's "Real Armenia" agenda, which prioritises improving relations with long-standing adversaries Turkey and Azerbaijan, closer alignment with the EU, and economic development, has reportedly provoked strong opposition within Armenian diaspora communities in the US and Russia, as well as from former Armenian presidents. Meanwhile, recent arrests of opposition figures, including the Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, and a dispute between the government and the Armenian Apostolic Church have underscored these divisions. In mid-Dec 2025, the Armenian government reportedly requested EU assistance in combating malign external interference, which is assessed to include Russia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. ^{183 184}

¹⁸¹ Located at: 59.761132, 30.355517

¹⁸² <https://forumspb.com/?lang=ru>

¹⁸³ See: 20251224-RUSSIA_OS_Report_Weekly_Report_Strategic_Monitoring_187 (8).

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2025/12/24/parliamentary-elections/3148227>