



MAIN TAKEAWAY of the month

June 2026 confirmed a widening asymmetry in the war: Russia continued to rely on large-scale attritional missile and drone attacks against Ukraine, while Kyiv increasingly used long-range strikes to disrupt Russia's fuel supply, logistics, naval assets, and defence-industrial depth. At the same time, Ukraine's European track advanced but remained vulnerable to EU veto politics, while negotiations stayed active in form but offered no credible path toward compromise. At the same time, the Kremlin is trying to preserve an image of political stability and institutional normality ahead of the State Duma elections, but the domestic costs of the war are becoming harder to manage. Ukrainian drone strikes, fuel shortages, fiscal strain, and signs of economic stagnation are increasingly testing Russia's resilience narrative, while Moscow continues to present the war externally as part of a broader struggle to redesign Europe's security order on terms favourable to Russia.

The Balkans and the Black Sea region showed a growing convergence between war spillover, NATO security exposure and regional political fragility. Romania's drone and maritime incidents underscored the increasing vulnerability of NATO's Black Sea flank, while new maritime security initiatives and multinational exercises pointed to a stronger allied response. At the same time, political instability in Romania, Bulgaria's more cautious stance on Ukraine, and evolving NATO/EU engagement in the Western Balkans highlighted that regional security remains shaped as much by domestic politics as by external threats.

Moldova's European integration agenda became increasingly tied to security, resilience and reform delivery. While Chişinău advanced on the EU track and deepened practical cooperation with Western partners, Russian hybrid pressure, drone-related risks, the unresolved Transnistrian vulnerability, energy security challenges and domestic social tensions showed that Moldova's reform process is unfolding in a highly contested strategic environment.

Ukraine's strike campaign in June 2026 showed a further maturation of its long-range drone and special operations approach, with an emphasis on degrading Russia's fuel supply, logistics corridors, naval assets, and defence-industrial infrastructure. Ukrainian strikes hit targets across a wide geographic arc, from [Crimea](#) and the occupied territories to [Tambov](#), [Ryazan](#), [Tatarstan](#), [Samara](#), Moscow, and the [St. Petersburg region](#). The [mid-June attack on Moscow](#) was particularly significant because it targeted the [Kapotnya oil refinery](#), the largest fuel supplier for the Moscow region: Russian authorities [reported that 60 drones approached](#) the capital within two hours, while one drone struck the refinery and caused a fire. According to subsequent reporting, the strike damaged the refinery's main processing unit, which accounts for [more than half of its total capacity](#), forcing a suspension of operations. This placed Ukraine's campaign not only deep inside Russian territory, but also directly against infrastructure supporting the political and economic centre of the Russian Federation.

More broadly, strikes on [Afipsky](#), [TANECO](#), [TAIF-NK](#), [Moscow refinery facilities](#), [fuel depots in Crimea](#), and oil logistics routes appear to have generated operational and economic effects, with fuel restrictions reported in several Russian regions and particularly [acute shortages in occupied Crimea](#) (with caps of 20–60 litres per vehicle in some areas, while in Crimea, fuel stations halted all fuel sales to individuals and businesses from 21 June). At the same time, attacks on [Kronstadt](#), [the Baltic Fleet arsenal](#) near St. Petersburg, [vessels in the Black Sea](#) and [Baltic theatres](#), [UAV production sites](#), and [military-industrial facilities](#) suggest that Ukraine is increasingly connecting battlefield interdiction with strategic pressure on Russia's wider war economy. Statistically, on the night of 26 June, Russia's Ministry of Defence claimed it had intercepted and destroyed [660 Ukrainian drones](#), the highest number reported in a single night since the start of the war. The effectiveness of Ukraine's drone strike campaign is increasing, with June accounting for around 35% of successful attacks on Russian territory recorded since the beginning of the year. The escalation comes as President Volodymyr Zelensky announced a [40-day "influence operation"](#) on June 25, against Russia, aimed at increasing pressure on Moscow to end the war.

In parallel, Russian strike activity against Ukraine in June 2026 remained centered on high-volume aerial attacks, designed to overwhelm air defences and maintain pressure on civilian, energy, transport, and symbolic targets. The most significant example was the night of 2 June, [when Russia launched one of the largest attacks](#) since the beginning of the full-scale war, using 73 missiles and more than 600 drones against Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv. This was followed by further attacks involving guided missiles and large Shahed-type drone waves, [causing casualties across](#) Kyiv, Kherson, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv regions. Russian strikes also targeted highly sensitive and symbolic sites, including the area of the spent [nuclear fuel storage facility near Chornobyl](#) and the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Film Studios in Kyiv, where Ukraine's largest and oldest costume collection was destroyed.

Overall, Russia maintained a high operational tempo and continued to impose costs on Ukraine's air defence and civilian resilience, but the pattern of strikes remained broadly attritional, while Ukraine's own campaign increasingly focused on creating cumulative disruptions inside Russia's military-industrial and logistical depth. According to a [New York Times analysis](#) based on Ukrainian Air Force data, Russia is launching an average of 74 ballistic missiles per month against Ukraine this year, marking a steady escalation from six per month in 2023, 28 in 2024, and 49 in 2025. While Ukrainian air defences intercept around 90% of drones, the same analysis indicates that roughly two-thirds of Russian ballistic missiles still penetrate Ukraine's defence systems.

Western assistance to Ukraine remained centered on sustaining air defence, battlefield mobility, aviation capabilities, maritime security, and budgetary resilience, while increasingly linking immediate support to longer-term defence-industrial integration. The PURL mechanism ([amounting to \\$4 billion as of June 2026](#)) continued to function as the main channel for financing U.S.-made weapons, with [Germany](#), [Sweden](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Australia](#), and [Japan](#) announcing or expanding contributions, while [Belgium committed to delivering seven F-16s](#) this year, including three operational aircraft.

Additional support included [German air-to-air missiles](#) and another IRIS-T system, [Dutch minehunter capabilities for the Ukrainian Navy](#), [Textron armoured vehicles financed](#) through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, and [UK funding for nuclear fuel supplies](#) to keep Ukraine's nuclear power plants operational. At the same time, [the EU's €2.8 billion Ukraine Facility tranche](#) underlined the importance of macro-financial support, while initiatives such as [Brave France](#), [Latvian drone cooperation](#), and [German-Ukrainian production of Termit ground robotic systems](#) show Ukraine's growing integration into a wider European defence-production and innovation ecosystem.

EU integration became an important parallel track this month, strengthening Ukraine's diplomatic positioning beyond the ceasefire debate, but also exposing the continued vulnerability of the accession process to bilateral disputes inside the EU. On 15 June, [the EU and Ukraine formally opened accession negotiations](#) with the first negotiating cluster, [while 14 July was initially set as the target date](#) for opening the remaining five clusters, giving Kyiv a concrete [institutional milestone](#) at a moment when the peace process remained uncertain and allowing it to frame its European trajectory as increasingly irreversible. [Ursula von der Leyen's indication that Ukraine and Moldova](#) could move forward at different speeds after the opening of the first cluster further reinforced the principle that accession will depend on each candidate's reform performance rather than automatic political pairing. However, this momentum remains politically fragile. In Hungary's case, [an agreement with Kyiv on minority rights](#) in Transcarpathia helped unlock the first cluster, but [Budapest later blocked approval in COELA](#) of the screening results for clusters 2–6 for both Ukraine and Moldova, delaying the formal invitations to submit negotiating positions and confirming that Hungary remains a potential procedural veto point even after the post-Orbán reset.

At the same time, relations with Poland [deteriorated over historical memory issues](#) after Ukraine named a military unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, [prompting President Karol Nawrocki to revoke](#) Zelenskyy's Order of the White Eagle and several Ukrainian officials to return Polish state awards. Donald Tusk's warning that [the dispute](#) represented a "strategic mistake" reflected broader political friction between Poland's nationalist-conservative president, Karol Nawrocki, and the more pro-European government led by Tusk, particularly over the management of relations with Ukraine.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

The negotiation track in June 2026 remained active in form but increasingly fragmented in substance, with no clear movement toward a structured peace process. Kyiv continued to rely on Washington as the only actor with sufficient leverage over Moscow, but Zelensky openly acknowledged that [Ukraine was no longer the top U.S. priority](#), as attention shifted toward Iran and the expected visit of U.S. negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Kyiv was delayed. At the same time, European actors moved more visibly into the diplomatic space. [Germany, France and the United Kingdom worked with Ukraine](#) on possible formats to bring Russia back to talks, while [the E3 leaders and Zelensky agreed in London](#) on a clearer framework for a just peace: an immediate ceasefire, negotiations based on the current line of contact without recognizing territorial conquest, legally binding security guarantees, the continued freezing of Russian assets, and direct protection of European security interests in any settlement.

Russia's position remained centered on procedural ambiguity and maximalist political framing. Putin claimed that [Moscow was ready for an agreement based on](#) the understandings reached with Donald Trump in Anchorage, but simultaneously insisted that Russian control over the whole of Donbas was compatible with peace and emphasized continued Russian advances on the front. [Lavrov](#) and [Ryabkov](#) then hardened this line further, questioning the credibility of the United States as mediator, accusing Washington of moving away from the Anchorage understandings, and blaming Ukraine and Europe for undermining negotiations through continued military support. [Zelensky's proposal to meet Putin during the G7 summit](#) in France, as well as [alternative ideas involving Hungary](#) or [broader European formats](#), did not translate into a real diplomatic opening. Overall, this confirmed that the negotiation process is becoming less a path toward compromise than a parallel arena of leverage-building, where Ukraine seeks to anchor Europe and the U.S. around binding conditions, while Russia

uses references to prior U.S.-Russian understandings to pressure Kyiv without moderating its territorial demands.

RUSSIA - internal and external dynamics

Russia's internal political environment in June 2026 was increasingly shaped by the tension between electoral management and the domestic costs of the war. The 29th edition of the [St. Petersburg International Economic Forum](#), held from 3 to 6 June, unfolded under the direct shadow of the war in Ukraine. Efforts by Russian authorities to project economic stability and resilience were undercut by Ukrainian drone strikes targeting the St. Petersburg region during the event.

On the other hand, Putin formally set the State [Duma elections for 18–20 September](#), while the Kremlin signalled that [17 parties would participate](#), preserving the appearance of political pluralism. At the same time, reports that some security-sector actors had floated the idea of [postponing the vote](#) pointed to elite concern over a deteriorating economic environment, declining support for United Russia, and the political impact of Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian territory. Although VCIOM later recorded [a recovery in United Russia's rating](#), the broader picture suggests a pre-election environment in which the Kremlin is balancing procedural normality with growing sensitivity to social stress and battlefield spillover.

The social and informational impact of the war became more visible through the fuel crisis, especially in annexed Crimea and across Russia's domestic fuel market. The authorities publicly framed the shortages as the product of [panic buying and "artificial" demand](#), with Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Novak claiming that demand had increased by 20–30%, while Finance Minister Anton Siluanov [denied a nationwide](#) price shock. Yet the underlying pressure came from Ukrainian strikes on refineries and logistics infrastructure, which reduced gasoline production and forced emergency measures, including lower-quality fuel, import searches from China, [India](#) and [Kazakhstan](#), and restrictions on exports. In Crimea, the crisis was more acute: [long queues](#), shortages of fuel, water and electricity, [disrupted children's camps](#) and a damaged [tourist season](#) turned the war's logistical effects into an everyday social problem. The decision by the state messenger Max to [block local chats](#) discussing petrol shortages, prices and queues further shows that the Kremlin is treating the fuel crisis not only as an economic disruption, but also as an information-control problem.

Economically, June underlined the narrowing room for manoeuvre in Russia's war economy. The Central Bank reduced the key rate only modestly, to 14.25%, with Elvira Nabiullina warning that [inflationary risks remain elevated](#) because of expansionary fiscal policy and rising fuel costs. This cautious approach contrasts with pressure from industrial lobbies and parts of the political leadership for cheaper credit and faster investment revival. At the same time, budgetary stress is deepening: the Accounts Chamber warned that federal revenues in 2026 could fall by around 2.1 trillion rubles [below plan](#), while Bloomberg reported that war-related spending could exceed [the planned level by 40%](#), potentially pushing military expenditure toward 18 trillion rubles. The Duma's decision to allow the government to [exceed spending and debt limits](#) without formally amending the budget, combined with the Central Bank's repo operations backed by federal bonds, points to a more flexible but also less transparent fiscal architecture designed to sustain the war. This comes as industry returned to [contraction](#) in May, and even pro-government macroeconomic analysts warned that the current Russian economic model has entered a phase of "[new stagnation](#)."

Externally, Moscow continued to frame the war in Ukraine as part of a broader struggle over Europe's security order rather than as a negotiable bilateral conflict. Lavrov argued that the [Helsinki-based European security system](#) can no longer be restored and called for a new Eurasian security framework reflecting "multipolar realities" and Russia's interpretation of equal and indivisible security. This messaging directly counters the [E3-Ukraine position adopted in London](#), which linked any peace settlement to an immediate ceasefire, negotiations based on the current line of contact,

binding security guarantees for Ukraine, frozen Russian assets, and protection of European security interests. At the same time, Moscow's frustration with Washington became more explicit. Lavrov stated that Russia no longer views the [United States as an objective mediator](#), while Marco Rubio's claim that no concrete Ukraine agreements were reached at the Alaska summit undermined Moscow's repeated references to the "spirit of Anchorage." The [Trump–Putin birthday call](#) and reported plans for Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner [to visit Moscow](#) suggest that the Kremlin still seeks to keep the U.S. channel alive, but primarily as a way to revive an Anchorage-based framework favourable to Russian demands rather than to accept the European conditions for a just peace.

Evolutions in the Republic of MOLDOVA

In June, Moldova's EU accession process entered a more operational and demanding phase. The opening of negotiations on [Cluster 1 – on 15 June](#), followed by the [EU–Moldova Summit](#) in Brussels on 22 June, confirmed that Chişinău is moving from political symbolism toward measurable reform delivery. [EU support](#) was closely tied to resilience, security and economic anchoring, with Brussels reaffirming Moldova's European future while condemning Russian hybrid actions.

Less than 24 hours after Sandu's statement, [a drone exploded on the night of 7–8 June](#) on the right bank of the Dniester river. On 7 June, President Maia Sandu called for Moldova to develop [high-technology interceptor drones](#) and for legislation enabling defence-industry development, public-private partnerships and foreign investment. [Drone fragments](#) were also found in the country on 8 June, in the context of repeated drone-related incidents linked to Russia's war against Ukraine. At the same time, Moldova continued to deepen [practical cooperation with NATO](#) through the Individual Tailored Partnership Programme 2025–2028 and the Defence Capacity Building Initiative, while maintaining its constitutional neutrality.

Russian hybrid activity remained one of the main pressure points. [EU sanctions](#) against Şor-linked and Russian-backed destabilization networks, together with [the detention of an alleged FSB officer](#) accused of intelligence activities near the Security Zone, highlighted the continued use of intelligence operations. Transnistria also remained the country's core strategic vulnerability, with the EU again calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops and ammunition from the region in line with OSCE commitments.

Energy security continued to be treated as a hard-security priority. Moldova advanced the U.S.-backed [Străşeni–Gutiuaş “Liberty Line”](#), a planned 400 kV interconnection with Romania designed to strengthen access to the European electricity system, increase import and export capacity, and reduce vulnerability to regional energy shocks. In parallel, Social tensions also became more visible, particularly through [farmers' protests](#) against elements of the draft fiscal policy and wider agricultural grievances. The demonstrations showed that Moldova's reform agenda will require stronger public communication and mitigation measures to avoid social resistance.

The Balkans

The most consequential incident preceding this month occurred on the night of 28–29 May, when a [Geran-2 Shahed-type drone](#) struck a residential building in Galaţi, eastern Romania. The country has recorded 47 drone incursions since the start of the war in Ukraine, but this was by far the most serious. Around 10 km from the Romania–Moldova–Ukraine tripoint and close to southern Odesa Oblast, Moscow [denied responsibility](#) and questioned the drone's origin, while Romanian authorities confirmed that the [UAV was verified as Russian](#).

Romania's Foreign Minister Oana-Silviu Țoiu confirmed on 3 June that [the incident would accelerate ongoing work with NATO](#) to strengthen surveillance and response capabilities: France, which leads NATO's battlegroup in Romania with approximately 1,400 troops, is discussing [additional support](#)

[on radar and air monitoring systems](#), while Britain, Italy, and Spain have signalled willingness to step up their contributions to air defence operations.

Another significant incident occurred on the morning of 5 June, when a Ukrainian maritime drone, reportedly diverted by Russian electronic jamming, exploded near [an oil terminal](#) in Romania's Black Sea port of Constanța. Although no casualties were [reported](#), Romanian authorities evacuated more than [1,300 people](#) and deployed helicopters to search for other possible drones, describing the measures as precautionary in a highly sensitive security environment. The episode followed the Romanian Navy's controlled detonation earlier that week of a Russian YaRM-type anti-landing mine that had drifted toward the Romanian coast. Together with the Galați drone strike, these incidents, occurring within a short timeframe, highlight the increasing permeability of Romania's Black Sea security perimeter and the growing risk of spillover from the war in Ukraine onto NATO territory.

The month's most structurally significant development may prove to be the completion of the joint Romanian-Bulgarian project to establish a [Black Sea Maritime Security Hub](#), with operational headquarters in Constanța and Varna. The Hub will enable [joint threat analysis](#), improved situational awareness, and rapid information exchange among participating states. It is open to authorities from all Black Sea states and is designed to support the EU's broader security strategy. The timing, announced in the immediate aftermath of the Constanța incident, reinforces how urgently such a structure is needed. At the same time, between 2 and 20 June, Romania hosted [Sea Breeze 26](#), a multinational exercise involving around 450 troops from Romania, the United States, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey and Bulgaria, under the command of the US Sixth Fleet. Significantly, the country is no longer just a logistical hub for Ukraine; it is increasingly a directly exposed security actor on NATO's Black Sea flank.

In parallel, the country faces a dual domestic political instability and direct security spillover from the war in Ukraine. The attempted formation of a new government failed after Adrian Vestea's [proposed cabinet](#) did not receive enough votes in Parliament on June 22. This followed the collapse of the previous pro-European coalition and raised the risk of further governmental paralysis at a moment when Romania needs fiscal consolidation, EU funds absorption and credible defence planning.

Bulgaria's new political direction was one of the most important regional developments. The new defence minister announced that Sofia would [no longer provide arms to Ukraine](#), despite its previous military support and strategic Black Sea position. President Rumen Radev also threatened to veto the latest [EU sanctions package against Russia](#), citing concerns over the [Lukoil refinery](#) in Burgas and other interests.

On the other hand, one of the main diplomatic events took place on the 5th of June, with the [EU-Western Balkans Summit](#) convened in Montenegro. Discussions centred on [enlargement policy, regional stability, and deeper integration of the Western Balkans into the EU](#).

Finally, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced a [considerable reduction of KFOR's peacekeeping presence in Kosovo](#), citing an improved security situation, particularly in the Serb-majority north, compared to 2023. The alliance plans to reduce its current force of 4,700 troops to between 3,000 and 3,500 personnel. In a parallel development, the EU fully lifted its 2023 punitive measures against Kosovo in March 2026, following the orderly transition of local governance in Serb-majority municipalities.

In the meantime...



[The NATO Summit](#) will take place in Ankara on 7–8 July. Ukraine is expected to be a central topic of discussion, alongside European defense cooperation, military assistance to Kyiv, allied force readiness, and long-term security commitments. The summit is expected to be accompanied by increased diplomatic engagement and military coordination among NATO members.



The unresolved electoral deadlock in Găgăuzia, where the [People's Assembly elections](#) scheduled for June 21, were postponed once again, may also remain a sensitive domestic issue that deserves closer attention.



Romania will chair the [South-East European Cooperation Process](#) until June 2027, giving Bucharest a regional platform to push priorities such as EU integration, connectivity, energy resilience, hybrid-threat response and regional security cooperation.



[Romania's post-election government](#) negotiations have returned to deadlock after consultations with President Nicușor Dan failed to produce an agreement. The main options remain a PSD-led cabinet or a PNL–USR–UDMR coalition, while early elections are increasingly being used as a pressure point in the talks. Both governing scenarios currently under discussion — a PSD single-party minority cabinet or a PNL–USR–UDMR minority government relying on external parliamentary support — would remain structurally fragile and are unlikely to resolve Romania's political instability. Any such cabinet would depend on a negotiated support arrangement rather than a stable governing majority, leaving it vulnerable to renewed parliamentary pressure if tensions re-emerge among the parties whose votes are needed for its survival. This risk was already illustrated in May 2026, when the Bolojan government was dismissed through a [no-confidence motion](#) filed jointly by PSD, a former governing partner, and AUR, the dominant sovereigntist force in opposition.