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# Issue 495

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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## [SPAIN: Drug Tunnel Discovery Likely Reflects Transnational Criminal Networks](#)

**Summary:** The 31 March seizure of more than 37,000 pounds of hashish and \$1.6 million in cash in a tunnel linking Morocco and Ceuta likely reflects increasingly integrated transnational criminal networks facilitating narcotics trafficking into the European Union.

**Development:** On 31 March, Spanish authorities discovered a drug trafficking tunnel connecting Morocco to Ceuta, a Spanish autonomous exclave in North Africa. The tunnel contained a rail system and underground cranes used to transport hashish, according to Reuters. Madrid identified the tunnel during Operation Ares, an ongoing effort targeting narcotics trafficking networks. On 26 March, authorities arrested the tunnel's suspected operator and 26 others in connection with the operation, according to *El Pais*. Authorities seized more than 37,000 pounds of hashish and \$1.6 million in cash during the operation, according to CBS News. This seizure follows multiple large-scale hashish and cocaine interdictions in recent years, according to *El Pais*.

**Analysis:** The scale and sophistication of this operation almost certainly indicate coordination among multiple transnational criminal networks rather than a single organization. The volume of narcotics seized likely exceeds levels intended for localized consumption, suggesting traffickers use Ceuta as a transit node for distribution across the European Union. The construction and operation of a cross-border tunnel with specialized transport infrastructure likely required substantial financial resources, technical expertise, and sustained coordination between production and distribution networks. These conditions suggest increasing integration between North African supply networks and European distribution networks, enabling persistent large-scale trafficking. Disruptions to individual smuggling routes will likely have limited impact on overall trafficking volumes as networks adapt by leveraging alternative routes and partnerships.

[Christina Muchow]

## UKRAINE: Moscow's Spring Offensive Will Likely Threaten Donetsk Belt

**Summary:** Moscow's offensive push will likely threaten the Donetsk belt. A successful operation could cause a collapse in Kyiv's defensive as this belt and territory have represented a critical barrier since the early phases of the war.

**Background:** On 6 March, Ukrainian intelligence reported a Russian force realignment, shifting assets from western and southern forward operating bases toward the Donetsk defensive belt. In the days that followed, Russian units began establishing forward logistics points and temporary command-and-control posts along the northern axis of the front. This consolidation phase allowed Russian forces to synchronize assets before initiating a more aggressive offensive. As Moscow continued preparing for offensive operations, drone reconnaissance increased, accompanied by probing infantry attacks designed to test Ukrainian responses and identify weaknesses within the front. Across the sector electronic warfare systems began disrupting Ukrainian Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and communications. On 26 March, Moscow launched nearly 1,000 drones, 23 cruise missiles and seven ballistic missiles across Ukrainian territory, resulting in at least six civilian fatalities. Ukraine's air force reported that the onslaught affected eleven regions, with seven cities directly hit, marking this as the largest single-day aerial attack of the war to date. Immediately after, Moscow launched drone barrages into eastern Ukraine forces started conducting battalion level assaults involving light infantry and dispersed armor elements in the Lyman direction, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

**Geopolitical and Economic Timing:** Moscow will likely increase pressure due to the Middle East conflict diverting the West's diplomatic and material resources. The conflict in the Middle East is pulling Washington and North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) attention and air defense resources away from Ukraine, almost certainly creating a window of opportunity for Moscow. Patriot missile defense systems shifting towards the Middle East leave Ukraine exposed and more vulnerable to ballistic missile and indirect fire attacks such as those seen on 26 March.

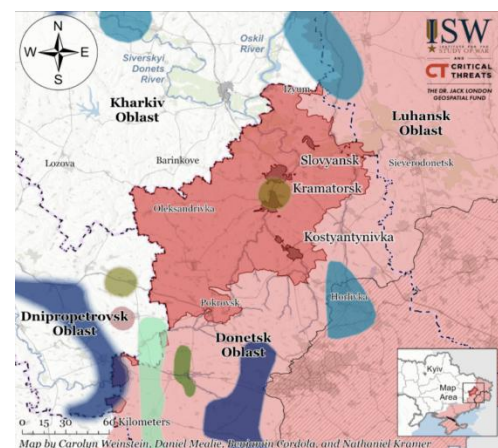


Figure 1: Ongoing Offensives and Russian Control of Terrain Near the Donetsk Defensive Belt (Source: Institute for the Study of War)

Reports also suggest that the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the temporary increase in oil prices have created extra revenue for Moscow, which it is using to fund its war effort, according to the Institute for the Study of War. Moscow stands to gain at least five billion per month in additional revenue from the price spike. This also includes a spike in gas revenue, with a potential \$30 to 40 million per month increase in revenue as countries affected by the ongoing near-total shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz shift to buying Russian gas.

**Strategic Consequences of Belt Collapse:** A collapse of the Donetsk belt would likely mark a turning point favoring Moscow within the war and open several avenues of advance toward key urban cities such as Slovyansk, and Kramatorsk, which contain key logistic hubs and command posts for Ukrainian operations in the region, according to The Institute for the Study of War. Losing this terrain enables Moscow freedom of maneuver toward deeper objectives. A breakthrough could allow Moscow to bring more cities into high-risk range and pressure Kyiv politically by threatening civilian dense areas increasing civilian vulnerability and giving Moscow coercive leverage.

**Outlook and Implications:** With the economic gain from the conflict in the Middle East, Moscow will likely have enough resources for a prolonged push into the Donetsk belt. Western governments' attention and resources being diverted towards the Middle East almost certainly compounds this strategic benefit. This will certainly leave Kyiv highly vulnerable to losing the defensive, which could force elements to retrograde towards weaker secondary positions. This will likely shift the war as the belt is a critical defense line for Kyiv.

[Gunnar Blackmun]

## CHINA: Likely Increasing Pressure on Taipei through Gray Zone Operations

**Summary:** Beijing will likely continue increasing coercive pressure on Taiwan through sustained gray zone operations and military signaling, testing deterrence and expanding strategic leverage without initiating direct conflict.

**Development:** The People's Liberation Army has conducted near-daily air and naval operations around Taiwan in recent years as part of a sustained pressure campaign, according to AFP reporting cited by the *Taipei Times*. Beijing resumed military air activity around Taiwan in March 2026 following an unexplained operational pause, according to *Reuters*. Chinese military aircraft and naval forces have increased activity levels near the Taiwan Strait during recent operations, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense. Beijing continues to employ "gray zone" operations around Taiwan that increase military signaling without disrupting commercial activity, according to Risk Intelligence. Beijing has stationed more than 200 converted drone aircraft at bases near the Taiwan Strait to support potential large-scale operations, according to a report cited by Reuters. Taiwanese officials assess that China may increase pressure while the United States focuses on the 2026 Iran War, according to Reuters.

**Analysis:** Beijing will likely continue its gray zone strategy to coerce Taipei while avoiding direct conflict with Washington. This approach allows Beijing to incrementally increase pressure through military, informational, and economic means without crossing thresholds that would trigger a large-scale military response. Beijing's recent resumption of air operations following a temporary pause likely reflects deliberate operational calibration rather than reduced intent. Beijing likely uses pauses and surges in activity to manage escalation, test responses from Taipei and its allies, and maintain strategic ambiguity. The ongoing 2026 Iran War will likely create opportunities for Beijing to intensify pressure, as Washington allocates more resources to the Middle East. Beijing will likely expand asymmetric capabilities, including drone deployments and maritime militia activity, to complicate Taipei's defense planning and impose economic and operational costs. These capabilities support a long-term strategy focused on exhaustion rather than rapid invasion. Overall, Beijing will likely pursue a sustained pressure campaign designed to weaken Taipei's resilience and shape conditions for future coercive or military options without initiating immediate large-scale conflict.

[Armaan Needles]

## About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

## About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Business, Security, and Intelligence.

Christina Muchow, a Senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at [editorsee@gmail.com](mailto:editorsee@gmail.com) or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 495, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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