

Deep Russia: **THE EXPLODING GAS STATION**

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and "Telegram" from June 1 to 7

Period June 1–7, 2026

Platforms VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)



Key takeaways

In May 2026, the Russian Federation's official position was built on denying a systemic fuel shortage. The Kremlin claimed it saw no risks to the country's fuel supply despite strikes on oil refineries; the situation was explained by maintenance work, a calculated fuel balance, and the existence of compensatory mechanisms.

However, the authorities' subsequent actions pointed to existing strain on uninterrupted supply. In early June, Russia was cutting crude oil exports to support higher oil-refinery throughput and increase domestic refining. The most concrete signs of shortage were in Temporarily Occupied Crimea and Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol.

The federal information framing did not deny individual disruptions but avoided presenting them as a single cause-and-effect chain: damage to refining and logistics, reduced supply, disruptions at gas stations, and rising prices.

For a significant share of regions, fuel problems are perceived as local difficulties of particular territories. Users are convinced the problem will not affect them directly.

In regions with a fuel shortage, reports of fuel-sales limits caused surprise, were considered absurd, and drew criticism of the authorities for inefficiency. A significant share of commenters considered the shortage a consequence of logistics problems or an artificially created rush.

Temporarily Occupied Crimea became the main hub of discussions about the fuel crisis. The population cursed the authorities, mocked Peskov for his words about “keeping the situation under control” and a month-and-a-half fuel reserve, and shared photos of empty gas stations with addresses. **The worse the situation with access to fuel became, the less self-censorship there was in the comments.**

The main grievance of Crimeans is related to unequal access to fuel. They complained that some could fill up in large volumes using coupons, while others could not buy even a minimal amount of gasoline for everyday trips.

The population is rather inclined to reject the explanation of the crisis as Ukrainian strikes on oil refineries. They are more inclined to believe that the authorities are artificially raising prices to profit.

Apart from the fuel crisis, the week was also defined by **a massive drone attack on St. Petersburg** on the night of June 2–3, coinciding with the opening of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Smoke over the city, mobile-internet shutdowns “due to the president's visit” and air pollution sparked unexpected interest in groups far beyond the front-line zone.

1. THE EXPLODING GAS STATION

The fuel shortage in the government and media field

In May 2026, the Russian Federation's official position was built on denying a systemic fuel shortage. On May 21, [the Kremlin stated](#), that it saw no risks to the country's fuel supply despite strikes on oil refineries; the situation was explained by maintenance work, a calculated fuel balance, and the existence of compensatory mechanisms.

However, the subsequent [actions of the authorities pointed](#) to existing strain on uninterrupted supply. In early June, Russia was cutting crude oil exports to support higher oil-refinery throughput and increase domestic refining.

The most concrete signs of shortage were in Temporarily Occupied Crimea and Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol. According to [Crimea.Realities](#), at many gas stations queues and disruptions with gasoline and diesel arose. Retail prices were also rising: on May 1, AI-95 at ATAN cost 79.99 rubles/liter, AI-92 — 73.49 rubles/liter; on May 20, at TES AI-95 cost 81.87 rubles/liter, AI-92 — 75.77 rubles/liter..

In Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol, [a limit was introduced](#) of 20 liters per vehicle or canister at TES network gas stations; later a similar limit appeared at the ATAN network.

[Kommersant](#) confirmed that at some Crimean gas stations fuel was dispensed by coupons or no more than 20 liters per person.

[The Moscow Times](#) reported the emergence of a secondary market: AI-95 in Temporarily Occupied Crimea was offered at 200–350 rubles/liter, and ATAN coupons were sold at a markup.

[Radio Liberty](#), analyzed that strikes on the R-280 “Novorossiya” highway and the land corridor to temporarily occupied Crimea complicate Russian logistics and the supply of troops on the southern axis.

In early June, [the Russian Ministry of Energy](#) already linked fuel-supply disruptions in the south to a rise in attacks on fuel-and-energy-complex facilities. This essentially amounted to a shift from the “there are no risks” explanations to acknowledging the problem, albeit with the caveat that it is temporary.

Federal media adhered to the Kremlin's official line and presented the situation as local, temporary, and manageable. [They emphasized](#), that there is no shortage in Russia overall, and that the Crimean restrictions are local in nature.

Thus, the federal information framing did not deny individual disruptions but avoided presenting them as a single cause-and-effect chain: damage to refining and logistics, reduced supply, disruptions at gas stations, and rising prices.

Perception of the fuel shortage in regional Telegram and VKontakte public groups

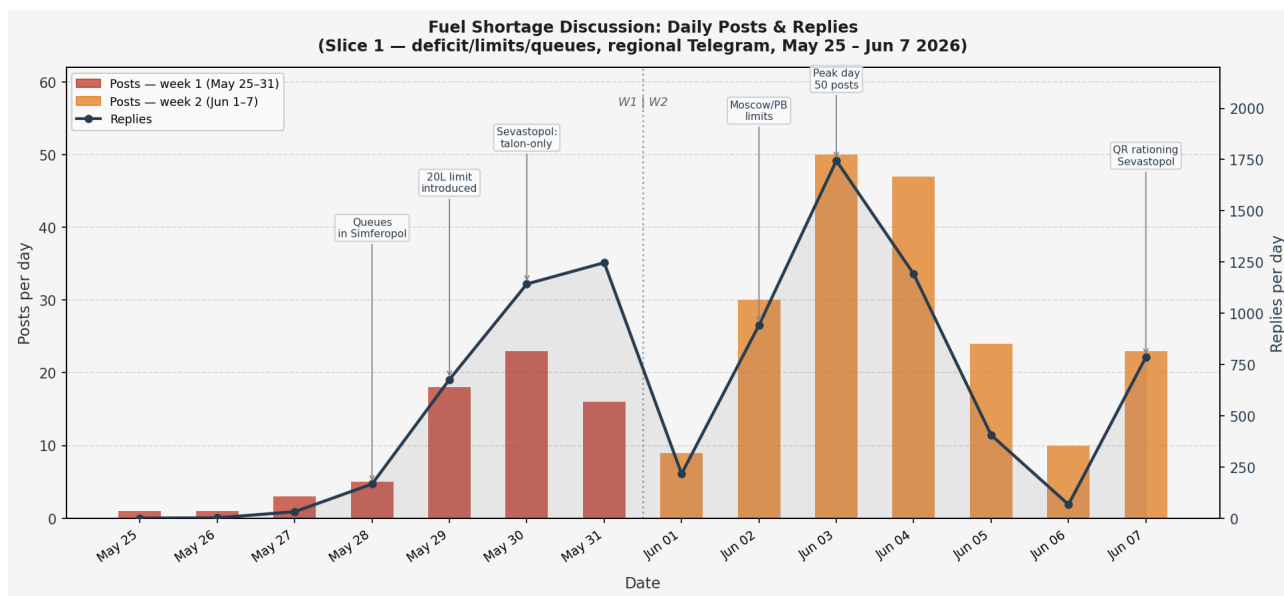
For a significant share of regions, fuel problems are perceived as local difficulties of particular territories, primarily Temporarily Occupied Crimea. Users are convinced the problem will not affect them directly.

The fuel shortage was discussed most in Karelia, St. Petersburg, Volgograd and Belgorod Oblasts, Temporarily Occupied Crimea, and Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In these regions, reports of fuel-sales limits caused surprise, were considered absurd, and drew criticism of the authorities for inefficiency. A significant share of commenters considered the shortage a consequence of logistics problems or an artificially created rush.

Temporarily Occupied Donetsk
Aleksandr Lozovoy · 3 Jun at 15:37 · ♥ 6
«Soon we'll be buying fuel from the Americans.»

Specifics of the situation in Temporarily Occupied Crimea

Temporarily Occupied Crimea became the main hub of discussions about the fuel crisis. The population cursed the authorities, mocked Peskov for his words about “keeping the situation under control” and a month-and-a-half fuel reserve, and shared photos of empty gas stations with addresses. The worse the situation with access to fuel became, the less self-censorship there was in the comments.



The main grievance is related to unequal access to fuel. They complained that some could fill up in large volumes using coupons, while others could not buy even a minimal amount of gasoline for everyday trips.

Statements by the governor of Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol, Razvozhaev, about restoring free fuel sales, and a day later about their cancellation, were called mockery by commenters: “people are on the edge, and you irritate them even more.”

A separate layer of discontent was directed at vacationers, who asked whether it was worth going to Temporarily Occupied Crimea. Locals were ironic and advised bringing a hundred liters of gasoline and an electronic-warfare jammer for the car.

Since an entire speculation economy had grown up — resellers near the bridge, AI-95 at 400+ rubles, a “stand in line for you” service for a thousand — attitudes toward the “profiteers” were mixed. Some heroized them, that “our people won't be left without,” others filed denunciations against them.

In Krasnodar Krai and Rostov Oblast, people hardly react to the restrictions in Temporarily Occupied Crimea, pretending it doesn't concern them. Although the regularly shelled R-280 highway runs through Rostov, so they fully expect the same kind of situation with the Don M-4 road.

Reaction to rising fuel prices

For most regions, the shortage only affected them through rising prices, so reactions were mostly restrained and concerned everyday discontent. No panic moods were noticeable.

The main discussions concerned:

- general outrage over why fuel prices are rising in an oil state;
- the impact on business and shipping, which are already delayed because of air-raid alerts;
- self-reassurance that things aren't so bad, and “in Temporarily Occupied Crimea it's all by coupons anyway”;
- accusations that gas-station owners are profiteering;
- distrust of the official explanations for the price increases.

The fuel-sales restrictions in St. Petersburg even amused some people in Tatarstan.

Dagestan

Aron Berg · 6 Jun at 15:03 · ♥ 40

«You bastards, there are no grounds to raise the price. Where's the Antimonopoly Service? When the big chains, Gazprom and Lukoil, move in, they'll sing a different tune.»

Krasnoyarsk Krai

Dmitry Perminov · 3 Jun at 16:13 · ♥ 22

«We should declare a boycott, just like with Mirotoorg, let them take losses too.»

↳ Egor Egor · 5 Jun at 4:34 · ♥ 6

«Dmitry, you crack me up. Who's going to declare a boycott — this herd of moron drivers? These sheep will eat instant noodles and feed them to their kids but won't get off their precious buckets. Whether gas costs 150 or 200 tomorrow and they pile on even

more taxes, they'll keep driving like they always did, because they're a dumb, finished herd that the authorities milked, are milking, and will keep milking.»

The link between fuel problems and attacks on oil refineries

The population is rather inclined to reject the explanation of the fuel crisis as Ukrainian strikes on oil refineries. They are more inclined to believe that the authorities are artificially raising prices to profit. Thus, in Voronezh, explosions at oil refineries are called merely a pretext; the same in Samara and Murmansk, where oligarchs are blamed. In Temporarily Occupied Luhansk, people compared themselves to Rostov. Supposedly the shelling there is no less, yet prices are not rising, so the price increase is artificial. Even where the cause is entirely real, responsibility is shifted onto an internal culprit.

Samara

Mikhail Prokhorov · 3 Jun at 11:14 · ♥ 61

«They wrecked the refineries, what's logistics got to do with it – they're feeding people a load of nonsense as usual.»

Karelia

Avrora Borealis · 3 Jun at 15:44 · ♥ 36

«“...a measure linked to elevated seasonal demand”)). Just makes you want to say: “Quit your bullsh...ting!”»

Overall picture of the week

A noticeable rise in emotional tension was observed only in Temporarily Occupied Crimea. In other regions, the situation is mostly perceived as a problem of rising prices or temporary inconvenience, often following the logic “this isn't about us.”

2. The week in Russian regional "VKontakte" and "Telegram"

The week was defined by a massive drone attack on St. Petersburg on the night of June 2–3 coinciding with the opening of **the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum**. Smoke over the city, mobile-internet shutdowns “due to the president's visit” and air pollution sparked unexpected interest in groups far beyond the front-line zone.

The week covers data from two platforms:

- Telegram (40,442 posts, 82 regions, 411 channels, 516 million views, 2.4 reposts)
- VKontakte focus groups (302 groups, 33 regions, including Temporarily Occupied Crimea and Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions)

Shared topics of the week

1) *Petersburg “under fire”*

The drone attack on St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast became one of the most high-profile events of the week. On the night of June 3, facilities in the Kronstadt area came under attack, and the incident itself coincided with the start of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Additional attention was drawn by the mobile-internet shutdown in the city center, which was explained by security considerations.

St. Petersburg

Sergey Nikolaevich · 3 Jun at 21:54 · ♥ 14

«This was exactly what to expect during the opening of the world economic forum!((And it's very sad that the special services failed to provide the necessary security!((»

On Telegram, comments along the lines of “what did we do to deserve this?” spread widely after the attack on Petersburg. For many users, the very fact of a strike on a city that for decades had not been associated with war was discussed more than the scale of the damage. On VKontakte, reactions were polar, from “how awful, better this hadn't happened,” “we draw lines, we voice concern,” “and where's the air defense?” to “we need to blow up everything connected to military targets in that merciless backwater that was once a flourishing Soviet republic.”

St. Petersburg

[] · 3 Jun at 11:16 · ♥ 53

«This is awful, and not only in Leningrad Oblast — what are we to do? Putin spoke about strengthening and developing the air-defense system for the whole country; I think that won't be soon, but what do we do right now??? There's only one way out — to blow up EVERYTHING connected to military targets in that merciless backwater that was once a flourishing Soviet republic.»

On VKontakte, the most interesting reaction was that of Belgorod Oblast and Temporarily Occupied Crimea, where the attack was perceived skeptically and mostly through their own experience of regular strikes. In the comments they “rejoiced” that the problems of the

“Special Military Operation” had finally become tangible for one of Russia's main centers too. In rear regions, people worried about their own safety and about a repeat of the attacks, only now on their own regions.

Karelia

Anastasia Taybakova · 3 Jun at 23:46 · ♥ 5

«Uncle Vova keeps hushing everything up, kids are dying and he couldn't care less, it's high time to take measures.»

2) St. Petersburg International Economic Forum

The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum dominated the agenda on Telegram and VKontakte. High-profile stories included the “new Volga” for 4.2 million rubles, the restoration of hot water in some Petersburg districts during the forum, and officials' statements.

The most discussed were the words of Putin and other forum participants about the “resilience of the economy,” rising incomes, and new markets. In the comments, people responded with mentions of inflation, expensive groceries, loans, falling purchasing power, and business closures.

Tolyatti

Oleg Golikov · 5 Jun at 17:44 · ♥ 82

«They keep going on about chaos in Europe, while their own border regions are under shelling, businesses have no idea what'll happen with taxes and laws a month from now, and ordinary people are guessing what'll get blocked next.»

People mocked the statements about the “Oreshnik” strike on a “shed,” considering it a waste of money against the backdrop of social problems. Negativity was also caused by talk of Putin's possible candidacy in 2030 and forecasts of another 20–30 years of war. In the discussions, the public became convinced that the authorities do not plan to change course and are ready to shift the consequences of the war onto the population.

Omsk

Dmitry Fadeev · 5 Jun at 0:26 · ♥ 80

«The dipshit just can't get enough of his damn Oreshnik. God, you've worn everyone out. Not a single thought beyond the war and how to finally end it. So much cash was poured into it for nothing, most of it stolen by officials and the military brass. That money would've been better spent building roads, schools, kindergartens.»

Altai Krai

Igor Vetrov · 4 Jun at 12:39 · ♥ 5

«The satanists are planning to keep on killing.»

In the regions, skepticism toward the deals and investments signed at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum was also widespread. Many believed it was yet another “show” from which “ordinary people” would get no benefit.

3) Peskov's statement about a possible end to the war

Dmitry Peskov's statement about a possible end to the war “by the end of the day” was met mostly with irony and skepticism. Users called it yet another empty promise, recalled that

the war has been “about to end” for many years already, and accused the Kremlin of unwillingness to actually end the conflict.

Tatarstan

Artem Sergeevich · 2 Jun at 15:12 · ♥ 22

«Yet another empty, utterly meaningless load of crap from Peskov...»

4) *Unmanned Aerial Vehicle strikes on Nizhny Novgorod Oblast*

Repeated attacks on Kstovo in Nizhny Novgorod Oblast brought the question of the regions' readiness for such incidents into focus. In local discussions, attention centered on the lack of shelters, the safety of children during exams, and the operation of warning systems.

Nizhny Novgorod

Vladimir Komarov · 5 Jun at 14:48 · ♥ 17

«Thanks to whoever organized this whole circus, now we're not bored.»

Beyond Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, people worried that “what happened to them could happen to us too.” They raised similar questions about bomb shelters and warning systems.

5) *Proposal for negotiations between Zelensky and Putin*

Volodymyr Zelensky's proposal for a personal meeting with Vladimir Putin, and the latter's subsequent refusal of such a format because he “sees no point,” became a widely discussed event.

The reaction mostly came down to war fatigue and a demand for negotiations. In many regions, people wrote that Putin is not interested in ending the conflict, puts forward unacceptable conditions, and drags out the war, while part of the audience called for a direct meeting and a peaceful settlement. At the same time, there was also a smaller group of commenters who did not trust Zelensky and mocked the very initiative of the letter.

Rostov

Vasily Olkhovskiy · 4 Jun at 22:12 · ♥ 738

«Time to put an end to this crap. People are already exhausted on both sides.»

Belgorod

Yulia Bimka · 5 Jun at 0:35 · ♥ 141

«If only peace would come sooner.»

Kursk

Evgeny Popov · 5 Jun at 5:35 · ♥ 207

«How many people have they buried... and for what? So that Russian oligarchs could develop the rich lands of Crimea and Donbas? And spare us the fairy tales about saving Russian-speakers... For that matter, Kharkiv is more Russian-speaking than even Donbas, yet for some reason no one cares about the fate of its residents... Nothing there worth taking?»

Novosibirsk Oblast

Tatyana Maltseva · 5 Jun at 19:25 · ♥ 81

«It's not just that a screw's come loose — this is full-blown dementia in bloom.»

Methodology

What is this project. Systematic monitoring of moods in Russian regions — with a focus on critical and negative posts as an indicator of what irritates, frightens, or outrages people. The conclusions rely on two parallel sources.

VKontakte. Observations by analysts working in regional Russian VKontakte communities — in selected regions of all eight federal districts of the Russian Federation, as well as in Temporarily Occupied Crimea and Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Telegram. About 410 regional Russian channels — regional news channels, city public groups, oblast media, local “chatbots” with audiences ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands of subscribers. Coverage — all Russian regions and the occupied territories of Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Quotes in the report text are presented verbatim.