

# Deep Russia: THE KREMLIN'S ENVOY

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and "Telegram" from June 8 to 14

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<b>Period</b>	June 8–14, 2026
<b>Platforms</b>	VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)

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ПРЕЗИДЕНТ УКРАЇНИ

## Відкритий лист Президенту Російської Федерації від Президента України

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Президенту Російської Федерації  
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Коли ви більш ніж 26 років тому очолили Росію, багато хто в Україні ставився до вас позитивно. Так було. Це вже в минулому.

## Key takeaways

**The Kremlin was the first to publicly confirm the meeting of oligarch Roman Abramovich with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky.** At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 5, Putin stated that one of the business-circle representatives, after a trip to Kyiv, conveyed to him Zelensky's request for a meeting.

Volodymyr Zelensky, in an interview with Sky News, confirmed the meeting with Abramovich in Kyiv and noted that through him **an open letter-proposal was passed to the president of the Russian Federation.** In the comment, Zelensky explained Kyiv's position. Ukraine does not agree to “hand over” Donbas, and a substantive peace process is possible after a ceasefire. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs separately denied receiving through diplomatic channels the open letter to Putin, which Zelensky published on June 4. Federal and loyal Russian media mostly reproduced the Kremlin's narrative framing that “Kyiv is looking for a channel for negotiations” and «Moscow is demonstrating firmness».

**The meeting did not become a high-profile event for the regions.** The event was mentioned in isolated posts and discussions in 12 regions on VKontakte and 18 regions on Telegram. Reactions were mostly ironic. Most often, users mocked Zelensky. The discussions were dominated by skepticism about the prospects of negotiations, combined with war fatigue.

**The fuel crisis became the most widespread topic of the week on VKontakte and Telegram.** Users almost unanimously rejected the explanation of «seasonal demand» and linked the crisis to strikes on oil-refining infrastructure and logistics problems. What irritates the population most is the unfair distribution of fuel amid the shortage: some filled up using coupons, while others stood in lines for hours or could not buy fuel at all.

**Residents of Omsk Oblast received a Ministry of Emergency Situations missile-danger alert for the first time.** For Siberia this was a shock. In the comments, people discussed whether any region remained in the country that could be considered the rear.

**In Temporarily Occupied Crimea** people reacted very emotionally to the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle hit on the Moscow–Simferopol passenger train. They demanded a harsh response to Ukraine and criticized the authorities for the inability to ensure the safety of transport links with Temporarily Occupied Crimea.

**The strike on VNIIR** in Cheboksary became the most high-profile single event of the week on Telegram. Users argued about the work of the air defense, the flight routes of the drones, and the scale of the damage. Commenters were more tired of repeated attacks on the same facility.

## 1. THE KREMLIN'S ENVOY

### Confirmation of the meeting of Volodymyr Zelensky with Roman Abramovich in the media field

On May 21, 2026, Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich meets with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky.

[The Kremlin was the first to publicly confirm](#) the meeting. At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 5, Putin stated that one of the business-circle representatives, after a trip to Kyiv, conveyed to him Zelensky's request for a meeting. Putin did not name the person and said he saw no sense in a meeting that would be «pointless back-and-forth». [According to Putin's version](#), the businessman did not have an official mandate from the Russian Federation. He supposedly «just went to listen» rather than being sent by state bodies.

On June 7, [Financial Times](#) reported, citing four sources, that the «business-circle representative» through whom Zelensky conveyed the meeting proposal to Putin was Roman Abramovich.

That same day, [Volodymyr Zelensky, in an interview with Sky News, confirmed the meeting](#) with Abramovich in Kyiv and noted that through him an open letter-proposal was passed to the president of the Russian Federation. In the comment, Zelensky explained Kyiv's position. Ukraine does not agree to “hand over” Donbas, and a substantive peace process is possible after a ceasefire. The meeting itself was not an official meeting within the framework of a peace negotiation process. Rather, it was a non-public channel for conveying positions.

[The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs separately denied](#) receiving through diplomatic channels the open letter to Putin, which Zelensky made public on June 4. Abramovich's representatives gave no substantive public confirmation or denial. [Forbes Russia](#) relayed the FT report with the pointed note that Abramovich's team did not comment on the story.

## How regional Telegram and VKontakte public groups reacted

In most of the studied regions of the Russian Federation, there were no mentions of the meeting of Volodymyr Zelensky and Roman Abramovich.

The meeting was mentioned in isolated posts and discussions in Bashkortostan, Sverdlovsk, Tyumen, Voronezh, Vladimir, Orenburg, Kaliningrad, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and Volgograd Oblasts, Temporarily Occupied Crimea, and Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (12 regions).

### *Main recorded messages and reactions*

- 1) **The transfer to Ukraine of Abramovich's funds from the sale of the Chelsea football club** was the most widespread and discussed news in Voronezh, Vladimir, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and Volgograd Oblasts and Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The discussions were dominated by mockery and insulting remarks aimed at Zelensky. Some commenters called him a «clown», questioned the appropriateness of such demands, and shifted the discussion into the realm of personal insults. In Voronezh Oblast, negative comments were also directed against Abramovich.
- 2) **Abramovich's mediating role between Kyiv and Moscow** was discussed mainly in Tyumen Oblast. Commenters called the situation a «circus», questioned the very appropriateness of such contacts, and spoke negatively about Abramovich. Mentions of Abramovich's involvement in prisoner exchanges were in Orenburg Oblast. Commenters expressed joy at the return of prisoners.
- 3) **Reports about the meeting of Zelensky and Abramovich** without additional details were in Sverdlovsk and Kaliningrad Oblasts. In Sverdlovsk Oblast, the reaction was limited to isolated jeers at Zelensky. In Kaliningrad Oblast, some users assumed the meeting might have certain practical results.
- 4) **The version about possible peace agreements** was discussed in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Some users assumed that Abramovich's visit to Kyiv might be connected with a search for paths to peace, but alongside this there were opinions about the impossibility of any agreements with the Ukrainian side.
- 5) **Zelensky's words that Kyiv will not give up Donbas “as Moscow wishes”** were discussed only in Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The reaction to them was the most aggressive among all the discussions identified and was accompanied by insults and threats against the president of Ukraine.
- 6) **Indirect mentions** of the meeting were found in Temporarily Occupied Crimea. In comments on other topics, users expressed displeasure over the contacts of Russian businessmen with the Ukrainian leadership.

The situation with the discussion of the meeting on Telegram was similar to that on VKontakte. The meeting received fairly limited coverage in only 18 regions.

### *The discussion developed in two short waves.*

- 1) The first fell on June 5–6 and arose after Putin's statement at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. It was precisely this that became the main driver of attention to the topic. Regional channels mostly relayed the official agenda. The reports were presented as standard news from the forum without additional interpretations or doubts about the fact of contacts between the parties. The name of the intermediary was not mentioned; only abstract phrasings were used: «a big businessman», «a decent person», «an old acquaintance».
- 2) The second wave began on June 7 after the Financial Times publication, which named Roman Abramovich as the intermediary. However, this information practically did not spread in the regional Telegram space. Only two posts from a single St. Petersburg channel were recorded in the sample.

### *Audience reaction*

The audience reaction was mostly ironic. The most popular reaction was the 🤪 emoji, which significantly outpaced all other types of reactions. Positive assessments also occurred but were significantly less noticeable.

In users' comments, three main lines of discussion can be distinguished.

- 1) Most often, anti-war skepticism and war fatigue were heard.
- 2) An ironic attitude toward the prospects of negotiations.
- 3) Support for the official position of the Russian authorities and the continuation of hostilities.

### **General observations**

- The meeting did not become a high-profile event for regional Telegram channels and VKontakte public groups.
- Reactions were mostly ironic. Most often, users mocked Zelensky.
- The discussions were dominated by skepticism about the prospects of negotiations, combined with war fatigue.

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

### *The week covers data from two platforms:*

- Telegram (40,105 posts, 82 regions, 411 channels, 544 million views)
- 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**

#### *The fuel crisis*

The fuel crisis became the most widespread topic of the week on both platforms. People discussed limits at the Tatneft, Rosneft, Lukoil, and Kirishi gas stations, as well as the fuel shortage in Crimea, where gasoline on the black market reached 250–300 rubles/liter. On both platforms, users almost unanimously rejected the explanation of «seasonal demand» and linked the crisis to strikes on oil-refining infrastructure and logistics problems. Despite this, the public is deeply convinced that the shortage is still artificial and is outraged that such a situation has arisen in a gas-station country. In Samara, people were ironic about the “Russian Banana Union,” which “assured that there is no shortage of bananas.” What irritates the population most is the unfair distribution of fuel amid the shortage: some filled up using coupons, while others stood in lines for hours or could not buy fuel at all.

*Pskov*

*Vlad Vesnov · 9 Jun at 21:28 · ♥ 54*

*«Some kind of strange “getting up off our knees” for Russia, don't you think? At this rate we're moving back to the USSR, and apparently we like it.»*

**The situation in Temporarily Occupied Crimea.** In Crimean public groups there was a lot of news about gasoline problems. People complained about coupons and the impossibility of getting a QR code. They were very outraged by the resellers and called for chopping off their hands. In the end, there was even less fuel than there had been, even after the authorities' statement. There was also a moment when the head of Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol, Razvozhayev, honestly reported that the fuel trucks had not arrived, so there would be no fuel. Against this backdrop, calls were added to “dekulakize” government representatives, to drain the gasoline from their cars, and let them stand in line. Such calls were quite widespread. Inconvenient comments in the public groups were deleted very quickly.

#### *Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attacks*

On June 10, residents of Omsk Oblast received a Ministry of Emergency Situations missile-danger alert for the first time. For Siberia this was a shock. In the comments,

people discussed whether any region remained in the country that could be considered the rear.

### **Omsk**

*Mikrorayon Russkiy · 10 Jun at 9:01 · ♥ 468*

*«What to do? Come to the elections in September and vote against United Russia.»*

↳ *Vyacheslav Glebov · 10 Jun at 9:25 · ♥ 26*

*«Mikrorayon, bold move.»*

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attacks also continued across the whole country: Krasnodar, Oryol, Tula, Orenburg, and other cities of the Russian Federation. For many regions, air-raid alerts have already become part of everyday routine and do not provoke emotional reactions. Rather, people discuss how to adapt and live under a “constant” threat.

### **Tatarstan**

*Yu Yu · 12 Jun at 10:09 · ♥ 24*

*«We don't ignore it, we listen. Then what? Run around looking for the keys to SUPPOSED shelters?! Or just try to find shelters at all?!»*

### **Moscow**

*Valeria Smirnova · 9 Jun at 8:51 · ♥ 13*

*«I think it's time we consulted heroically brave Iran on how to properly fight enemies, since we ourselves can't destroy the factories, the fascists in Europe, in the Baltics, in Britain.»*

## **Strike on the Moscow–Simferopol train**

The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle hit on the Moscow–Simferopol passenger train became a notable event on both platforms. As a result of the strike, an assistant train driver was killed, the driver was wounded, and passengers were evacuated right onto the tracks.

Crimeans reacted very emotionally to the incident. They demanded a harsh response to Ukraine and criticized the authorities for the inability to ensure the safety of transport links with Temporarily Occupied Crimea.

In the regions, the safety of trips to Crimea was discussed most. Users criticized those who go there on vacation despite everything, especially with children. They linked such behavior to the influence of propaganda that convinces people “that everything's fine.”

### **Murmansk**

*Marina Nikulina · 8 Jun at 10:21 · ♥ 256*

*«Why go there, I don't understand.»*

↳ *Lyolya Sheremetyeva · 8 Jun at 10:33 · ♥ 64*

*«Marina, they're tempting fate.»*

↳ *Vasily Piton · 8 Jun at 11:33 · ♥ 184*

*«Marina, the TV says everything's fine and perfect. The air defense works, there's no danger. And those with a higher “television education” believe everything.»*

## **Zero days without bans**

Fines for using Gmail and Outlook, new internet restrictions, and the development of VPN-blocking systems became one of the most discussed topics of the week. On Telegram it covered 68 regions; on VKontakte it was present across almost the entire sample.

On both platforms, a sense of the constant expansion of bans dominated. People were ironic that the authorities are fighting their own population. Most often, they discussed ways to circumvent the new rules.

### ***Demography***

The statement by deputy Tatyana Butskaya that the first child should be born while still studying at university. The public criticized the official and actively discussed the costs of a child. Most link the low birth rate to economic instability. They argue that “there's no money to support children” and do not believe in state support.

#### ***Belgorod***

*Aleksandr Anatolyevich · 10 Jun at 11:20 · ♥ 198*

*«And will this deputy provide housing for all these kids? Or let them be homeless and then off to the Special Military Operation as cannon fodder? She seems to have it all so easy in her reasoning about life.»*

This week, the proposal of a «maternal salary» became a notable topic of discussion. Regardless of their attitude to the idea itself, most doubted that new payments could affect the decision to have children.

#### ***Lipetsk***

*Anastasia Chernikova · 8 Jun at 10:53 · ♥ 81*

*«And for mothers who work AND raise children, let them hand out horseshoes! Here, working and raising kids is not honored, a tax refund isn't allowed — your income's too high — otherwise there won't be enough money for the slackers!!!! You work, you pay into the treasury, but you get squat!»*

### ***Markhaev and the timeframe of the “special operation”***

State Duma deputy from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Vyacheslav Markhaev called for publishing a plan to end the “Special Military Operation.” For many, he became an example of a politician who voiced questions that had long been accumulating in society. At the same time, almost everyone assumes that such frankness in the current system may have consequences for the deputy himself. Part of the audience expressed distrust of Markhaev since he is a man of the system and suspected him of pre-election populism.

#### ***Novosibirsk Oblast***

*Evgeny Viktorovich · 12 Jun at 13:14 · ♥ 37*

*«Looks like he'll be removed now, and the position will be vacant.»*

## **What else made it to the top of discussions on Telegram?**

### ***Strike on VNIIR in Cheboksary***

The strike on VNIIR in Cheboksary became the most high-profile single event of the week on Telegram. The topic gathered almost 3,000 posts in 67 regions and over 390,000 reposts. The channel «Serdita Chuvashia» published the three most viral posts about the attack at once, and the main one gained 15,929 reposts, which set the record of the week.

Users argued about the work of the air defense, the flight routes of the drones, and the scale of the damage. Commenters were more tired of repeated attacks on the same facility.

***Samara***

*Pako Presnyy · 10 Jun at 7:14 · ♥ 51*

*«Thank you to the government for our happy life.»*

### ***Moscow is drowning***

The downpours of June 12–14 became the most noticeable civilian topic of the week. The audience's reaction had almost nothing to do with the weather. The main theme was complaints about the quality of urban infrastructure. Users perceived the flooding of new or recently repaired facilities as proof of poor-quality repairs and inefficient use of budget funds.

## 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.