

Deep Russia:
**THE HINTERLAND DOESN'T BELIEVE IN
TEARS**

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and on "Telegram" from June 15 to 21

Period 15 - 21 June 2026
Platforms VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)



Key findings

In the first half of the week, the agenda was dominated by news about the **fuel crisis**, queues at gas stations, restrictions on gasoline sales, and the decision to allow the use of fuel of a lower environmental standard. However, from June 18 the information agenda shifted abruptly. **A massive drone attack on Moscow pushed the fuel topic into the background and became the main event of the week for most regions.**

The June 18 attack was the largest drone attack on Moscow since the start of the war. Official statements and the authorities' reaction were aimed at minimizing the scale of the attack in the eyes of the population, shifting the emphasis to the successful work of air defense. They claimed the massive attack had supposedly been largely repelled by air defense, and that the consequences at the oil refinery were under control. **Although Sobyenin admitted that several drones reached the Moscow Oil Refinery.** The Russian Ministry of Defense reported 555 drones intercepted and shot down overnight.

There were reports of **traffic restrictions near Kapotnya and the closure of the Moscow Ring Road** and several streets in southeastern Moscow, as well as disruptions to air travel. Publicly, Rosaviatsiya and the Ministry of Transport used the neutral wording of “temporary restrictions on the arrival and departure of aircraft”.

Federal media stuck to the official framing of the situation being under control, while the local level was far less “reassuring”. Eyewitnesses described explosions, smoke, a glow in the sky, the smell of burning, “black rain,” and the absence of any clear alert. Such photos and videos spread actively through Telegram channels. Their dissemination became a problem for the propaganda, because they shattered the formula of “everything is under control.”

In regional discussions, people voiced dissatisfaction with the authorities and personally with the president. There were accusations of inaction, complaints about losing, and irony aimed at propaganda narratives about “everything going according to plan.” **In the comments, there were active calls for peace and negotiations as well as demands for a harsh response against Ukraine.** Users also distrusted the official reports, assuming that the news was concealing the scale of events.

In the regions, there was noticeable **irritation over the special status of the capital** in the information space. People were outraged that the war was only mentioned after the strikes on Moscow, because “other regions are supposedly not Russia.”

1. THE HINTERLAND DOESN'T BELIEVE IN TEARS

Russian media on the drone attack on the Moscow Oil Refinery in Kapotnya on June 18, 2026.

The initial official line was built around the “successful” work of air defense, but after visual materials and reports of a fire appeared, [Sobyanin admitted](#) that several drones had reached the Moscow Oil Refinery.

After that, the rhetoric shifted toward minimizing the consequences. In the afternoon, [Sobyanin stated](#) that the fire had been “mostly contained” and that there were no casualties at the plant. [The Russian Ministry of Defense reported](#) 555 drones intercepted and shot down overnight. The briefing focused on the record number of “destroyed” targets. [The Ministry of Emergency Situations and city services](#) did not publicly provide any technical assessment of the damage to the facilities. They spoke of the containment of the fire, the absence of casualties, the normal operation of gas stations, and [air quality monitoring](#).

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[ASTRA](#) quoted residents who complained that from 04:48 to 06:20 they heard strikes but received neither SMS alerts nor sirens. [“Novaya Gazeta Europe”](#) cited the testimony of a resident near the oil refinery who woke up to sounds resembling strikes, as well as the words of another eyewitness from the Kapotnya district who saw drones and criticized the fact that they only began shooting them down near residential buildings. [Reuters](#) and [The Guardian](#) reported residents' complaints about the absence of sirens, trembling windows, the smell of smoke, and oily traces left after the rain on cars and windowsills.

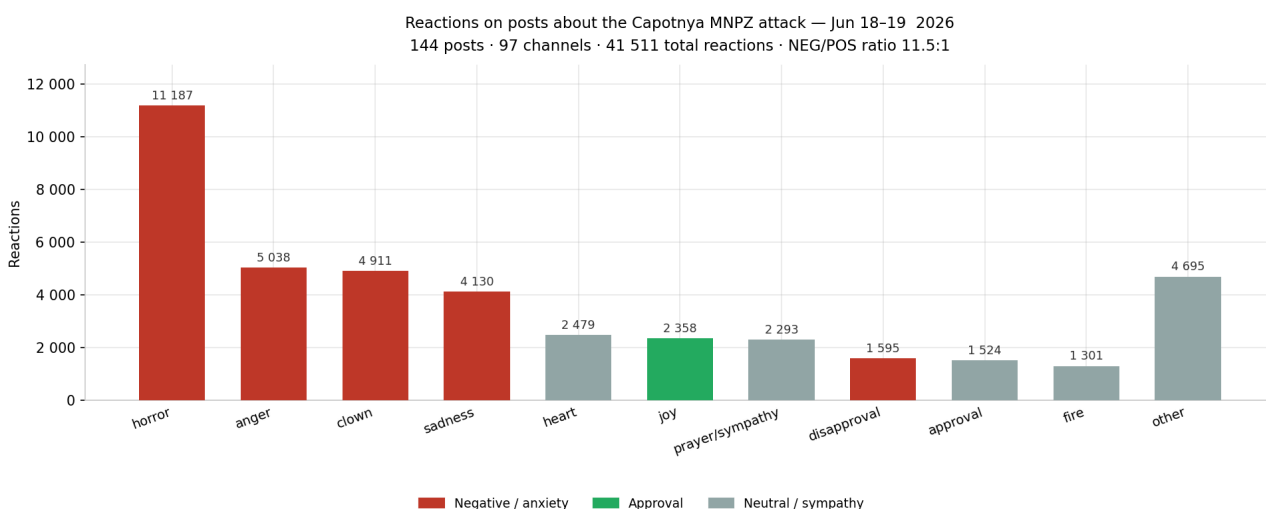
In the regions, there were reports of large numbers of drones being shot down, air defense activity, the destruction of residential buildings, a strike on the Moscow Oil Refinery in Kapotnya, debris falling on the “Sadovod” shopping center, “oil rain” over the Moscow region, and casualties. People posted about air travel disruptions. They reported the introduction of the “Kover” (Carpet) plan, the closure of Moscow airports, the cancellation/delay of flights, and the rerouting of planes to other cities.

Visual materials showing smoke, flames, and an explosion on the grounds of the Moscow Oil Refinery spread actively through Telegram channels. Such materials became a problem for the official framing, because they shattered the formula of “everything is under control.” [The blogger](#) Maxim Kalashnikov was summoned to the police after publishing a video of the aftermath of the strike in Kapotnya.

How regional public groups on Telegram and VKontakte reacted

The attack on the Moscow Oil Refinery became the main event of the week on both platforms.

On **Telegram**, 164 posts were shared across 56 regions, and overall the messages about the attack gathered more than 852,000 forwards. The most common reaction was the 😱 emoji, reflecting shock and anxiety. The 😏 reaction was used mostly in the context of “gloating” over the strikes that had reached Moscow. There was also a large number of 🙏 under posts about the damaged residential building in Zhukovsky.



The main discussions on both platforms:

Criticism of the top leadership and general skepticism

In the comments, people expressed dissatisfaction with the authorities and personally with the president. The most frequent accusations were of inaction: “the old man sits there and does nothing,” “they’re holed up in their bunkers.” Separately, people questioned the success of the “Special Military Operation” and the effectiveness of air defense. There was also irony toward propaganda narratives that “everything is going according to plan”; in some comments this turned into direct insults aimed at the president, in particular the phrasing that “the bald Chekist ram lost the whole game.” The most such reactions came from the Republic of Bashkortostan and Krasnoyarsk Krai, and the Samara, Novosibirsk, Leningrad, and Lipetsk Oblasts. In St. Petersburg, a noticeable share of comments criticizing the authorities were deleted.

St. Petersburg

Kostya Baburin · 18 Jun at 16:44 · ♥ 11

«Meanwhile Putin's strolling around Kazan, smiling»

Moreover, the public distrusted the official reports, assuming that the news was concealing the scale of events. People posted their own videos and mocked reports about “clean air thanks to the weather” and statements that “only one drone” had hit the target. Such

reactions were most common in the Altai Republic and the Kaluga, Omsk, Nizhny Novgorod, and Kaliningrad Oblasts.

Anti-Moscow sentiment

In the reactions, there was noticeable irritation over the special status of the capital in the information space. Users were outraged that the war was only “remembered” after the strikes on Moscow, while other regions, by their logic, are supposedly “not Russia.” Hence reactions like “finally the center will feel the war for itself too.” Moscow was constantly compared with border regions that have long lived under the threat of attacks but do not receive the same level of attention and information support. In comments from Altai, Krasnoyarsk Krai, and Kaluga Oblast, there was almost no sympathy for Muscovites. There, the situation in the capital was perceived rather indifferently, since it did not affect the users personally.

Krasnoyarsk Krai

Andrey Lukin · 18 Jun at 14:37 · ♥ 5

«Honestly, who gives a damn about Moscow — it's like nothing else in the country ever happens anywhere except Moscow»

↳ Dmitry Perminov · 18 Jun at 15:36 · ♥ 5

«Andrey, they're just going to squeeze even more out of us now»

Peace vs Radicalization

Both supporters of peace and supporters of escalation and war showed equally high activity.

- There were arguments like “let's wrap this up,” “how long can you keep playing at this little war.” People urged the government to stop the madness and decide to end the war, since civilians are suffering, while promises to destroy Ukrainian factories do not stop the growing number of drones. Some called the “Special Military Operation” simply a “business,” where officials' children don't fight, while “ordinary” citizens are forced to pay for the consequences of decisions made at the top.

Kaliningrad

Natalya Vakhtina · 18 Jun at 12:04 · ♥ 111

«God, when will all this end?! How I long for calm and confidence in the future!»

- Alongside this, a significant share of commenters demanded a harsh response, the destruction of Ukraine's logistics, or to “blow Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Lviv to pieces.” In Samara Oblast, people mentioned Y. Prigozhin, who is “sorely missed to restore order.” At the same time, officials' suggestions that civilians “prepare for war as 80 years ago” provoked immediate aggressive rejection, with advice that they go to the enlistment offices themselves. The most such rhetoric came from Tatarstan and the Pskov and Orenburg Oblasts.

“Starting to fight for real”?

The statement by State Duma deputy O. Zhuravlyov about the need to “start fighting for real,” to wipe out Ukraine's logistics, bridges, and railway stations in response to the strikes on the capital, was met with criticism. In Novosibirsk, Samara, Pskov, Orenburg, and other regions, users asked what had been happening over the previous years, if only now were the authorities talking about a “real war.” For many, such rhetoric looked like an actual devaluation of the losses already suffered, effectively “playing toy soldiers.” And of course people called on officials to go and fight in the trenches together with their own children, rather than “dumping it all on the people.”

Kuzbass

Aleksandr Sorok · 18 Jun at 13:43 · ♥ 63

«Then let the State Duma go and fight. All it can do is ban things and hand out fines.»

How did Moscow react to the strike?

There was plenty of news in Moscow public groups. At first it was presented in brief bullet points. Later, a couple of emotional posts appeared about an 8-year-old girl killed after the strike by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In their reactions, commenters split into several camps, whose support was distributed evenly.

- 1) Kremlin patriots, who tried to push the idea that the Armed Forces of Ukraine are terrorists and that Kyiv should be struck.
- 2) Observers, who focused simply on sharing what they saw, heard, and felt, but without any emotional coloring.
- 3) The anxious, who said they were already frightened and that it needs to be ended.
- 4) Critics of air defense, officials, and corruption. Sobyenin himself also came in for criticism over the ineffective use of funds on “flower beds” rather than on protecting strategic facilities.

Moscow

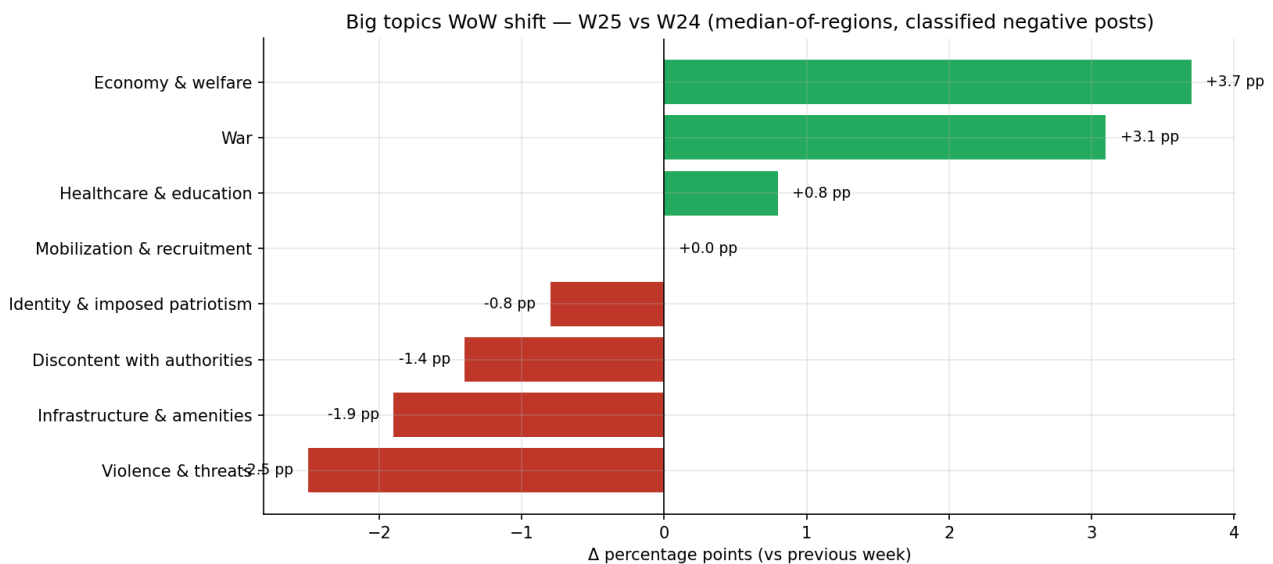
Valeria Smirnova · 9 Jun at 8:51 · ♥ 314

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

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

Activity on Telegram

The week showed 4.4% more posts (41,883 vs 40,105) and 9.3% more views (594 million vs 544 million) than the previous one. Both indicators rose, with reach growing faster than activity. Thursday, June 18 (the day of the strike on the Moscow Oil Refinery) showed a peak in views: 105 million in a single day. One post received 49,354 forwards, which is at least 3 times higher than the usual weekly maximum.



Among the topics, there were two notable shifts: “War” (+3.1 pp) and “Economy and social issues” (+3.7 pp) exceeded the threshold of structural movement. The remaining topics moved within the normal range. The fact that “Dissatisfaction with the authorities” formally fell by 1.5 pp is not a significant decline. The topic steadily accounts for 42–44% and continues to dominate over the others.

Subtopics: what rose, what fell

Rose significantly:

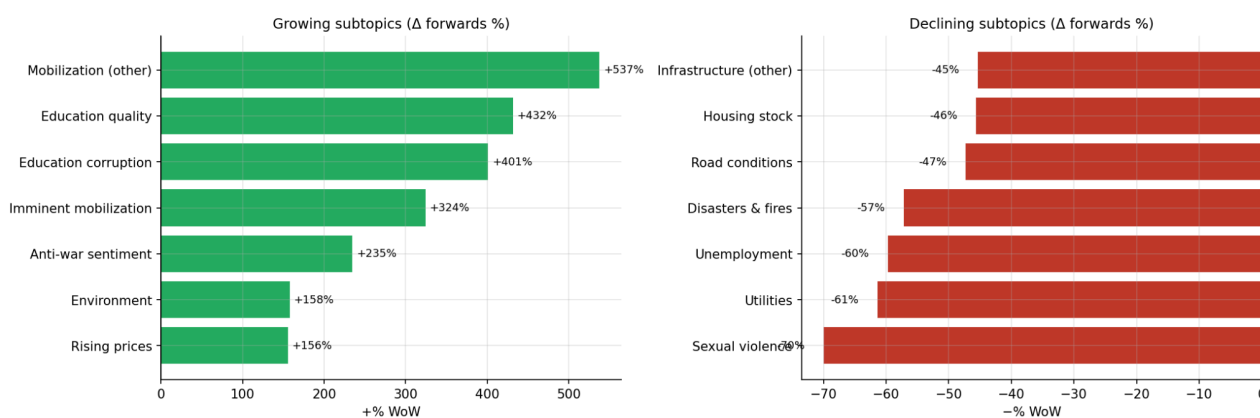
1. Anti-war sentiment: +235% forwards, +3 regions — a direct consequence of the June 18 strikes. Comments under posts about the strikes contained a markedly higher share of open criticism of the war.
2. Quality of education: +431% forwards, +15 regions — the largest civilian spike of the week, linked to the exam season and the scandals associated with it.
3. Impact of sanctions and shortages: +133% forwards, +19 regions — the fuel crisis spread from the Moscow region to distant regions and Temporarily Occupied Crimea.

4. Mobilization panic and anxiety: +324–537% forwards depending on the subcategory — likely linked to news about a possible resumption of recruitment after the escalation.

Fell significantly:

1. Housing and utilities: –61% forwards. Last week it was a major topic; this week it receded against the backdrop of fuel and the strikes.
2. Disasters, fires: –57% forwards (despite the real fires at the oil refinery). The previous week had more virally spread fire posts; this week the same fires got lost in the military context.
3. Lack of jobs: –60% forwards, –18 regions. The topic disappeared from the agenda. It was pushed out by other storylines, or that's just how the weekly cycle goes.

Subtopic WoW movers — W25 vs W24 (2026)



Shared topics of the week on Telegram and VKontakte

The week covers data from two platforms:

- Telegram (41,883 posts, 80 regions, 411 channels, 544 million views)
- VK focus groups (383 groups, 27 regions, including Temporarily Occupied Crimea and the Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions)

Fuel shortage

The fuel shortage was the main “civilian” topic of the week, to which the public reduced most of their discussions. News about empty gas stations, queues, restrictions on fuel sales, and sky-high price tags rolled across all the monitored regions. Regional reactions show that a fuel crisis in a “gas-station state” looks absurd to the population — they could not believe that there really was no gasoline.

Samara

Dmitry Sarychev · 15 Jun at 13:33 · ♥ 153

«The country that's second in the world for oil and gas sales has run out of fuel 😂😂😂»

People criticized their own population for creating an artificial shortage and stirring up panic, as once happened with buckwheat or sugar. They accused gas stations of exploiting the situation to their advantage in order to deliberately earn more, claiming that “they actually do have gasoline.” They worried about rising gasoline prices and, as a

consequence, prices of goods and services, and fretted about whether food and medicine would be delivered on time.

Kaluga Oblast

Maksim Ignatov · 19 Jun at 13:28 · ♥ 112

«We've seen this somewhere before with buckwheat. Now it's gasoline. You whip up panic like crazy yourselves — now they'll raise the prices and the gas will suddenly appear»

The authorities' decision to revert to “Euro-3” standards was supported reluctantly. People were indignant that this surrogate fuel would “wreck” car engines, while prices would creep upward anyway.

Kursk

Aleksandr Fursov · 15 Jun at 22:07 · ♥ 51

«And after this, how am I supposed to be proud of my country, where they openly tell me I'll be eating crap at the price of a regular lunch. Maybe I should go and put a gas tank on my car... Otherwise I'm afraid that after this "fuel" I'll have to overhaul the engine.»

Crimean public groups had the most activity among the regions, although it was slightly lower this week than last. In the region, people were completely absorbed in the fight against profiteers, hunting down — even at night — individuals who either fill up without queuing or resell fuel. They wrote about such cases in the public groups. Overall dissatisfied with the authorities, half-jokingly and half-seriously they asked where the cars of Razvozhaev, Aksyonov, and Konstantinov were, so they could siphon the fuel out of them. The general mood of the audience can be described as tense and anxious, with noticeable fatigue from everyday problems and security risks. On the one hand, there were attempts by pro-Kremlin bots to demonstrate calm, safety, and faith in air defense, thanking it for shooting down the threats; on the other, people were anxious that the war had become an inseparable part of everyday life and that almost no safe places remained. Comments from those dissatisfied with the situation were often met with accusations of working for the enemy.

Temporarily Occupied Crimea

Roman Mugidinov · 19 Jun at 13:43 · ♥ 14

«And the price of gas at the filling stations — isn't that profiteering on a state scale, why don't the police catch anyone, the monopolists Atan, TES, and Grifon have set up a racket with jacked-up prices and everyone couldn't care less..., lots of questions — like electric cars not being allowed across the bridge, and fuel trucks not allowed across the bridge, and rail across the bridge, and tankers into Crimea (from Novoros to Feodosia, or the short route to Kerch) — what kind of sabotage is this on the part of the state? Many of them, but not a single answer»

Does the rear even exist?

Discussions of drone strikes spread across most regions of the Russian Federation. Besides the attack on the Moscow Oil Refinery, the strike on the Tyumen Oil Refinery also drew

attention. There were many reports of air-raid alerts in the regions. In Samara Oblast, people counted 5–7 alerts a day.

Nizhny Novgorod

Aleksandr Smirnov · 16 Jun at 16:36 · ♥ 55

«God, I'm so damn sick of this Operation "Y" and the other adventures of "Pu", the senile old geezer has turned the country upside down!»

The audience was preoccupied above all with how a drone physically covered thousands of kilometers deep into the country despite years of reports about “unrivaled” detection systems. A popular explanation is the version that all air defense systems have been pulled together to guard Putin's residences at Valdai, leaving the industrial regions without cover.

Volgograd

Viktoria Kashirina · 18 Jun at 10:37 · ♥ 19

«It's the 21st century, satellites are plowing the planet's orbit, but they still can't figure out where the drones are flying from. 😏»

↳ Anton P · 18 Jun at 11:31 · ♥ 19

«Viktoria, they can, but why bother.»

In some regions, people were outraged that the sirens go off only after the strikes.

Omsk

Yulia Ivanova · 18 Jun at 12:31 · ♥ 66

«If only we could hear that siren just once. We live in the Neftezavod district, the refinery is a stone's throw away, but the alert system doesn't work. We've already written to the Administration, they promised to sort it out. They're still sorting it out.»

↳ Viktoria Andreevna · 18 Jun at 12:46 · ♥ 40

«Yulia, come to Krasnodar Krai) here we've got warmth, and sirens, and explosions! We've got it all!»

The consequences of “debris,” especially when it means the deaths of children, are perceived aggressively and painfully. Commenters also mocked the jamming of communications, which does not hinder the drones but makes life harder for Russians. A recurring thread running through the discussions is the idea that there is no safe rear anymore.

Novosibirsk Oblast

Svetom Belym · 21 Jun at 11:36 · ♥ 6

«They're right when they say the world would only be cleaner without Little Britain (the main supplier of missiles and drones for the war against Russia)»

Elections without communications

After a statement by Central Election Commission head Pamfilova about possible restrictions on the internet and communications during the September elections “for the sake of security,” the audience quickly linked this topic to new initiatives against VPNs, when deputy Denisenko separately proposed blocking VPNs in order to combat rumors

about the gasoline shortage. The public believes that the elections will be held without internet so that no one knows what is happening at the other end of the country. People criticized officials without restraining their use of profanity and associated the State Duma with “the orchestra on the Titanic.” The audience is outraged that, instead of solving the problem, the authorities are scrubbing information about it, and that internet blocking is already happening now “without elections” and still does not stop the drones. In Samara Oblast, the discontent was intensified by actual outages. There, people sat for two days without communications, a festival was canceled, and in response the population demanded a recalculation of tariffs for services not provided.

Kursk

Aleksandr Belov · 15 Jun at 15:36 · ♥ 50

«Judging by the fact that there's been no mobile internet in Kursk for the third week now, the elections in Kursk are already in full swing.»

Elections to the State Duma 2026

Putin signed a decree on the election of State Duma deputies on September 20, which gathered perhaps the most negative reactions of any news during the week. The public believes that the authorities will postpone all difficult and unpopular decisions until after the elections, after which they expect living conditions in the Russian Federation to worsen. They have no hope that the elections will change anything and do not understand why they are even held in this form at all.

The Gomel bus

A number of regions discussed the strike by a drone on the bus of a children's football team from Gomel near Bryansk. In the Temporarily Occupied Luhansk region, local commenters left the Armed Forces of Ukraine free of criticism and primarily blamed the trip's organizers, who sent the bus along routes known to be under fire. In the Samara and Kaluga Oblasts and the Temporarily Occupied Donetsk region, on the contrary, people demanded a harsh response — that “Ukraine should be pounded until the ground turns to glass wool” — but at the same time many did not believe there would actually be any response. In Bashkortostan, after the event, a recruitment banner “Protect Your Own” appeared, with signing bonuses of up to 800,000 rubles, but it was quickly removed.

Voronezh

Oksana Kvasova · 2 hours ago · ♥ 50

«And what's the response? Zakharova will scold them and that's it? Doesn't it seem like things are already going way too far with this Special Military Operation of theirs? The blather they call negotiations isn't producing any results, there are no red lines..... oh wait, wait, wait..... we haven't even started yet, riight....exactly! About 5 years ago came the moment when we needed to start and finish it. We shouldn't have pulled the troops out of Kyiv Oblast 🤔»

Telegram only. A mobilization “raid” in Penza

After reports appeared about people in civilian clothes in Penza allegedly forcing passersby to sign contracts for the “Special Military Operation,” the police and the channel “War on

Fakes” came out with denials, which went viral in the regional information space, gathering 2,115 forwards. Overall, the mobilization topic covered 348 posts from 74 regions during the week, but it was specifically in Penza that activity was highest. In the discussions, some commenters called the story an exaggeration and urged people “not to give in to panic,” while others cited their own experience or the testimony of acquaintances, asserting that such checks really do happen, but that they are selective.

Methodology

What this project is. Systematic monitoring of sentiment 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 VK communities — in selected regions of all eight federal districts of the Russian Federation, as well as in Temporarily Occupied Crimea and the Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

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

Quotes in the text of the report are given verbatim.