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Russia-Installed Officials Killed in Occupied Ukraine

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Gavriil Grigorov / TASS

A bomb explosion has killed the prosecutor general of eastern Ukraine's self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) and his deputy, pro-Moscow officials said Friday.

"Today, Prosecutor General Sergei Gorenko and his deputy Yekaterina Steglenko died as a result of a terrorist act," the press service of LNR head Leonid Pasechnik said on Telegram.

Their deaths mean five Russian-installed officials have been killed in Russian-occupied or separatist-held areas of Ukraine on Friday alone as Kyiv continues to press ahead with its counteroffensive in the northeast and south.

The deputy head of the Russia-installed administration of Berdyansk and his wife were killed, while a strike on Kherson city's administrative building left one dead and one injured.

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for any of these attacks.

Pro-Russian figures placed early blame for the attack that targeted the prosecutor's office on

Ukrainian sabotage, with Pasechnik saying it "showed that Kyiv's regime had crossed all possible limits."

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But Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that the attack "should be viewed as showdowns of local organized criminal groups that could not share looted property before a large-scale escape. Or as RF's purge of witnesses to war crimes."

The LNR's emergency services believe an improvised explosive device was detonated inside the prosecutor general's office, Interfax reported.

Video footage showed emergency services rushing to the scene, where the building's windows appear smashed from the interior.

Pro-Kremlin journalist Semyon Pegov reported that the blast took place during a meeting of the breakaway republic's administration.

Administrative buildings across the war-torn city of Luhansk are now being evacuated.

"In order to avoid an increase in the number of victims, it was decided to evacuate people from administrative buildings," Pegov wrote on his popular Telegram channel, WarGonzo.

At least 20 assassination attempts have taken place in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine since the start of Moscow's invasion in February, according to a tally by volunteer project WarTranslated.

AFP contributed reporting.

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