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Russia, Ukraine Report Drone Attacks as Zelensky Visits ICC

By AFP

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Krasnodar Region Governor Telegram Channel

Kyiv and Moscow reported drone attacks Thursday including two that sparked fires in Russian oil refineries, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited The Hague to lobby for more support.

Zelensky's surprise visit to meet top officials of the International Criminal Court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Russian leader Vladimir Putin, came a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of a drone attack on the Kremlin.

Russia has accused Ukraine of trying to kill Putin, but Zelensky denied his country was behind the Kremlin strike.

He is due to meet Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren and make a speech entitled "No peace without justice for Ukraine."

An AFP correspondent saw Zelensky arrive at the ICC under heavy security measures, as a Ukrainian flag was flown at the court.

The Netherlands has pledged both financial and military support to Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion in February 2022.

The country announced last month that it would buy 14 Leopard 2 tanks with Denmark to give to Kyiv, which is demanding more heavy weapons.

The Ukrainian air force said Thursday that Russia had fired 24 attack drones overnight, of which 18 were downed. Authorities said there were no casualties.

"The invaders launched up to 24 Shahed-136/131 attack drones... The Air Force of Ukraine, in cooperation with other air defense units, shot down 18 attack drones," the air force said on Telegram.

Sergiy Popko, the head of the city of Kyiv's military administration, said that "all enemy missiles and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) were destroyed over Kyiv by air defense forces."

'Intense strikes'

Popko said it was the third day of attempted strikes on Kyiv in May.

"Our city has not experienced such intensity of strikes since the beginning of this year," he said, adding that debris from the downed drones had fallen on different parts of the city but there were no casualties.

Russia on Thursday said a drone attack in the southern Krasnodar region's Ilsky settlement sparked a blaze at an oil refinery.

Krasnodar Governor Veniamin Kondratyev said the refinery fire had been localized to a 400-square-meter (4,300-square-foot) area and was quickly extinguished by emergency services.

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Shortly afterward the governor of Russia's Rostov region, which also borders Ukraine, said a drone had hit a local refinery near the village of Kiselevka and caused an explosion and a fire.

A similar blaze Wednesday at an oil reservoir in the nearby village of Volna engulfed 1,200 square meters, with officials also blaming a drone crash.

That same day, Moscow said it shot down two drones aimed at Putin's residence and accused Ukraine of attempting a "terrorist act," with the Kremlin threatening a tough response.

Ukraine has denied any involvement and the country's Western allies have also cast doubt on the report.

"We do not attack Putin or Moscow," Zelensky said on a visit to Finland. "We defend our

villages and cities."

On Wednesday, Kyiv said Russian strikes had killed 21 people in the southern region of Kherson, including at a supermarket and a train station.

The spate of apparent sabotage attacks has been used to underscore Russia's exposure to enemy blows as the Kremlin gears up for important anniversary celebrations.

The May 9 victory celebrations that commemorate the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II have become a central event during Putin's rule.

Kyiv suggested that Moscow "staged" the attack, which came ahead of a widely expected Ukrainian spring counteroffensive. The U.S. said the Russian report should be taken with a "shaker of salt."

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