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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Fires Missiles on Kyiv in Rare Daytime Attack

By AFP

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Smoke rises in the sky over Kyiv after a Russian missile strike on May 29, 2023. **Gleb Garanich / Reuters**

Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes.

A series of explosions rang out in Kyiv on Monday as Russia targeted the city for the second time in 24 hours.

AFP journalists heard at least 10 explosions from around 11:10 am local time (0810 GMT) in Kyiv, starting just a few minutes after an air raid warning sounded.

Authorities said Ukrainian air defenses had downed every Russian missile launched against the Kyiv region.

"A total of 11 missiles were fired: 'Iskander-M' and 'Iskander-K' from a northerly direction," Ukraine's Armed Forces chief Valery Zaluzhny said.

"All the targets were destroyed by air defenses," he added.

Sergiy Popko, head of Kyiv's city administration, said that Russians struck in the morning when "most residents were at work and on the streets."

"The Russians are clearly demonstrating that they are aiming to destroy the civilian population," he said on Telegram.

"Debris was recorded falling in different parts of the city," Popko said, adding that information on casualties was currently being clarified.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said earlier in the day one person had been hospitalised.

Heavy barrage sparks panic

People ran to take shelter in a metro station in central Kyiv as volleys of loud explosions were heard, AFP journalists said.

Many residents had become used to ignoring air raid sirens but the heavy barrage prompted a panicked reaction.

Down on the platform of the Khreshchatyk metro station, people stood and sat on steps checking their mobile phones.

"I saw 6,7 or 8 — a certain number of explosions in the sky. That's why I came here with my work colleagues," said Maksym, a plumber, sitting on the steps.

"I'm waiting for the air raid to end."

The Kyiv city administration said air defenses were at work during the air raid, which was the 16th attack on the city this month.

AFP journalists also saw missile fragments scattered on the road in Kyiv's northern Obolonskiy district.

"At first, they started shooting down missiles as usual. Then one of them fell on the road, as you can see, just the tail of it. Some people said it set a car on fire," said Dmytro, a young man in a plaid shirt.

"It was quite loud: there were several explosions. While the missile was being shot down, there were about 6-5 explosions. Before that, you could hear a piece of debris falling."

Kyiv, which had been relatively spared from attacks since the beginning of the year, has faced nearly nightly air raids this month.

Authorities said early Monday that Kyiv had overnight repelled another large number of overnight air strikes, with no casualties.

Zaluzhny said that a total of "up to 40 missiles" and "around 35 drones" had been launched, almost all of which were downed.

This followed an overnight drone attack on Saturday that was the biggest on the capital since Russia's invasion began in February last year.

Children wounded

Russia on Monday also targeted a settlement in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, killing one man and wounding nine people including a 11-year-old child, local authorities said.

A missile attack on a village in the eastern Kharkiv region left six people wounded, including a pregnant woman and children aged 10 and 14, the authorities said.

In the western region of Khmelnytsky, Russian forces struck a military facility overnight, officials said.

In a rare admission of the damage, they said "five aircraft have been put out of action."

Work was underway to localise fires and repair a runway, official said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces had attacked Ukrainian airfields and "all the assigned targets have been destroyed."

Moscow has warned the West against escalating the conflict after the United States agreed to greenlight deliveries of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

Kyiv has been preparing an offensive although its timing and focus have been the subject of months of speculation. Ukrainian authorities have said almost nothing except that they need more weapons from Kyiv's backers.

Deputy Defense Minister Ganna Malyar said Monday that in the frontline hotspot of Bakhmut "the intensity of the enemy's offensive has significantly decreased" as Russian mercenary group Wagner was handing over its positions to Moscow's regular troops.

"Our troops are making this process much more difficult for the enemy," she said.

"At the same time, the intensity of enemy artillery shelling has not decreased."

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