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Russia Says Repelled 'Incursion Attempt' Into Border Region

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Updated to recast with Defense Ministry and Kremlin statements and add other updates.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Thursday it had repelled an attempted incursion by "Ukrainian terrorist formations" as two anti-Kremlin militias made up of Russians claimed to have made it over the border.

"Russia's Armed Forces together with units of the border service...foiled a fresh attempt by the Kyiv regime to conduct a terrorist attack against the civilian population of the city of Shebekino," the ministry's spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a daily briefing, referring to a Belgorod region town close to the border.

Moscow used jets and artillery to repel the attacks and prevent Ukrainian troops from crossing over into Russia, he added.

The ministry's statement could not be independently verified.

The Belgorod region, particularly its Shebekino district lying on the Ukrainian border, has come under intensifying attacks in recent days.

The ministry's claims came hours after two reported shelling attacks on the Belgorod region, including on the village of Novopetrovka and the town of Shebekino — both of which are located less than 10 kilometers from the border with Ukraine.

At least 12 people were injured and a local dormitory was set on fire due to Thursday's shelling of Shebekino by Grad rocket systems, according to Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Embed:

Shelling attacks were also reported in the Belgorod region villages of Kozinka and Novaya Tovolzhanka.

Russia's Investigative Committee has launched an investigation into the reported shelling attacks.

The Kremlin denounced what it said was the silence of the international community after the Belgorod region was shelled.

"The international community has every opportunity to see the footage, read the materials describing strikes on residential buildings, social infrastructures and so on," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "There is not a single word criticizing Kyiv."

Separately, an explosion caused by a drone carrying an explosive device was reported in the regional capital Belgorod. At least two people were injured and one car damaged after the drone fell on a road in one of the city's residential areas, according to Governor Gladkov.

Belgorod Mayor Valentin Demidov said the explosion went off near a petrol station, adding the blast took place "not far from the ground."

Local officials were inspecting nearby buildings to see if they were damaged, Demidov said.

Earlier on Thursday, two anti-Kremlin units composed of Russian nationals fighting on the side of Ukraine announced fresh incursions into southern Russia.

The Russian Volunteer Corps, a nationalist paramilitary unit, claimed to be "once again battling on the territory of the Russian Federation" in a video published Thursday.

A member of another unit, the Freedom of Russia Legion, said his group was near the border and announced another incursion into Russian territory "very soon."

"We're going to free all of Russia, from Belgorod to Vladivostok," said the fighter wearing a camouflage face covering.

Both statements came nine days after both groups claimed responsibility for an attack on the Belgorod region in which Russian authorities said one man was killed and a dozen received injuries.

Russian Volunteer Corps founder and far-right activist Denis Kapustin hailed last week's brazen mission as a "success."

In the latest video statement, the volunteer corps fighter urged civilians in Shebekino to take cover during the incursion.

"Sadly we can't evacuate civilians from border areas because the Russian army is shelling these areas, thus complicating the evacuation," he said in front of a damaged building against the backdrop of loud bangs.

It was not immediately possible to identify the location where the video was filmed. The fighter said his unit would approach the town of Shebekino "very soon."

AFP contributed reporting.

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