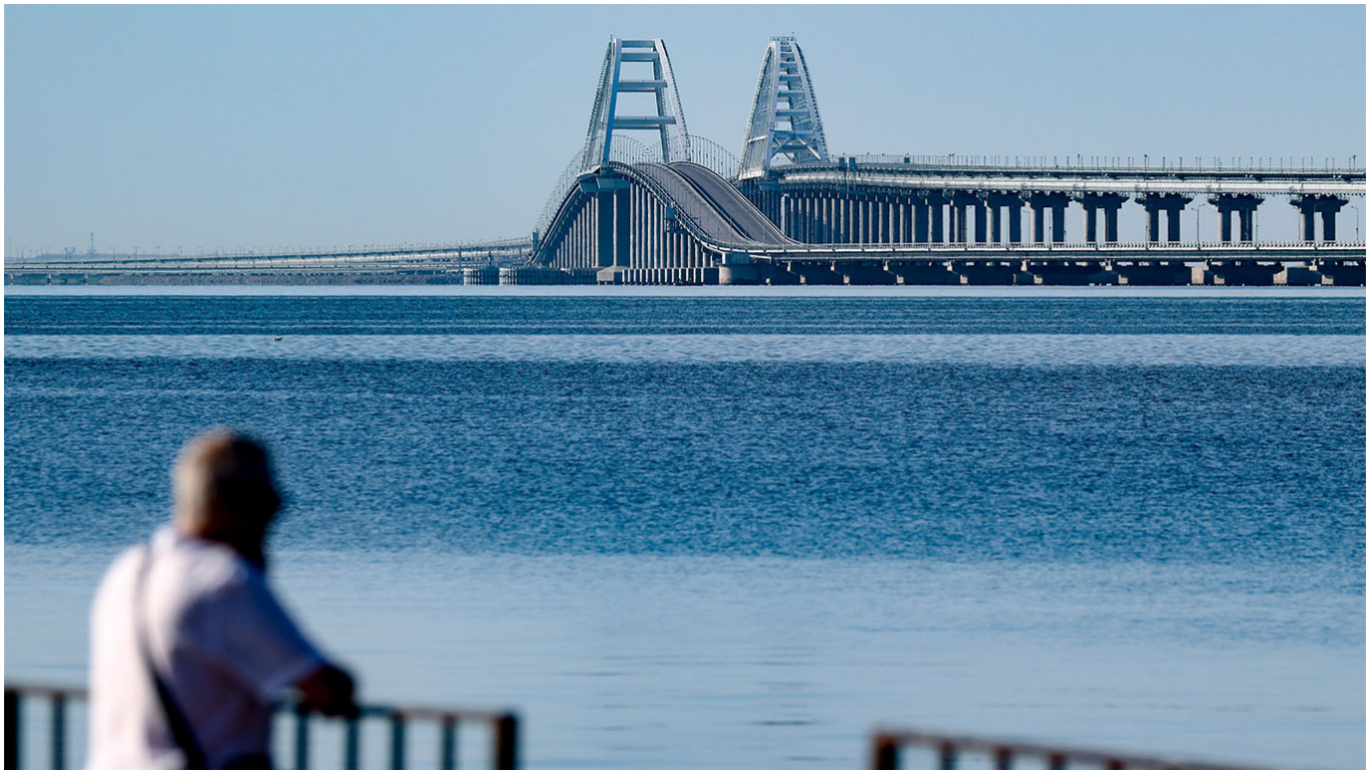
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

What Do We Know About the Latest Crimea Bridge Attack?

July 17, 2023



A view of a road-rail bridge across the Kerch Strait linking Crimea to mainland Russia. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

The bridge linking the annexed Crimean peninsula with mainland Russia was damaged in an overnight attack, Russian officials confirmed Monday.

The attack, which killed two people and injured one other while cutting off traffic to and from the peninsula, is the second attack on the bridge since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

A drone strike in October 2022 was believed to have inflicted damage of up to 500 million rubles ($5.5 million), with repairs taking nearly half a year to complete.

Here is everything we know about the latest attack so far:

What happened?

Two waterborne drones attacked the Crimean Bridge at 3:05 a.m. local time, according to Russia's Investigative Committee.

Though the news was quickly picked up by Russian pro-war bloggers, Crimea's Moscow-installed Governor Sergei Aksyonov only confirmed that all movement on the bridge was halted as a result of an "emergency" more than an hour after the strike.

Russia's Transportation Ministry said that the explosions caused damage to the motorway, but claimed that the piles supporting the bridge structure remained untouched. Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin later confirmed that no damage to the supporting structures was identified, according to the preliminary results of a safety inspection.

Who are the victims?

A married couple was killed when their car was damaged during the explosion.

The victims were identified by state-run media as 40-year-old Alexei Kulik and his 36-year-old wife Natalya Kulik, residents of Russia's Ukraine-bordering Belgorod region.

Their 14-year-old daughter who was traveling in the same vehicle survived, but sustained a closed head injury and was transported to a hospital in the southern city of Krasnodar.

What is the situation like now?

The damaged motorway over the bridge remains closed to all traffic. Russian officials advise drivers coming to and from the peninsula to travel through Moscow-occupied Ukrainian territories instead, using the road going through the port city of Mariupol — which itself was all but destroyed during a two-month Russian siege last year.

Embed:

All train movement on the railroad running over the bridge was resumed five hours after the incident and Russia's Transportation Ministry confirmed that several additional trains will run on Monday to accommodate stranded passengers.

The ferry service between Crimea and the Russian mainland was briefly suspended after the incident but also resumed its work at 10 a.m. Monday, though private vehicles are not allowed to use it.

The disruption caused by the morning attack left thousands of tourists stranded on the peninsula. Local Russia-installed government opened 34 temporary accommodation points in Kerch and Feodosia for travelers waiting to board the ferry to the mainland.

The Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) said longer travel times of around eight hours across 400 kilometers and a lack of GPS coverage would likely stifle demand for the road evacuation route.

Russia's Tourism Industry Union on Monday called on hotel owners — who are already facing losses amid falling tourist flows — to allow residents currently unable to travel home to extend their stays for free.

Who is responsible?

Russian officials issued statements blaming the Monday morning attack on Kyiv. Russia's Investigative Committee said the "terrorist attack" was "committed by Ukrainian special services " in an official statement issued hours after the attack.

Embed:

> Damage to Kerch Strait Bridge seen in @Maxar satellite image pic.twitter.com/Q5vCZCbPzO
>
> — Christoph Koettl (@ckoettl) July 17, 2023

Ukrainian news outlets Ukrainska Pravda and RBC Ukraine reported, citing unspecified sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), that the attack was orchestrated by the SBU and the Ukrainian Navy.

"The bridge was attacked using waterborne drones. It was difficult to reach the bridge, but in the end, it was done," RBC Ukraine cited an anonymous SBU source as saying.

SBU spokesman Artem Dekhtiarenko later told the news outlet that the agency would reveal all details about the explosion "after the Ukrainian victory."

"For now, we are watching with interest how one of the symbols of the Putin regime once again failed to withstand the military pressure," RBC Ukraine quoted Dekhtiarenko as saying.

How will Moscow respond?

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that Russia was not planning any immediate retaliatory actions against Ukraine.

"In the long run, the answer will be achieving all the goals of the special military operation that will go on," Peskov said, using the Kremlin's preferred term for the war.

President Vladimir Putin denounced what he called a "terror attack" and called for tougher security measures after Kyiv targeted the bridge linking Moscow-annexed Crimea to Russia.

"Another terrorist attack was committed on the bridge last night," Putin said in televised remarks. "I am waiting for specific proposals to improve the security of this strategic, important transport facility."

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/17/what-do-we-know-about-the-latest-crimea-bridge-attack-a81863