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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Strikes on East Ukraine Residential Block Kill at Least 7

By Anna Malpas for AFP

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State Emergency Service of Ukraine

Rescue workers combed through the rubble of damaged apartments in the city of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine on Tuesday, a day after Russian strikes killed at least seven people.

The target of the missile attack was a command post of the Ukrainian armed forces, the Russian Defense Ministry indicated in a daily briefing.

Pokrovsk, which had a pre-war population of around 60,000, sits just 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the eastern front line, where Moscow says it is gaining ground and repelling Ukrainian attacks.

Two missiles — launched 40 minutes apart — damaged residential buildings, a hotel, cafes, shops and administrative buildings on Monday, said Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk region's military administration.

Seven people were killed in the strike on Monday evening and 81 were wounded, including two children, Kyrylenko said.

Those killed included a high-ranking emergency official of the Donetsk region, said Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine's interior minister.

"We are resuming the demolition of rubble," Klymenko said early on Tuesday, after the rescuers "were forced to suspend work for the night due to the high threat of repeated shelling."

The Russian Defense Ministry said it had struck a location used by the Ukrainian military in an attack on Pokrovsk.

"Near the settlement of Krasnoarmeysk in the Donetsk People's Republic, an advanced command post of the Khortytsya joint group of Ukrainian troops was hit," Russia's Defense Ministry said, using the Russian name for Pokrovsk.

Russian advances

AFP correspondents on the ground saw rescuers evacuating survivors from the rubble of a five-story building and carrying the wounded into ambulances.

The strike damaged the upper floors of a building which at street level housed a pizzeria popular with volunteers, military and journalists, according to an AFP photographer.

In late June, Russia struck the Ria Pizza restaurant in Kramatorsk, killing 13 and wounding dozens more.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday that Moscow had struck a residential building.

He shared a video on social media of civilians helping wounded people and rescuers clearing rubble from a building that had lost its top floor.

Also on Monday, Russia said it had recently advanced three kilometers towards Kupiansk in northeastern Ukraine, around 150 kilometers north of Pokrovsk and a few dozen kilometers from the Russian border.

Kupiansk and its surroundings in the Kharkiv region were retaken by Ukrainian forces in September, but Moscow has renewed its assault on the area.

"Over the past three days, the advance of Russian troops... amounted to 11 kilometers along the front and more than three kilometers deep into the enemy's defense," Moscow's Defense Ministry said.

It said that it had "improved" its standing along the front line and continued to repel Ukrainian counter-attacks.

In mid-July, Ukraine said it was in a "defensive position" in the Kupiansk area, as the Russian army launched an offensive there.

Ukraine began its own long-awaited counter-offensive on the eastern and southern fronts in June but has made only modest advances in the face of stiff resistance from Russian forces.

Saudi talks

On the diplomatic front, Ukraine said on Monday it was "satisfied" after a peace summit held in Saudi Arabia, to which Moscow was not invited.

Representatives from around 40 countries including China, India, the United States and Ukraine took part in the weekend summit in Jeddah.

The initiative was greeted with scorn by Moscow on Tuesday.

"We have become eyewitnesses of yet another unsuccessful attempt by the U.S. administration to pass off their wishes for reality. There was no diplomatic success in Jeddah," said the Russian Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Antonov, in a post on social media.

The diplomat said it was pointless to discuss the crisis in Ukraine without Russia's participation.

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