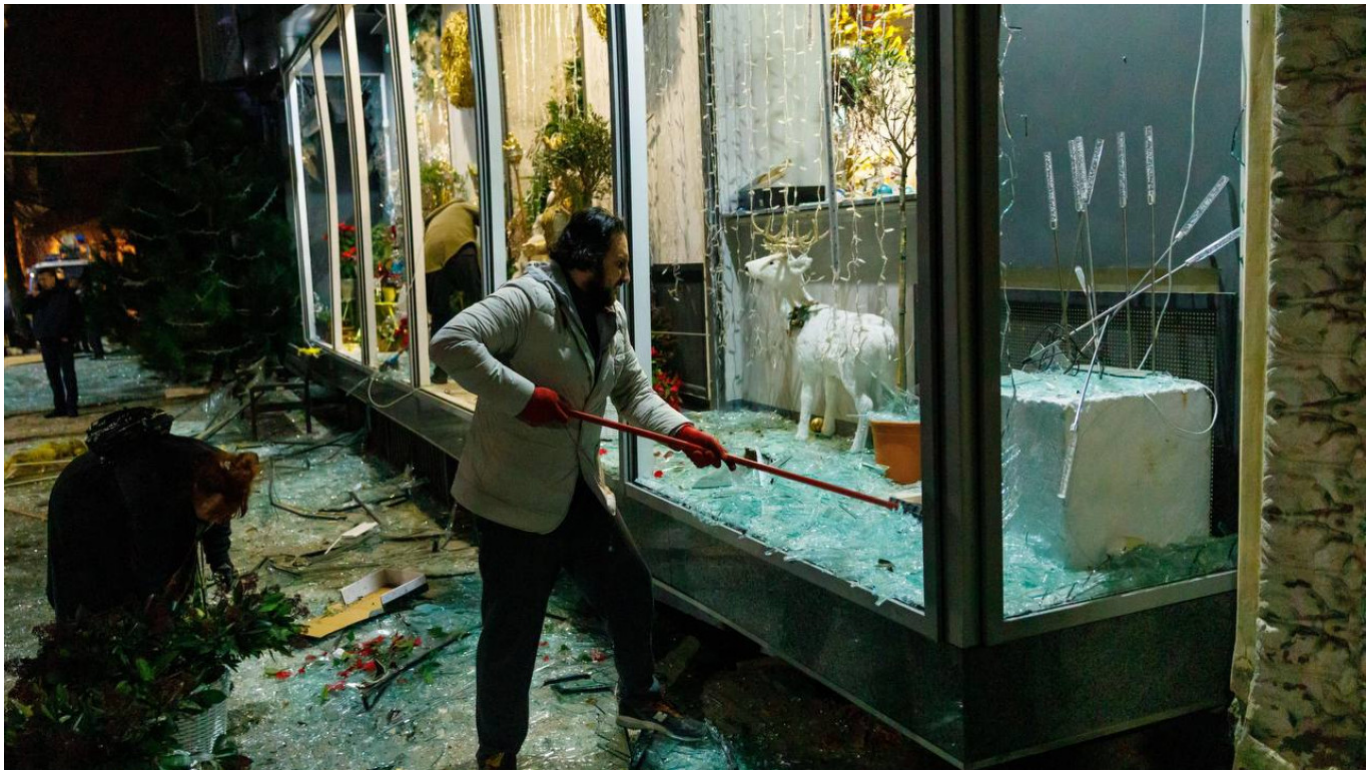
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Strikes Ukraine in Retaliation for Attack on Belgorod

By AFP

December 31, 2023



A man clears shattered glass from a storefront damaged in a Russian strike on Sunday. **Telegram**

Russia launched fresh strikes against Ukraine early Sunday, a day after vowing to retaliate for what it called a "terrorist attack" on the city of Belgorod.

Several Iranian-made Shahed drones targeted Ukraine's northeastern city of Kharkiv overnight, according to local authorities, as Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of bombarding civilian areas near their shared border over the weekend.

"As a result of the night attack of Russian drones on Kharkiv, buildings in the city center were damaged. These are not military facilities, but cafes, residential buildings and offices," the city's mayor, Ihor Terekhov, wrote on the messaging app Telegram.

At least two people were killed in the strikes against the Kharkiv region, according to police, while dozens more were said to have been injured.

"On the eve of the New Year, Russians want to intimidate our city, but we are not scared," Terekhov said.

Related article: Russia Accuses Ukraine of 'Terrorist' Attack on Belgorod, Vows Revenge

The strikes follow the deadliest attack on civilians in Russia since the start of the war.

At least 22 people were killed and dozens more were injured on Saturday in Belgorod, a Russian city located some 30 kilometers from the border with Ukraine, and which has been repeatedly hit by what Moscow says is indiscriminate shelling.

Russian authorities said Saturday's attack included the use of controversial cluster munitions and told an emergency meeting at the UN Security Council that Kyiv had targeted a sports center, an ice rink and a university.

Russian envoy Vasily Nebenzya called it a "deliberate, indiscriminate attack against a civilian target."

However, Ukraine's allies said that responsibility for the attack ultimately lay with Russian President Vladimir Putin for launching his invasion nearly two years ago.

"If Russia wants someone to blame for the deaths of Russians in this war, it should start with President Putin," said British envoy to the UN Thomas Phipps.

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