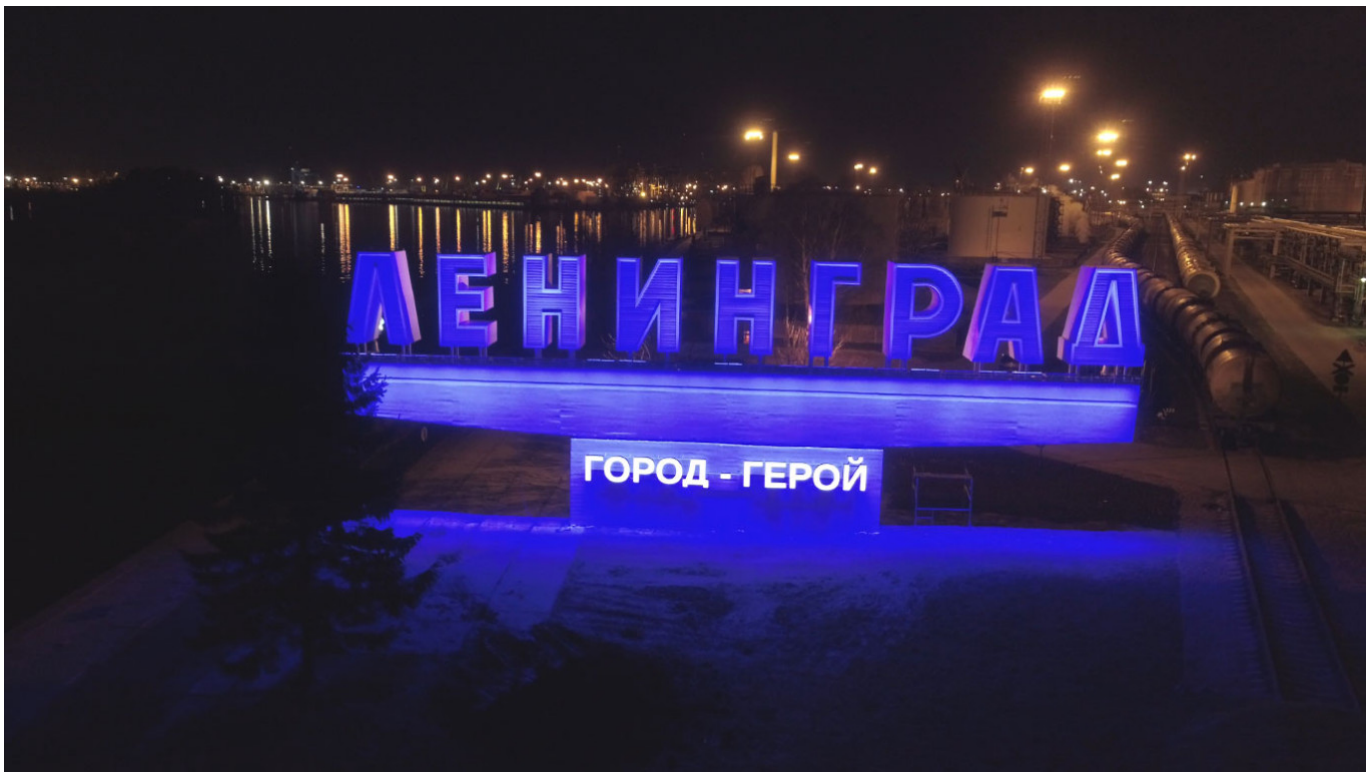
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In First, Russia Downs Drone Over St. Petersburg

January 18, 2024



The St. Petersburg Oil Terminal. **oilterminal.ru**

Updated to include Kommersant, Ukrainska Pravda reports.

Russian air defense systems intercepted a drone in St. Petersburg overnight, the first such instance in the country's second-largest city since the invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago, authorities said Thursday.

Residents reported hearing loud bangs at around 1:00 a.m. local time over Vasilyevsky Island, not far from the city center.

St. Petersburg's Pulkovo International Airport briefly grounded flights around the same time.

"The air defense forces on duty destroyed one unmanned aerial vehicle over the Moscow region and intercepted one over the Leningrad region," Russia's Defense Ministry said on the messaging app Telegram.

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St. Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov said no one was hurt in the attack.

The independent Astra Telegram news channel reported that the drone fell near the grounds of the St. Petersburg Oil Terminal. The local news website Fontanka, citing an anonymous source, also said the drone fell in that area.

St. Petersburg Oil Terminal's co-owner Mikhail Skigin later confirmed that the facility was targeted in the attack and credited the "lightning-speed" work of Russian air defense units.

"This helped prevent a horrible catastrophe which would have had terrible consequences, human casualties and gigantic environmental damage to the Baltic Sea," Skigin told the Kommersant business daily.

"I express my gratitude to the armed forces of our country and their leadership. This is brilliant work."

The online publication Ukrainska Pravda reported that an anonymous source from the Ukrainian intelligence services claimed the drone strike was part of a special operation carried out by the military.

"This is a Defense Intelligence operation involving modern Ukrainian assets," the source was quoted as saying, adding that there were "confirmed strikes" on unidentified targets.

Russian military facilities in the Leningrad region are now "within reach of Ukrainian forces," the source said.

Earlier on Thursday, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced that a drone was intercepted near the city of Podolsk, some 50 kilometers south of the Russian capital.

Meanwhile, authorities in western Russia's Belgorod region, which is located near the border with Ukraine, said one woman was hospitalized with shrapnel wounds following a thwarted rocket attack.

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