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Russia and Ukraine Launch Overnight Drone Attacks

By Daria Andriievska for AFP

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A burning apartment in the Ukrainian city of Sumy after a Russian drone attack. **State Emergency Service of Ukraine**

Ukrainian drones attacked a metal plant in Russia's border region of Kursk on Wednesday, causing a fire at a fuel tank, the local governor said.

Kyiv meanwhile announced it had intercepted dozens of Russian drones, as both sides launched a wave of overnight aerial attacks in an attempt to hit targets deep behind the front lines.

"Today another attack on the Kursk region was carried out by Ukraine," Kursk Governor Roman Starovoit said in a video message posted on his Telegram channel on Wednesday morning.

"A drone attacked a fuel and lubricants warehouse in Zheleznogorsk. There are fires in the

area right now," he added.

He said later a second drone hit the depot, located at the Mikhailovsky Mining and Processing Plant in the city of Zheleznogorsk, some 90 kilometers (55 miles) from the border with Ukraine.

Videos posted on Russian social media showed thick grey smoke billowing as a fire raged inside a cylindrical fuel storage tank.

There was no immediate comment from Kyiv.

Related article: Drone Attacks Fuel Depot in Russia's Kursk Region

Ukrainian forces have launched a wave of drone attacks at Russian energy facilities in recent months, trying to target the country's vital energy and gas sector that it says Russia uses to fuel its invasion.

'Extensive system'

Ukraine also said that Russia fired 42 Iran-designed attack drones and five missiles at its territory overnight in a barrage that injured at least seven people.

"As a result of combat operations, 38 Shaheds were shot down," the air force said in a statement, referring to the unmanned aerial vehicles, adding that the drones were launched from Russian border regions and the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Faced with hold-ups to much-needed Western aid, Ukraine has lost ground to Russia in the past three months, withdrawing from the industrial hub of Avdiivka in February.

The Ukrainian army said Wednesday it had built an "extensive system" of fortifications near the town in a bid to stop further Russian advances.

Kyiv has appealed to its Western allies to help bolster its air defenses to fend off systematic Russian aerial attacks on key infrastructure throughout the two-year invasion.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, Russian shelling killed a 70-year-old man in the town of Borova and injured four others, regional head Oleh Syniehubov said Wednesday.

Ukraine's prosecutor general said seven people including a 10-year-old boy were also injured during overnight attacks in the eastern Sumy region.

One of the drones fired at the Sumy region had targeted a hospital where 400 patients were housed, Governor Volodymyr Artiukh said.

Officials in the southern Odesa region said a recreational facility, a gas pipeline and residential buildings were damaged by debris from the downed drones and some residents in the Khmelnytskyi region were left without electricity after the attack.

'Active combat zone'

Regional officials in Russia said Ukraine had also fired artillery and drones at the Belgorod border region. Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said there was some minor damage, but no casualties.

Russia's defence ministry said it had downed Ukrainian drones over the Belgorod and Voronezh regions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi, in Sochi later Wednesday to discuss the situation at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

The facility, Europe's largest nuclear energy site, was seized by Russian troops in the first days of the war.

Speaking to AFP ahead of the meeting, Grossi rejected Russian suggestions that the plant could be put back online.

"That is not imminent. I have been drawing the attention of my Russian counterparts to the fact that any such action would require a number of considerations," he said.

"First of all, this is an active combat zone, and this cannot be forgotten. Secondly, this plant has been in shutdown for a prolonged period of time," he added.

Separately, the Kremlin told reporters Wednesday it did not recognize International Criminal Court arrest warrants issued Tuesday for two top Russian officers over alleged war crimes conducted in the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia is not a member of The Hague-based court.

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