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Russia Says Intercepted U.S.-Supplied ATACMS Missiles Fired From Ukraine

By AFP

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Sergei Aksyonov / Telegram

Updated with Politico report.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that its forces shot down six U.S.-supplied missiles launched by Ukraine, with Moscow-backed officials in annexed Crimea claiming some of the weapons were downed over the Black Sea peninsula.

Washington quietly shipped an unspecified number of long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Ukraine in recent weeks after repeated calls from Kyiv for more powerful weapons as its military fends off advancing Russian troops.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it destroyed six ATACMS missiles "over the past 24 hours," though it did not specify where they had been shot down.

The Russian-installed head of annexed Crimea Sergei Aksyonov said one of the missiles was

destroyed over the village of Donskoye, outside the city of Simferopol.

"After an ATACMS missile was shot down, undetonated submunitions scattered," Aksyonov said on the Telegram messaging app. "If you find such a weapon, do not pick it up or come close and call emergency services or the police."

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Aksyonov posted a photo of a metal ball which he said was part of the destroyed missile. He did not say whether the missiles caused any damage.

Earlier on Tuesday Moscow-backed officials in occupied southern Ukraine said air defense systems were responding to aerial projectiles over Simferopol and the town of Dzankoi in northern Crimea.

An anonymous U.S. official cited by Politico later rebuked Moscow's claim that its forces shot down the long-range missiles that were launched toward the annexed Peninsula.

"We have no indications this claim is accurate, and the Russians do have a long history of embellishing and inventing battlefield achievements," the official was quoted as saying.

Ukraine has regularly attacked Crimea since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion over two years ago, however, it did not comment on Tuesday's reported missile attacks.

Last week, Washington said it had sent ATACMS missiles to Ukraine following a directive from U.S. President Joe Biden.

Ukrainian forces are now awaiting the arrival of new U.S. weapons and supplies as part of an aid package approved by Biden after months of wrangling with Republicans in Congress.

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