

Ukraine, Russia Trade Barbs Over Fire at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant

By [AFP](#)

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Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. [@ZelenskyyUa](#) / X

Kyiv and Moscow exchanged blame late Sunday after a fire broke out at a cooling tower of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which Russian forces seized days after launching the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Russia, Ukraine and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said there had been no detected spike in radiation levels or any impact on nuclear safety. A Moscow-installed official, Vladimir Rogov, said Monday that the blaze at a cooling tower has been "completely extinguished."

Both Rogov and Yevgeny Balitsky, the Moscow-installed governor of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, blamed "Ukrainian armed forces" for the incident.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a social media post that "Russian occupiers

have started a fire" at the plant, accusing them of trying to "blackmail" Kyiv.

"Currently, radiation levels are within the norm," he added. Balitsky and the facility's press service also reported the "radiation background" around the facility was normal.

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"No impact has been reported for nuclear safety," said the IAEA, adding that its experts station at the plant "witnessed strong dark smoke coming from ZNPP's northern area following multiple explosions heard in the evening."

It said the plant had reported an "alleged drone attack today on one of the cooling towers." The IAEA later said it had requested that its team get "immediate access to the cooling tower to assess the damage."

Kyiv accused Russia of purposefully starting the fire.

"Russia must be held accountable for this. Only Ukrainian control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant can guarantee a return to normalcy and complete safety," Zelensky said.

Ukraine's Interior Minister said Kyiv was "intensively monitoring" radiation levels from nearby meteorological stations. All six of its reactors are currently in cold shutdown, the plant's press service said after the incident.

"There is no threat of a steam explosion or any other consequences," Balitsky said.

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A video published by Zelensky showed black smoke billowing out of one of the station's cooling towers as red flames licked around the bottom.

Russia seized control of the plant just days after it launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The site is on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River, a de facto front line snaking through southern Ukraine.

Kyiv controls the opposite bank and Russia has repeatedly accused its forces of deliberately shelling the nuclear power station — claims denied by Ukraine. Authorities in Kyiv, in turn, have accused Moscow of militarizing the facility, including by placing heavy weapons there at the start of the conflict.

The IAEA has repeatedly urged restraint, saying it fears reckless military action could trigger a major nuclear accident at the plant.

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