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2 Firefighters Killed as Russia Battles Oil Depot Blaze Day After Ukrainian Drone Attack

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Social media

At least two firefighters were killed battling a blaze that erupted in the southern Saratov region after a Ukrainian drone attacked an oil depot, Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said Wednesday.

Authorities declared a state of emergency in the city of Engels amid efforts to put out the fire at the oil depot, which services the Russian air force. The city is located around 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of the border with Ukraine.

Images shared on social media showed a giant plume of smoke rising over Engels, which has a population of around 220,000. Residents have complained about smoke in the air, but authorities claim that the air quality has not fallen to hazardous levels.

Firefighters Gennady Afanasyev and Zhaslan Teleupov "died in the Saratov region in the line

of duty," the Emergency Situations Ministry said on Telegram. However, it did not explicitly state that Afanasyev and Teleupov died in the Engels oil depot fire.

Related article: Ukraine Says Hit Oil Depot in Russia Used by Moscow's Air Force

Regional health authorities said a third firefighter was hospitalized in "grave but improving condition," according to the FreeNews-Volga website. He was identified as a 39-year-old man.

Saratov region Governor Roman Busargin said Thursday that emergency services were continuing to battle the flames one day after the drone strike.

"Experts say that it will take some time to complete the burning process," Busargin wrote on Telegram, adding that there was "no threat" to residential buildings. Busargin previously said no one was wounded in the attack.

Ukraine has hit Russian infrastructure — sometimes deep behind the front lines — throughout the nearly three-year war. It has said that hitting the Saratov region oil depot will cause "serious logistical problems" for the Russian air force.

Hours after the drone strike, the Russian military struck Zaporizhzhia, a southern Ukrainian city close to Moscow-occupied territory, killing 13 people. Kyiv said in an updated toll on Thursday that 113 people were wounded in the Zaporizhzhia strike.

Meanwhile, Russian attacks on the southern Kherson region killed two people on Thursday, Ukrainian officials said.

AFP contributed reporting.

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