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Russia Launches War's Largest Drone Attack Just Days After Peace Talks, Ukraine Says

By Reuters

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A resident carries a cat at the site of a house heavily damaged by a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, outside of Kyiv, Ukraine May 18, 2025. **Valentyn Ogirenko / Reuters**

The largest known Russian drone attack since the full-scale war began in 2022 killed a woman in the Kyiv region and injured at least three people, Ukrainian authorities said early on Sunday, as Moscow stepped up strikes following peace talks on Friday.

As of 8 a.m. local time, Russia had launched 273 drones, targeting the Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions, Ukraine's air force said.

Based on data provided by the air force, this was Russia's largest drone attack on Ukraine since the war began. The record was previously held by a Feb. 23, 2025, strike, on the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, when Moscow launched 267 drones.

The overnight Russian barrage killed a 28-year-old woman in the capital region and injured at least three people, including a 4-year-old child, Ukrainian authorities said.

“Unfortunately, as a result of the enemy attack in the Obukhiv district, a woman died from her injuries,” Mykola Kalashnik, governor of the Kyiv region, posted on Telegram.

Kyiv and the region around it, as well as the eastern part of Ukraine, were under air raid alert for nine straight hours overnight before it was finally called off around 9 a.m. local time. Air defense units were engaged several times trying to repel attacks, the military said on Telegram.

“It's been a tough night. The Russians have always used war and attacks to intimidate everyone in negotiations,” Andriy Kovalenko, head of Ukraine's Centre for Countering Disinformation, wrote on Telegram about Sunday's attack.

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Air defence units destroyed 88 of the drones overnight. The attack also included 128 simulator drones that were lost along the way without hitting anything, Ukraine's air force said.

On Saturday, a Russian drone attack killed nine civilians after hitting a shuttle bus in the Sumy region in northeastern Ukraine, Kyiv said. Zelensky called the attack “deliberate” and urged stronger sanctions on Moscow, which said it had attacked a military facility.

All of those injured in the Obukhiv district just south of Kyiv were hospitalized, Kalashnik said. Several residential buildings were damaged in the area, he added.

In Kyiv, fragments of a destroyed drone damaged the roof of a non-residential building, the city's military administration said. There were no reports of injuries, it added.

Reuters witnesses in and around Kyiv heard blasts that sounded like air defence units in operation. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in the war, but thousands have been killed in the conflict, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.

The first direct talks in three years between Russia and Ukraine on Friday failed to broker the temporary ceasefire Kyiv and its allies have been urging. However, the 100-minute talks in Istanbul yielded an agreement to trade 1,000 prisoners of war on each side.

U.S. President Donald Trump said he would speak to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday.

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