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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

'A Bit Unusual': Russia's Sochi Resort Grapples With Ukrainian Drones

By AFP

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A view of Delmar Beach after it was evacuated due the threat of an attack by Ukrainian sea drones on Sept. 24, 2025. **Milena Bozrikova/TASS**

Internet blackouts have become a fact of daily life in the Russian city of Sochi, which is coming under increasing threat of retaliatory Ukrainian drone strikes.

Russia's authorities have tried to shield their citizens from the fallout of Moscow's offensive on Ukraine, launched in 2022, but as Kyiv ups its own long-range drone attacks on Russian territory, disruptions to daily life have become more and more frequent.

"The last few months have been difficult. We are being constantly disconnected. Usually during the night and morning, there are alerts about drones," Nadezhda Gorshanova, a 23-year-old sports coach from the city told AFP.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has vowed to increasingly target Russian energy and

military sites — a bid to cut off Moscow's vital energy revenues and a response to more than three years of near-daily attacks by the Russian army.

Under almost constant fire, millions of Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes in the south and east and tens of thousands have been killed.

Air raids blare out daily across the country, including in the capital Kyiv — forcing exhausted residents to either scramble to the nearest metro station or air shelter for cover, or risk the increasing likelihood of a drone or missile hit.

For most of the war, Russians have not had to face that kind of daily reality.

Beyond border regions, there are few air alerts.

But as the war grinds through its fourth year and with Ukraine having launched multiple successful strikes deep behind the front, that is now changing.

Temporary airport closures are common, disrupting flights and causing occasional bouts of transport chaos.

Mobile internet is also frequently turned off — an attempt to disrupt the drones' flight paths.

“Usually, the internet is turned off between 10:00 to 11:00 pm and 7:00 am but if there is a major drone threat, then it is kept off for longer,” Gorshanova told AFP.

“And then there are problems when you are commuting to work in the morning, by taxi or public transport,” she added.

Sitting on Russia's Black Sea coast, the resort city of Sochi has long been a favored summer escape for the Russian elite, including President Vladimir Putin.

The city and surrounding mountains hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics, as well as games during the 2018 football World Cup.

At the airport arrivals hall, a painting now shows a military plane flying over a field of flowers.

When Putin visited the city earlier this week, internet was cut off for almost the entirety of his stay amid reports of Ukrainian drones in the area.

Althouh some tourists have been “scared” away, according to Gorshanova, Russians have largely continued flocking to the area.

Sunbathing on the beach with his wife and mother-in-law, Sergei Kamenyuk told AFP he didn't mind the disruption.

“Yes the internet is disconnected. But on the contrary, it's good. No-one can reach you and you can't reach anybody either, so you just relax,” the 28-year-old, wearing a large gold orthodox cross and bright trunks, told AFP.

“The only thing that causes some concern is the helicopters overhead, various drones,” he added.

“It's a bit unusual.”

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