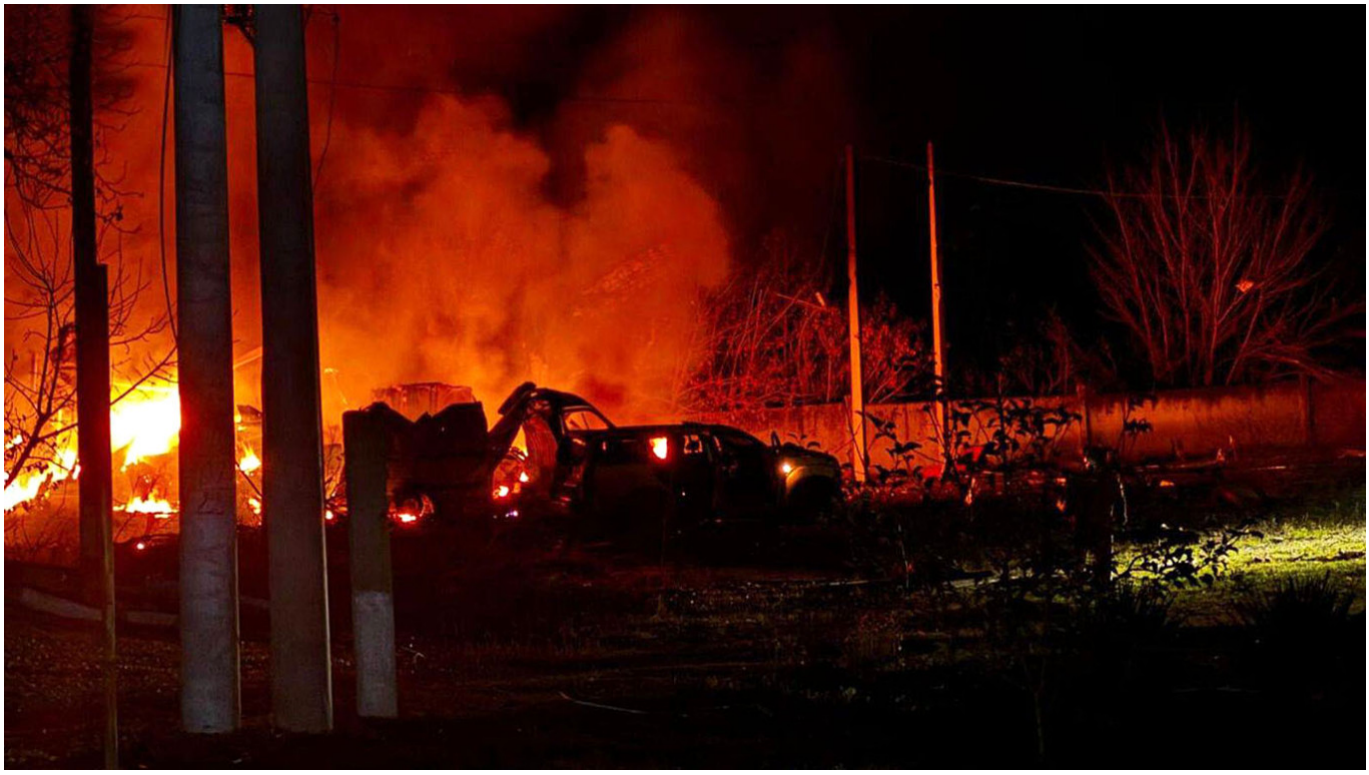
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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

2 Children Among Dead in Russian Blitz on Ukraine

By Stanislav Doshchitsyn for AFP

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Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine

Russia fired a wave of drones and missiles at Ukraine overnight, killing at least six people including two children and cutting power to tens of thousands, officials said Sunday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attacks, which also wounded a dozen other people, showed Moscow aimed to "inflict harm" on civilians.

Russia has rejected U.S. calls to halt its nearly four-year invasion of Ukraine, instead pushing forward with its ground assault while renewing its campaign of strikes against Ukraine's energy grid.

Kyiv announced Saturday it had deployed special forces to the eastern city of Pokrovsk, where it is under pressure from an intense Russian assault involving thousands of troops.

"Russian forces attacked the Dnipropetrovsk and Odesa regions. Six people died, including

two children," the office of Ukraine's prosecutor general said on Telegram.

The children were two boys aged 11 and 14, Ukraine's human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said.

Russia's attacks cut power to the entire eastern Donetsk region, as well as almost 58,000 households in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, the regions' governors said.

Kyiv says the strikes on energy infrastructure are primarily aimed at wearing down the country's civilian population, a charge Russia denies.

Ukraine under pressure

The overnight attacks came a day after Ukraine's top military commander announced he had deployed special forces to the eastern city of Pokrovsk, where Kyiv is under pressure from a Russian army thousands strong.

Hundreds of Russian soldiers have infiltrated the logistics hub, Kyiv said earlier this week.

Others are closing in on its outskirts in a pincer-shaped movement, according to battlefield maps published by the Institute for the Study of War.

The city's capture would provide a major propaganda boost for the Kremlin, which has rejected calls for a peace deal on the current front lines.

"A comprehensive operation to destroy and displace enemy forces from Pokrovsk is under way," Ukrainian commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky said in a post on Facebook on Saturday.

Videos published on social media purported to show helicopters flying towards the city, while another purportedly taken by a Russian drone showed figures scrambling from a helicopter that had landed in a field.

Russian oil tanker ablaze

Ukraine has responded to Moscow's attacks on its energy grid with retaliatory strikes on Russian oil and gas infrastructure.

A Ukrainian drone attack on Russia's Black Sea port of Tuapse early Sunday set an oil tanker ablaze and damaged port infrastructure, regional authorities said.

A source in Ukraine's SBU security services said the attack also damaged the Tuapse oil terminal, which belongs to Russian oil major Rosneft.

"Hits by five drones were recorded," the source told AFP.

Images published on social media purported to show various blazes at the port.

AFP was not able to immediately verify the images, and Russian authorities did not immediately comment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, describing it as a "special military operation" to demilitarize the country and prevent the expansion of NATO.

Kyiv and its European allies say the war, the largest and deadliest on European soil since World War II, is an unprovoked and illegal land grab that has resulted in a tidal wave of violence and destruction.

Tens of thousands of civilians and military personnel have been killed since the invasion began, while millions of Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes.

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