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U.S. Finds Ukraine Did Not Attack Putin's Valdai Residence – WSJ

January 01, 2026



CIA headquarters. **Saul Loeb / AFP**

U.S. intelligence officials have concluded that Ukraine did not attack one of President Vladimir Putin's residences earlier this week, The Wall Street Journal reported late Wednesday.

Russia claims that Ukraine launched a large-scale drone operation targeting Putin's Valdai residence in the northwestern Novgorod region between Sunday night and Monday morning. Kyiv has dismissed the accusations as an attempt to disrupt U.S.-brokered talks to end the war.

An anonymous U.S. official told WSJ that the CIA assessed no attack had taken place against Putin's residence. According to the official, Ukrainian forces had instead sought to strike a military facility elsewhere in the Novgorod region, far from Valdai.

The CIA declined to comment, WSJ said, and there was no immediate response from the White House.

Following the publication of that report, Russia's Defense Ministry announced Thursday that it had recovered flight mission files from one of the drones it downed during the attack on Valdai, saying it planned to share the data with U.S. officials.

Related article: Russian Military Reveals More Details of Alleged Drone Attack on Putin's Residence

On Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters that he was "very angry" after Putin told him over the phone about the Ukrainian attempt to hit his home.

However, shortly before WSJ published its report, Trump, posting on Truth Social, appeared to play down Russia's allegations by sharing a New York Post editorial titled "Putin 'Attack' Bluster Shows Russia Is the One Standing in the Way of Peace."

The editorial argues that Russia is obstructing efforts to end the war and that any attack on Putin would be "more than justified" given alleged Russian assassination attempts on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

On Wednesday, Russia's Defense Ministry issued its first detailed account of the claimed attack on Putin's Valdai residence. In a briefing, the ministry showed a map purporting to show the flight paths of more than 90 Ukrainian drones, along with video footage of what it said was a downed unmanned aircraft.

The Defense Ministry said that more than half of the drones were destroyed hundreds of kilometers from Valdai, in regions near Ukraine's border that are frequently targeted by Ukrainian strikes. It did not explain how the military determined that those drones were on a trajectory to Valdai.

Moscow has said it will revise its negotiating position in peace talks following the alleged attack, a move that raised suspicions the incident was fabricated and possibly aimed at slowing U.S.-led efforts to end the war at a moment when both Trump and Zelensky have said progress was being made.

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