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Ukrainian Drones Kill 28 in Occupied Kherson Resort Town, Pro-Kremlin Governor Says

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A fire that pro-Kremlin authorities in occupied Kherson say was caused by a Ukrainian drone attack on Jan. 1, 2026. **Vladimir Saldo / Telegram**

At least 28 people were killed and dozens more wounded in a Ukrainian drone attack on a town in occupied southern Ukraine, Kremlin-installed authorities said, accusing Kyiv of deliberately targeting civilians during New Year's Eve celebrations.

Vladimir Saldo, the Moscow-appointed governor of the occupied Kherson region, said drones struck a hotel and restaurant in the Black Sea resort town of Khorly around midnight Thursday, sparking a fire as people were gathered to celebrate. He said a child was among those killed.

Saldo, who briefed President Vladimir Putin about the deadly incident, published photos of the scene of the attack, where multiple bodies could be seen buried beneath the rubble of a burned-down building.

The Moscow Times was able to geolocate the images to a restaurant in Khorly called Cafe Ukrayinska Khata, located right beside Hotel Leo, which appears not to have been in operation since the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Russia's Investigative Committee launched a criminal probe into the drone attack, which it said it would treat as an act of terrorism.

On Friday, the Ukrainian military denied targeting civilians in Khorly, saying its forces "adhere to the norms of international humanitarian law and strike only at enemy military targets."

An anonymous source in Ukraine's defense forces told AFP that the attack did take place early Thursday, but said drones struck a gathering of military personnel that was closed to civilians.

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