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Trump Says He Doesn't Believe Ukraine Struck Putin Residence

By AFP

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Putin's residence at Valdai in the Novgorod region northwest of Moscow. **navalny.com**

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday cast doubt on the Kremlin's claims that Russian President Vladimir Putin's residence was attacked by Ukrainian drones.

"I don't believe that strike happened," Trump said in response to a reporter's question aboard Air Force One, noting how "nobody knew at that moment" whether the report was true.

Last week, Russia's Defense Ministry published a video of a downed drone it said Ukraine had launched at Putin's home in the Novgorod region, adding that the property was not damaged and the leader was elsewhere at the time.

The accusation came at a crunch moment, with diplomacy aimed at brokering an end to the nearly four-year war picking up pace, and as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traveled to Florida to meet with Trump.

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Russian officials criticized Ukraine as being insincere in its diplomatic efforts, while Kyiv and its Western allies disputed the attack had occurred.

Trump said that "something" happened near Putin's residence, but after reviewing the evidence, American officials did not believe it had been targeted by Ukraine.

Zelensky has meanwhile blamed Russia for carrying the war "into the New Year" with a series of deadly bombardments.

A countrywide air raid siren was issued early Monday morning in Ukraine, and attacks on the Kyiv region killed at least two people, authorities reported.

Russia made bigger advances on the battlefield last year than any other since it launched its invasion in 2022, according to an AFP analysis of data from the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War.

European leaders are expected to convene in France on Tuesday for further talks on a U.S.-backed plan to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II, which Zelensky says is "90% ready."

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