

Putin Replaces Aerospace Commander With EU-Sanctioned General Amid Drone Surge, Reports Say

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Colonel General Alexander Chaiko. **Russian Defense Ministry**

President Vladimir Putin has reportedly dismissed the head of Russia's Aerospace Forces, the military branch responsible for the country's air defenses, coming after a series of highly destructive Ukrainian drone attacks.

General Viktor Afzalov, who assumed command in 2023, has been replaced by Colonel General Alexander Chaiko, according to a [report](#) by the news outlet RBC, which cited two sources familiar with the matter.

The Kremlin has not yet commented on the shakeup, which was first [reported](#) by the influential pro-war Telegram channel Fighterbomber.

If confirmed, the leadership change would follow a significant uptick in Ukrainian drone attacks over the past two months that have targeted Russian energy infrastructure.

Chaiko is a veteran commander who led Russian forces in Syria from 2019 to 2021, RBC wrote. In 2020, Putin [reportedly](#) awarded him the Hero of Russia medal through a classified decree.

The EU [sanctioned](#) Chaiko in March after accusing him of serving as a lead commander during the Russian occupation of Bucha. Ukraine and its Western allies have accused Russian forces of massacring civilians in the Kyiv suburb — an allegation the Kremlin denies.

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