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Putin Says Ukrainian Drone Strikes Aim to Divide Russians

By AFP

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Vyacheslav Prokofiev / Pool / AFP

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that Ukraine's increasing drone strikes on Russia aimed to "sow confusion" and damage the country's economy.

Ukraine has hit ever deeper into Russia in recent months, regularly hitting oil refineries and export hubs.

"Their goal is to create a split in Russian society, sow confusion and inflict economic damage," Putin told Russian soldiers in a Kremlin meeting.

"But they will not succeed," he added.

The comments came hours after Kyiv said it hit a major oil refinery over 1,000 kilometres (around 620 miles) from the front line.

Putin admitted that Ukrainian strikes had caused “economic damage” but claimed that “everything was quickly restored.”

It has been difficult to assess just how damaging the strikes on Russian energy infrastructure have been.

Ukraine has called the strikes fair retaliation for the daily barrage of drones and missiles that Russia sends towards Ukrainian towns and cities.

Putin said Moscow needed to improve its air defenses, in the second such call this month.

The Russian leader compared the West to 19th-century French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and 20th-century Nazi Germany leader Adolf Hitler — both of whom tried to take Russian territory — and praised Russian assault groups for “coming in, taking control and securing territory for Russia.”

He also claimed that the Russian armed forces had more than 700,000 personnel involved in its war in Ukraine.

Putin recently rejected the prospect of face-to-face talks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky to end more than four years of war.

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