

Drone Attacks Disrupt First Day of Voting in Southern Russia and Occupied Ukraine

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A woman in the partially occupied Donetsk region of Ukraine casts a vote in the Russian parliamentary elections. **REUTERS / Alexander Ermochenko**

Ukrainian drone strikes disrupted the work of election workers at polling stations in southern Russia and parts of occupied Ukraine, Russian authorities said Friday, the first day of a three-day voting period for parliamentary and regional races.

“There are small incidents I can’t fail to mention,” Russia’s Central Election Commission (CEC) chief Ella Pamfilova [told](#) reporters during a morning press conference. “In the Krasnodar region, one polling station had to be moved to an alternative location because the windows were broken due to damage from a drone.”

Fourteen polling stations in the occupied Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine briefly lost power after drones damaged energy infrastructure, Pamfilova said, though the sites eventually switched to backup power supplies.

Andrei Proshunin, the mayor of the southern resort city of Sochi, [said](#) election workers and

voters were forced to seek shelter Friday morning due to an air raid alert. He did not say whether any additional safety measures had been introduced across the city's more than 240 polling stations amid near-daily drone attacks.

Russia is holding elections for the lower-house State Duma for the first time since President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Alongside parliamentary races, gubernatorial elections and votes for local legislative assemblies are taking place in several regions.

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Earlier this week, the CEC said one of its members was [killed](#) in a drone attack in the occupied Zaporizhzhia region. Voting is also taking place in parts of occupied Ukraine, which Russia claims to have annexed in September 2022.

Russian election officials also reported cyberattacks on the country's remote electronic voting system, with the head of Moscow's election commission [assuring](#) that "an army" of IT specialists was working around the clock to repel the intrusions.

On the eve of the first election day, Pamfilova [warned](#) of mobile internet disruptions across Russia, a common tactic used by the Russian military to disrupt the guidance systems of drones. "For us, this is no reason to cancel the vote," she said.

The independent news outlets RusNews and Sotavision, citing election observers in Moscow, [reported](#) widespread [failures](#) of electronic voting terminals. The Moscow Times could not independently verify those reports.

Despite the anti-drone measures, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin [reported](#) more than 350 incoming Ukrainian drones between Thursday night and Friday morning. He claimed at least 64 unmanned aircraft were destroyed on their approach to the capital.

Russia's Defense Ministry [said](#) it intercepted 629 Ukrainian drones overnight across Russia and annexed Crimea.

In Ukraine, authorities said two people were killed when the Russian military struck a business in the northwestern Zhytomyr region. Separate attacks wounded multiple people near Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine, with authorities reporting damage to infrastructure, schools, clinics and residential buildings.

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