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Ukrainian Drones Hit Sberbank Data Center After Yandex Attacks

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Ukrainian drones targeted a major data center under construction for Russian state lender Sberbank in the Saratov region overnight, First Deputy CEO Alexander Vedyakhin said Wednesday, as attacks on Moscow disrupted more than 500 flights.

Vedyakhin said all banking systems and online services continued to operate normally and no employees were injured in the attack in the Volga River city of Balakovo, according to the state-run news agency TASS.

Users across Russia nevertheless reported disruptions to Sberbank and its GigaChat artificial intelligence service, as well as several other major online platforms, according to outage tracker Detector404. The reports did not establish a link between the disruptions and the drone attacks.

NASA's satellite fire-monitoring system showed multiple fires in Balakovo.

Saratov region Governor Roman Busargin said "all infrastructure facilities" were operating normally, without identifying Sberbank's data center as a target. He said one woman was killed and several homes were damaged in the drone strikes.

The attack on Sberbank follows three consecutive Ukrainian drone strikes that disabled half of tech giant Yandex's data centers. Ukraine says it is responding to Russian attacks on its own data sites.

"You didn't think it would stop with just Yandex, did you?" Ukraine's Fire Point arms company said in a social media post Wednesday morning.

Sberbank began construction of the 55,000-square-meter (592,000-square-foot) facility in 2021, promoting the 122.2 billion ruble ($1.4 billion) project as one of Europe's largest data centers, with completion expected in 2030.

Related article: Ukraine's Strikes on Yandex Data Centers, Explained

Sberbank and its main domestic rival, Yandex, are leading Russian developers of artificial intelligence, with their respective GigaChat and YandexGPT models. State media reported in 2024 that Sberbank's Balakovo center would host Russia's biggest supercomputer, which was scheduled to go into operation in 2027.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defense systems destroyed 902 Ukrainian drones over 19 Russian regions and annexed Crimea between Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said "most" of the 493 Ukrainian drones flying toward the region were neutralized, 180 of them on direct approach to the capital.

The attacks on Moscow prompted civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia to restrict arrivals and departures at all four Moscow airports after 10 p.m. Tuesday, in the second prolonged shutdown of Moscow's airports in less than a week.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces struck seven Ukrainian energy infrastructure facilities and a data center with ground-launched missiles and long-range strike drones overnight.

Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak later accused Ukraine of attacking two oil refineries in the Saratov and Ryazan regions Wednesday, saying Kyiv was showing no signs of moving toward an energy ceasefire announced by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Dmytro Lytvyn denied those statements, telling reporters that Ukraine struck a data center and another unnamed target but not refineries.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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