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Putin Vows ‘Painful’ Retaliation to Crimean Bridge Attacks

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Vladimir Putin speaks at a press conference in Shenzhen, China. **REUTERS / Maxim Shemetov / Pool**

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday vowed “much more painful” retaliation to the Ukrainian attacks that knocked out part of the Crimean Bridge in his first public comments on the strikes.

Ukrainian forces targeted the bridge linking Russia and annexed Crimea for the third time in four days overnight, forcing a temporary suspension of rail traffic hours before Putin met with U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Authorities said no one was injured, while rail traffic reopened by the afternoon.

Following trilateral talks, Putin told reporters he had recently asked Russia’s Security Council to consider proposals for maritime or energy ceasefires with Ukraine in hopes of reaching an agreement.

“But after the strikes on the Crimean Bridge, we won’t negotiate. We’ll respond to these

strikes, and I want everyone to know about this," Putin said at the APEC summit in Shenzhen.

"I believe that our response will be much more painful than what the Kyiv regime did to the bridge," he added.

Related article: Traffic Suspended Over Crimean Bridge After Attack, Moscow-Installed Official Says

Putin acknowledged that Ukraine inflicted "serious damage" to the roadway section of the bridge, but promised to rebuild it.

The 19-kilometer (12-mile) bridge is a flagship project inaugurated by Putin in 2018 and a symbol of Russia's attachment to the peninsula it captured and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The bridge over the Kerch Strait was once a key supply route for Russian forces in Ukraine, but the military now relies more heavily on a land corridor running through parts of eastern and southern Ukraine that Russia has captured since launching a full-scale war with its neighbor in 2022.

Putin insisted that the bridge is used "exclusively for civilian purposes" and not for transporting military equipment, ammunition or petroleum products. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the attacks retaliation for Russian strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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