The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

From Crimea to Kyiv, Bridges Become Targets in Russia's War on Ukraine

By Bashir Kitachayev

November 21, 2026



The damaged Crimean Bridge in the Kerch Strait. **Social media**

Russia and Ukraine have escalated their attacks on bridges, aiming at crossings that carry military supplies to the front and keep cities moving.

Three nights of Ukrainian strikes this week brought down the main road span of the bridge linking Russia to annexed Crimea, forcing Moscow to divert military supply lines to a highway in occupied southern Ukraine. Days later, Russia fired ballistic missiles at bridges in Kyiv, killing three people and halting traffic across the Dnipro River.

The attacks have put two very different transportation networks under strain.

Russia now faces greater pressure on its supply lines to Crimea and the occupied southern regions, while Kyiv is contending with strikes that disrupted everyday life in the Ukrainian capital, analysts told The Moscow Times.

Why Russia needs the Crimean Bridge

Opened in 2018, the Crimean Bridge was one of President Vladimir Putin's flagship projects after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it had been the only direct link between mainland Russia and the peninsula, carrying passengers, food and fuel as well as troops and military equipment.

After occupying parts of southern Ukraine in 2022, Russia obtained a second way to reach Crimea via a highway that runs through Mariupol and Melitopol.

"As soon as that road opened, the bridge's importance declined, although certainly not to zero," Stupak said.

He estimated that military supplies accounted for at least 30% of the freight crossing the bridge, but noted that precise data was unavailable.

After a Ukrainian strike hit the bridge overnight on Monday, a second strike the following night brought down its main road span in an operation that Ukraine's SBU security service said the operation took about a month and unfolded in several stages. Trains were running again by Wednesday, but a third strike halted rail traffic again.

With the bridge's road span gone, Moscow will now have to rely more heavily on ferries and a highway that itself has come under repeated Ukrainian attack, said Pavel Aksyonov, a military analyst with the BBC's Russian service.

"Even setting aside the fact that some military cargo was still being transported into Crimea across this bridge, simply having to deal with the enormous problem now facing Russia creates an additional burden," Aksyonov said.

The disruption will make it harder for Russia to deliver food, fuel and spare parts to troops in the frontline Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, as well as to return damaged military equipment to southern Russia for repairs.

That is likely to be the case for the foreseeable future. On Friday, a Russian deputy prime minister said that Moscow has yet to determine how long it will take to repair the Crimean Bridge.

"This is not about liberating Crimea," Stupak said of Ukraine's strategy. "The aim is to undermine Russia's capabilities in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. It is no secret that Russian units stationed in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson have been partly supplied from Crimea."

What the strikes mean for Kyiv

In Kyiv, by contrast, the immediate consequences of Russia's bridge attacks have been felt most acutely by civilians.

Friday's overnight Russian missile attack closed the Podilsko-Voskresensky Bridge and restricted traffic on the Darnytskyi and Southern bridges, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

The strikes killed three people and wounded 15, seven of whom were hospitalized.

Russia has been striking bridges in Kyiv since October. It has also targeted crossings in Zaporizhzhia, where infrastructure is more directly connected to military supply routes on the southern front.

Stupak said the attacks on Kyiv's bridges serve a similar purpose to Russian strikes on Ukraine's power grid.

"When the Russians strike these bridges, it's not just about disrupting or cutting off military supply routes. It's also about disrupting urban infrastructure," he said. "This is a war of attrition. Exhausting the population contributes to the overall exhaustion of the state."

The Ukrainian military can adapt by using temporary crossings to maintain the movement of equipment, Stupak said.

Civilians, now forced to rely on a limited number of bridges to get to work, school or medical appointments, have fewer options.

How much damage does it take to close a bridge?

Russian pro-war bloggers have criticized the military for years for failing to destroy bridges across the Dnipro, which divides Ukraine and must be crossed by troops and supplies moving between the eastern and western banks.

But bringing down a major bridge is no easy task. Even with repeated strikes, a structure can be rendered technically unsafe or unusable but remain standing.

That was the case in Kherson in fall 2022, when Ukrainian forces repeatedly struck the Antonivskyi Bridge to cut supplies to Russian troops on the Dnipro's western bank. The damage hampered Russia's resupply efforts ahead of Moscow's withdrawal from the city. Russian forces later blew up part of the bridge as they retreated.

"They turned it into Swiss cheese," Aksyonov said. "They kept punching one hole after another in it."

The type of weapon and point of impact can determine whether an attack merely damages a roadway or brings down an entire span, Aksyonov said.

While Russian ballistic missiles generally strike from above, Ukraine appears to have targeted vulnerable structural components of the Crimean Bridge. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv used a combination of FP-1 drones and FP-5 Flamingo cruise missiles during the operation.

The Russian military Telegram channel Voyenny Osvedomitel suggested that Ukraine may have an advantage in the accuracy of its strikes because it can guide missiles in real time.

Russian ballistic missiles are less capable of hitting specific structural points, with their strikes more often resulting in damage to road surfaces than critical damage to the bridge itself.

Stupak said both sides were likely to keep targeting bridges in the near term, though the focus of their long-range attacks could shift again.

“Attacks on Wildberries warehouses from our side have stopped. Then came the trend of data centers. Now the trend is bridges,” Stupak said. “In a few weeks, the sides may turn their attention to something else — for example, border customs checkpoints or airport control towers.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/11/21/from-crimea-to-kyiv-bridges-become-targets-in-russias-war-on-ukraine-a94335