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violence epidemic

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Russia makes rare daytime strike on Kyiv

Russia targets settlement in Dnipropetrovsk, killing one man and wounding nine



KYIV: Local residents take shelter in a metro station in the center of Kyiv during a Russian missile strike. Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes. — AFP

KYIV: Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes. A series of explosions rang out in Kyiv on Monday as Russia targeted the city for the second time in 24 hours.

AFP journalists heard at least 10 explosions from around 11:10 am local time (0810 GMT) in Kyiv, starting just a few minutes after an air raid warning sounded. Authorities said Ukrainian air defences had downed every Russian missile launched against the Kyiv region.

"A total of 11 missiles were fired: 'Iskander-M' and 'Iskander-K' from a northerly direction," Ukraine's armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny said. "All the targets were destroyed by air defences," he added. Sergiy Popko, head of Kyiv's city administration, said that Russians struck in the morning when "most residents were at work and on the streets".

"The Russians are clearly demonstrating that they are aiming to destroy the civilian population," he said on Telegram. "Debris was recorded falling in different parts of the city," Popko said, adding that information on casualties was currently being clarified. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said earlier in the

day one person had been hospitalised.

Heavy barrage sparks panic

People ran to take shelter in a metro station in central Kyiv as volleys of loud explosions were heard, AFP journalists said. Many residents had become used to ignoring air raid sirens but the heavy barrage prompted a panicked reaction.

Down on the platform of the Khreshchatky metro station, people stood and sat on steps checking their mobile phones. "I saw 6,7 or 8 -- a certain number of explosions in the sky. That's why I came here with my work colleagues," said Maksym, a plumber, sitting on the steps.

"I'm waiting for the air raid to end." The Kyiv city administration said air defences were at work during the air raid, which was the 16th attack on the city this month. AFP journalists also saw missile fragments scattered on the road in Kyiv's northern Obolonskiy district.

"At first, they started shooting down missiles as usual. Then one of them fell on the road, as you can see, just the tail of it. Some people said it set a car on fire," said Dmytro, a young man in a plaid shirt. "It was quite loud: there were several explosions.

While the missile was being shot down, there were about 6-5 explosions. Before that, you could hear a piece of debris falling."

Kyiv, which had been relatively spared from attacks since the beginning of the year, has faced nearly nightly aerial raids this month. Authorities said early Monday that Kyiv had overnight repelled another large number of overnight air strikes, with no casualties.

Zaluzhny said that a total of "up to 40 missiles" and "around 35 drones" had been launched, almost all of which were downed. This followed an overnight drone attack on Saturday that was the biggest on the capital since Russia's invasion began in February last year.

Children wounded

Russia on Monday also targeted a settlement in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, killing one man and wounding nine people including a 11-year-old child, local authorities said. A missile attack on a village in the eastern Kharkiv region left six people wounded, including a pregnant woman and children aged 10 and 14, the authorities said. In the western region of Khmelnytsky,

Russian forces struck a military facility overnight, officials said.

In a rare admission of the damage, they said "five aircraft have been put out of action." Work was underway to localise fires and repair a runway, official said. Russia's defence ministry said its forces had attacked Ukrainian airfields and "all the assigned targets have been destroyed".

Moscow has warned the West against escalating the conflict after the United States agreed to green-light deliveries of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

Kyiv has been preparing an offensive although its timing and focus have been the subject of months of speculation. Ukrainian authorities have said almost nothing except that they need more weapons from Kyiv's backers.

Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said Monday that in the frontline hotspot of Bakhmut "the intensity of the enemy's offensive has significantly decreased" as Russian mercenary group Wagner was handing over its positions to Moscow's regular troops. "Our troops are making this process much more difficult for the enemy," she said. "At the same time, the intensity of enemy artillery shelling has not decreased." — AFP

World leaders congratulate Erdogan

ANKARA: Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin were among world leaders congratulating Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan after he won Sunday's historic run-off election to extend his two-decade rule.

Biden: 'Global challenges'

US President Biden said he hoped to work with Erdogan on "shared global challenges". "I look forward to continuing to work together as NATO allies on bilateral issues and shared global challenges," Biden tweeted, making no mention of recent tensions in the bilateral relationship.

Putin: 'Logical result'

Russia's President Putin, who has collaborated closely with Erdogan on key international issues despite some disagreements, told Turkey's leader his win was "the logical result of your dedicated work".

"Your victory in these elections is the logical result of your dedicated work as head of the Turkish Republic, a clear evidence of the Turkish people's support for your efforts to strengthen state sovereignty and pursue an independent foreign policy," Putin said, according to the Kremlin website.

Von der Leyen: 'Strategic importance'

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the Commission of the European Union, which Erdogan wants Turkey to join, said the bloc sought to strengthen ties. "I look forward to continue building the EU-Turkiye relationship," she wrote on Twitter, using an alternate spelling for Turkey.

"It is of strategic importance for both the EU and Turkiye to work on

advancing this relationship, for the benefit of our people."

Stoltenberg: 'Continuing our work together'

Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of the NATO military alliance, of which Turkey is a member, also sent congratulations. "I look forward to continuing our work together and preparing for the NATO Summit in July," he tweeted.

Guterres: 'Strengthening the cooperation'

UN chief Antonio Guterres congratulated Erdogan on his re-election, the secretary-general's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "He looks forward to further strengthening the cooperation between Turkiye and the United Nations," Dujarric added.

China: 'Great importance'

Beijing also offered congratulations. "We support Turkey in taking a development path that suits its national conditions, and hope that Turkey will continue to make new achievements in its development under the leadership of President Erdogan," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning. Beijing, "attaches great importance to its relations with Turkey".

Macron: 'Immense challenges'

French leader Emmanuel Macron said the two nations had "immense challenges" to work on together. Writing on Twitter, Macron said these included the "return of peace to Europe". "With President Erdogan, who I congratulate, we will continue to move forward," he said.

Zelensky: 'Security and stability'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the win for Erdogan, who since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has positioned himself as a mediator in the conflict. "We count on the further strengthening of the strategic partnership for the good of our countries, as well as the strengthening of cooperation for the security and stability of Europe," Zelensky said on Twitter.



ANKARA: Supporters of the Turkish President celebrate following his victory in the second round of the presidential election in Ankara on May 29, 2023. — AFP

Greece: Seeking closer ties

Interim prime minister Ioannis Sarmas wished "peace and prosperity to the Turkish people". Former PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who has had sometimes difficult ties with Ankara and hopes to be returned to office in elections expected on June 25, said he wanted to telephone Erdogan to "express my wish that the improvement in relations after the earthquakes carries on". But he added in a television interview with the private channel Mega: "I have no illusions about the fact that a country cannot easily change policy."

Scholz: 'fresh impetus'

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz hailed the countries as "close partners and allies" whose "people and economies are deeply intertwined". "Congratulations to President Erdogan—together we want to advance our common agenda with a fresh impetus," Scholz wrote on Twitter.

Modi: 'Ties will grow'

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "I am confident that our bilateral ties and cooperation on global issues will continue to grow in the coming times."

Sharif: 'Pillar of strength'

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif said

Erdogan was "a pillar of strength for the oppressed Muslims & a fervent voice for their inalienable rights." "His presidential victory & that of AKP in parliamentary elections is significant in so many ways, reflecting the trust & confidence of the Turkish people in his dynamic leadership," he tweeted.

Taliban rulers: 'Service of religion'

Afghanistan's Taliban-appointed Prime Minister Al-Haj Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund said he was praying "to the Almighty Allah to grant Turkiye, that has a special regional and global status, further strength, stability and service of religion".

UAE: 'Enhance strategic partnership'

President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan said the UAE looked "forward to working together to further enhance the strategic partnership between our two countries".

South Africa: 'Consolidate relations'

President Cyril Ramaphosa said Pretoria anticipated working with Turkey under Erdogan "to consolidate existing strong relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels". — AFP

Bola Tinubu takes helm in Nigeria, Africa's troubled giant

ABUJA: Long-time political kingmaker Bola Tinubu was sworn in as president of Nigeria on Monday, succeeding Muhammadu Buhari, a former general who stepped down after two terms in office. The 71-year-old southerner took over from a 80-year-old northerner as Africa's most populous nation faces a sea of economic troubles and security challenges.

"As president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria I will discharge my duties and perform my functions honestly to the best of my ability, faithfully and in accordance with the constitution," Tinubu said in a live broadcast from the capital Abuja's Eagle Square. Foreign leaders and representatives present at the ceremony included presidents Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana as well as delegations from the US, Britain and China.

Kashim Shettima was sworn in as vice president, taking over from Yemi Osinbajo. The ruling party duo were declared winners of the February 25 election, gaining the highest number of votes -- 8.8 million -- and picking up the required number of ballots across two-thirds of Nigeria's states.

But Tinubu only garnered just over a third of the total vote, leaving him with a weak mandate, some analysts say. The poor showing reflects "widespread disenchantment with his party's record... along with misgivings about his personal eligibility for the office," the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank said in a note.

Dubbed a political "godfather," Tinubu campaigned on the slogan "it's my turn" to govern the country, Africa's biggest economy. He has touted his experience as Lagos governor from 1999 to 2007 -- a period that, supporters say, modernised Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub.

But the new president also faces corruption allegations, which he denies, and questions over his health. Opposition leaders Atiku Abubakar, who came second, and Peter Obi, who was third, are contesting election results in court, claiming fraud. The electoral commission acknowledged "glitches" during the vote but dismissed claims that the process was not free and fair. — AFP