

Politics

Russia Strikes Across Ukraine as Kyiv Says New Offensive Nears

At least 18 are killed in strikes on civilian targets

Ukraine says its air defenses shot down missiles, drones






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Both sides have been preparing for an expected counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces this spring.

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Ukraine's defense chief said Friday that final preparations are under way for the plans to try to dislodge Russian forces from parts of Ukraine's southeast. Weapons and equipment have been partially delivered for the operation, Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told reporters in Kyiv Friday. The training for armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles provided by partner countries is in the final stages, he said.

Despite flows of equipment, Ukraine's allies have voiced doubts its military will be able to make a decisive breakthrough this year because Russia's defenses have had time to dig in ahead of the looming assault.

Ukraine's Allies Fear Breakthrough Unlikely Before Next Year

By preliminary estimates, Ukraine's air defense shot down 11 cruise missiles and two drones aimed at Kyiv, the city's military administration chief, Serhiy Popko, said on Telegram. While no deaths were reported in the capital, missile debris hit a power line in one of the districts, according to Popko.

Explosions were also heard in a number of regions across central and southern Ukraine early Friday, according to Ukrainian TV channel TSN.

A woman and a child were killed in Dnipro in central Ukraine, while at least 16 people were killed in Uman, a city further west with a pre-war population of about 90,000. Another 18 people were wounded there, with 11 taken to hospital. A missile struck a multi-story apartment block in Uman, where rescue efforts were ongoing.

The strikes come a day after Russia launched missiles at Mykolayiv in the south, also after a relatively long pause. That attack killed one and wounded more than 20 people, according to local Governor Vitaliy Kim.

— *With Aliaksandr Kudrytski*

(Updates death toll, adds comments on offensive plans in paragraph 5.)