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## Ukraine is Bringing The War to Russia



Inspector evaluating the damage of one of the drones strikes in Moscow on May 30, 2023.  
Photo Credit: Almaty AP

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### Verified locations of drone attacks on Moscow



It is the middle of the night and you hear two loud explosions that rock your home in one of the most heavily fortified capitals in the world. How would you feel? The War in Ukraine is a land conflict in which Ukraine protects their sovereignty against Russian aggression. The war has taken place mostly on Ukrainian soil, and the Ukrainian people have taken most of the brunt of terror as Russian missile strikes destroy their homeland. However, on Tuesday, May 30th, Muscovites woke up to the sound of explosions and shattered glass, as one of the first confirmed Ukrainian strikes on Russian land, many news outlets have sensationalized the assault as "Bringing The War to Russia."<sup>1</sup>

Reports state that 8 drones were spotted in Moscow early Tuesday, May 30, and explosions were heard in several districts and outlying regions of the city.<sup>2</sup> The location of the strike was Rublyoka, an area known as the wealthy part of the city where politicians and oligarchs reside. Furthermore, this area is close to Novo-Ogaryovo, the city of Putin's residence. According to RIA-Novosti, Russian state news, one drone hit the upper floor of a high-rise building in southwest Moscow while another hit the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of an apartment building in Leninsky Prospekt.<sup>3</sup> There was reportedly only minor damage caused by the strikes. The Mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyenin, states there were no casualties, and the residents of the building hit could go back to their homes by the end of the day.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/30/europe/moscow-drone-attacks-russia-intl/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-kyiv-6e50b9485a0608bbcf9420db7a6b6e3a>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/moscow-drone-attack-sobyenin-ukraine/32434691.html>

The Ukrainian military's motive for the attacks was reported by NBC News, which claims that an anonymous US congressional staffer told them that the drone strikes were aimed at top Russian intelligence officers. They explain that one of the targeted buildings had ties to the Russian intelligence service and that the attack was not simply an attack on an affluent neighborhood but was a strategic target towards Russian resources.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Russian and Ukrainian Response**

Russian President Vladimir Putin, responded to the attack on Moscow by declaring it an act of terrorism from Ukraine. He explains that "the Kyiv regime chose a different path - the path of attempts to intimidate Russia, to intimidate Russia's citizens, and of air strikes against residential buildings."<sup>6</sup> This statement is ironic as Russia struck Kyiv the night before, killing one civilian.<sup>7</sup> There have been over 17 drone attacks on Kyiv in May alone, compared to the one Ukrainian attack on Moscow.

On the other hand, Ukraine denies all involvement in the morning drone attack on Moscow. Presidential advisor Mykhailo Podolyak states, "Of course, we enjoy watching and predicting an increase in attacks ... But of course, we have nothing to do directly with it...what is growing in Russia is the karmic payment that Russia will gradually pay in aggravated form for everything it does in Ukraine."<sup>8</sup> Ukraine has denied any responsibilities with any forms of aggression outside their country. Ukraine has similarly denied any involvement in the current incursion of Belgorod on the Russian-Ukraine border, claiming that they are not funding Russian Volunteers fighters.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast CNN reports that members of US intelligence told them that Ukraine is behind the airstrikes in Moscow and that they supplied these drones to anti-Putin agents within Russia. They explain that the drones used in the strikes were launched within Russia rather than directly from Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> But regardless of the evidence of Ukrainian involvement, they will always deny it due to the stipulation regarding foreign aid given to Ukraine.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/drone-attack-moscow-targeted-homes-russian-intelligence-officials-rcna87823>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65751632>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65750745>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/30/europe/moscow-drone-attacks-russia-intl/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-shelling-continues-russias-belgorod-thousands-relocated-governor-2023-06-04/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2023/06/05/politics/ukraine-sabotage-agents-russia-drone-attacks/index.html>

## Other Responses

In response to the drone strikes on Moscow, a US National Security Council spokesperson said, "As a general matter, we do not support attacks inside of Russia. We have been focused on providing Ukraine with the equipment and training they need to retake their sovereign territory, and that's exactly what we've done."<sup>11</sup> Countries that have aided Ukraine in the war have emphasized the defensive nature of their aid, not wanting to be held liable for any aggression towards Russia. John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications of the White House National Security Council, said that while the United States supplies drones for Ukraine, Zelenskyy ultimately marks the strike locations regardless of US advice.<sup>12</sup> However, some countries have indirectly justified directly attacking Russia after the Moscow strikes.

Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom James Cleverly stated that "It (Ukraine) has the legitimate right to do so within its own borders of course, but it does also have the right to project force beyond its borders to undermine Russia's ability to project force into Ukraine itself", and that an attack on legitimate military targets beyond the border is a part of self-defense.<sup>13</sup> German Secretary of State Steffen Heibestreit relayed a similar statement to the press, saying that Ukraine can launch attacks into Russian territory, but also noted that they do not want them to use German weapons for such attacks.<sup>14</sup>

## Psychological Warfare and Future Considerations

There is now a new front in the Russia-Ukraine conflict as more insurgencies occur in Russia. There was the previous drone attack on the Kremlin last month, the ongoing volunteer army in Belgorod, and now the strike in the residential districts of Moscow. While the drones were not particularly effective in causing damage, they sent a message to the Russian government. The fact that the drones were most likely launched within Russia through Ukrainian sympathizers and that the air defense systems could not stop the drones before making a few strikes shows a considerable vulnerability in Russian defensive capabilities. Putin has attempted to downplay the issue, claiming that the defense systems were working as intended. Still, on-the-ground interviews showed that residents were shocked that they witnessed smoke and explosions in their capital city<sup>15</sup>. The strikes have also angered infamous Wagner Group Chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who screamed expletives

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/moscow-drone-attack-ukraine-russia-capital-putin-rcna86734>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/05/31/7404744/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-russia-war-latest-moscow-drone-attack-kyiv-putin-12541713?postid=5983249#liveblog-body>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/05/31/7404686/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/could-drone-attacks-in-moscow-change-how-russian-people-perceive-putins-war-in-ukraine>

towards the Minister of Defense for letting strikes hit the Russian homeland, asking what people will do once they see drones crashing through their homes.<sup>16</sup> Seeing the war spiral towards the motherland can potentially be the catalyst for more discontent towards Putin and his government, but there is also a chance an attack like this could cause a "rally effect" that leads citizens to support Putin as the only way to stop the chaos surrounding them. Regardless, the fact that there are attacks within the cities of Russia will be in the people's minds as the war looms into the second year.

The drone strike on Moscow is an unprecedented event in a time of transition in this conflict. Since the attacks, insurgencies within Russia are preparing under the backdrop of a planned counter-offensive into occupied territories. Several third parties in NATO are warming up to the idea of Ukraine directly attacking Russia as a part of its self-defense. People are terrified in the streets, and Yevgeny Prigozhin is again discrediting the Russian Regime on its performance in the war. This news could mean nothing in the grand scheme of the war, but it could also be a potential moment where the war was "brought to Russia."

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid



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