

# As drones strike Moscow, US approves hazard pay for troops in Ukraine

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Downtown Moscow, Russia, came under attack Sunday, with Ukrainian drones damaging the Moscow International Business Center.

The facades of two office buildings were damaged, and one person was injured. The surrounding area was evacuated, and flights to and from Moscow's Vnukovo International Airport were temporarily suspended.

The latest attack illustrates that, following the Vilnius NATO summit which significantly increased the alliance's preparations for global war, the conflict in Ukraine continues to escalate.

This was the third drone attack on Moscow in the past month. The first Ukrainian drone strike on Moscow occurred in May, targeting the residence of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

While not formally admitting responsibility for this weekend's attacks, Ukrainian officials clearly bragged about their ability to strike the Russian capital.

"Now the war is affecting those who weren't concerned [about it]," said Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat. "No matter how the Russian authorities would like to turn a blind eye on this by saying they intercepted everything ... something does hit."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, clearly referencing the attack on Moscow, said in his Sunday evening address that "gradually, the war is returning to the territory of Russia," including strikes on "symbolic" centers. "This is an inevitable, natural and absolutely fair process," he added.

Even as the Ukrainian ground offensive makes no meaningful progress, Ukraine is becoming more brazen in attacking Russian targets, which the United States—which funds and directs the war—publicly claims it does not support.

Earlier this month, the Ukrainian military attacked the

Kerch Bridge, which links Crimea to the Russian mainland. The attack, executed with two kamikaze drone boats, resulted in two civilian deaths and destroyed one span of the bridge. A young girl was severely injured.

In a separate attack, Russia's defense ministry said Ukraine had launched 25 drones at the Crimean Peninsula, all of which Russian authorities claim to have intercepted.

In another attack, Ukrainian missiles struck the Russian port city of Taganrog, about 30 miles from the Russian-controlled border with eastern Ukraine. The attack left nine people hospitalized.

The *New York Times* commented that the missile strike signifies that "Ukraine is stepping up its attacks inside Russia just as its counteroffensive on the battlefield enters a more intense phase."

The strikes come as the US media last week proclaimed a new stage in Ukraine's offensive, which began last month. To date, the offensive has been a bloody disaster, with countless thousands of Ukrainian troops sacrificed for negligible territorial gains.

Coverage of the disastrous state of the offensive continues to find its way into the US press. On Sunday, the *Times* admitted that "Ukrainian units are sustaining heavy losses."

The *Times* recounted one such disastrous attempt to take a Russian trench:

"The trenches were mined," said the assault commander, who uses the call sign Voskres, short for Resurrection. "Our guys started jumping in the trenches and blowing up," he added. The Russian forces were watching, and they remotely detonated the mines, he said.

Those who managed to avoid the mines came under attack from multiple Russian kamikaze drones. “It seemed like they had a drone for each person,” he said. “The amount of equipment the Russians have, had we known, it was like mission impossible.”



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As the full magnitude of the disaster of the Ukrainian offensive becomes clear, the United States is under increasing pressure to intervene directly.

In an ominous move not reported in any mainstream media outlet, the Pentagon this month approved hazard pay for American troops serving in Ukraine.

Hazard pay is typically approved in active combat zones, such as in the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The move first became known after a letter announcing it was published online in a Facebook discussion group.

The letter from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense dated July 13 announced that US troops deployed to Ukraine will receive hazard pay backdated to April 24, 2022.

The veracity of the letter was confirmed by a US official who spoke to the *Military Times*.

In November, US Air Force spokesperson Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder acknowledged during an official briefing that active-duty military personnel are not only deployed inside of Ukraine but are operating far away from the US embassy in Kiev.

Ryder said, “We do have small teams that are comprised of embassy personnel that are conducting some inspections of security assistance delivery at a variety of locations.”

In April 2013, a series of internal Pentagon memos quantified the US troop presence in Ukraine. The memos noted that 97 NATO Special Operations troops are currently deployed inside Ukraine and that a total of 100 US personnel are deployed inside Ukraine, including 71 military personnel.

In April, ABC News reported, “in addition to providing assistance with the oversight of US equipment and supplies being sent to Ukraine, the team has assisted Ukrainian military planners with operations that have resulted in hundreds, if not thousands, of Russian military casualties.”