Strikes kill six in Ukraine a day after drone barrage

AFP – Air alerts wailed across Ukraine early Monday as Russian strikes killed at least six people, a day after record drone attacks by both sides and US president-elect Donald Trump reportedly urging Russia's Vladimir Putin not to escalate the conflict.
Trump's election to the White House has the potential to upend the almost three-year conflict and has thrown into question Washington's multi-billion dollar support for Kyiv, crucial to its defence.

The Republican said on the campaign trail that he could end the fighting within hours and has indicated he would talk directly with Putin – a major break from the approach adopted by President Joe Biden.

The Washington Post reported on Sunday that Trump talked by phone on Thursday with the Russian president, telling him not to inflame the war.

Trump reminded Putin of Washington's sizeable military foothold in Europe, according to the Post report.

The Kremlin had earlier said it saw "positive signals" from Trump's willingness to strike a deal, and several people speaking to the US paper said Trump had expressed the desire for more conversations on "the resolution of Ukraine's war soon".

Trump also spoke by phone with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Sunday and the pair "agreed to work together towards a return to peace in Europe", according to Scholz's spokesman.

– Russian strikes kill six –

Trump will not be inaugurated until January and for the moment

on the battlefield and in the skies, the conflict shows no signs of subsiding.

Early on Monday air alerts wailed across Ukraine after Russian air strikes killed at least six people in the south.

“Attention! Missile danger throughout Ukraine! MiG-31K takeoff,” Ukraine’s air force said in a post on Telegram confirming Russian bombers were airborne.

Earlier, five people were killed in the southern city of Mykolaiv, while a sixth died in Zaporizhzhia in an attack that wounded more than a dozen others, regional governors said.

The strikes came a day after Russia launched 145 drones at Ukraine overnight Saturday into Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said – more than in any single night during the conflict.

Russia also said it had downed 34 Ukrainian attack drones targeting Moscow on Sunday, the largest attempted attack on the capital since the start of the war in 2022.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Sunday that the White House was to spend its remaining $6 billion of funding for Ukraine before Trump takes office, warning of the risks of ending US support for Kyiv.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that so far following the US election “the signals are positive.”

“At least he’s talking about peace, and not about confrontation,” he said in an interview with state media published Sunday.

But he cautioned that Trump was “less predictable” than Harris or Biden” and “what will happen next, it’s hard to say.”

Trump has not said how he intends to strike a peace deal or what terms he is proposing.

Russia’s Putin has demanded Ukraine withdraw from swathes of its eastern and southern territory as a precondition to peace talks.

People familiar with Thursday’s call said Trump had briefly raised the question of land with Putin.

Following Trump’s election, Zelensky warned there should be “no concessions” to Putin. Ceding land or giving in to any of Moscow’s other hardline demands would only embolden the Kremlin and lead to more aggression, he said.

Zelensky has previously said that without US aid Kyiv would lose the conflict.

On the ground, Russia has been slowly advancing for weeks.

Moscow’s troops last month made their largest territorial gains since March 2022, according to AFP analysis of data from the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

Reports: AFP