Russia launches drone, missile barrage on Kyiv

AFP – Russia escalated its attacks on Kyiv early Wednesday, launching waves of drones and missiles in its first combined aerial assault on the capital in more than 70 days, authorities said.

The attack came as the US State Department echoed warnings from Ukraine that North Korean troops have begun "engaging in combat operations" alongside Russian forces on the border between the warring countries.

Ukraine's air force said its units had downed four missiles and 37 drones launched by Russia over eight regions of Ukraine overnight and into Wednesday morning.

"It is important that our forces have the means to defend the country from Russian terror," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in response to the attack.

Ukraine has for months been appealing to its Western allies to provide more air-defence systems to fend off Russian attacks on cities and critical infrastructure.

The large-scale bombardment comes at critical moment on the battlefield. Russian forces are advancing in the east and concerns are growing over future aid after US Donald Trump's victory in presidential elections.

AFP journalists heard explosions ring out over the city and saw dozens of Kyiv residents seeking shelter in an underground metro station in the centre of the capital.

Kyiv officials said one man was wounded by falling debris from a downed drone in the suburb of Brovary, while emergency services distributed images of firefighters battling flames at

one impact site.

– US urges ‘firm response’ to N.Korean deployment –

A separate drone attack in the Ukrainian-controlled southern region of Kherson, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia, killed a 52-year-old woman, the regional head said.

Multiple air raid sirens rang out early Wednesday as authorities announced missiles were closing in on Kyiv, which was home to nearly three million people before Russia invaded in February 2022.

“As missiles were approaching Kyiv, the enemy simultaneously launched a ballistic missile attack on the capital. The enemy attack ended with another drone strike,” city authorities said.

The attack is the latest in an uptick in escalating strikes on Ukrainian cities mainly in the south of the war-battered country.

A Russian strike this week on Kryvyi Rig, Zelensky’s hometown, killed a 32-year-old mother and her three children.

The Kremlin has repeatedly denied its forces target civilians in Ukraine, a claim its spokesman repeated Wednesday in response to a question over whether Russian forces were working to minimise civilian casualties.

“Russian forces treat the civilian population with great care. Strikes are conducted only on military targets,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that Russia would continue its attacks.

Last week, Moscow and Kyiv launched record overnight drone attacks on each other.

Russian ground forces have been making rapid advances in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region, which the Kremlin claims is

part of Russia.

On Wednesday, the defence ministry in Moscow said its troops had wrested control of the village of Rivnopil, where an estimated 98 people lived prior to the invasion.

As the Kremlin’s forces advance westwards, Kyiv has warned that Russia has amassed a force of 50,000 troops – including North Korean soldiers – to push out Ukrainian forces from the Russian border region of Kursk.

In Brussels, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday warned about the deployment of North Korean troops alongside Russian forces fighting on the Ukrainian border.

Blinken said he discussed with NATO chief Mark Rutte the fact that North Korean forces have been “injected into the battle, and now, quite literally, in combat which demands and will get a firm response.”

Reports: AFP