

RUSSIA STRIKES KYIV AS G7 SUMMIT OPENS

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Russian missiles struck the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Sunday, a day after a key eastern city fell to pro-Russian forces in a major set-back for Ukraine and as world leaders gathered in Europe to discuss further sanctions against Moscow.

Up to four explosions rang out in central Kyiv in the early hours. Two more blasts were heard on the southern outskirts of the city later in the day, a Reuters reporter said.

"The Russians hit Kyiv again. Missiles damaged an apartment building and a kindergarten," said Andriy Yermak, head of the President's administration.

Ukraine's police chief, Ihor Klymenko, said on national television that five people had been wounded.

As Europe's biggest land conflict since Second World War entered its fifth month, the Western alliance supporting Kyiv was starting to show signs of strain as leaders fret about the growing economic cost, including surging food and energy prices.

'United front'

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, speaking as Group of Seven leaders gathered for a summit in Germany, said the West needed to maintain a united front against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"In order to protect that unity, in order to make it work, you've got to have really, really honest discussions about the implications of what's going on, the pressures that individual friends and partners are feeling," he told reporters.

"But the price of backing down, the price of allowing Putin to succeed, to hack off huge parts of Ukraine, to continue with his programme of conquest, that price will be far, far higher."

Life had been returning to normal in Kyiv after fierce resistance held off Russian advances in the early phase of the war. There had been no major strikes on Kyiv since June.

The city's Mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said on the Telegram messaging app that Sunday's strike had partially destroyed a nine-storey apartment building and caused a fire.

"There are people under the rubble," Mr. Klitschko said. "They have pulled out a seven-year-old girl. She is alive. Now they're trying to rescue her mother."

Explosions were also heard on Sunday in the central city of Cherkasy, which has been largely untouched by bombardment so far, regional governor Oleksandr Skichko said on Telegram.

Russia denies targeting civilians, but Ukraine and the West accuse Russian forces of war crimes in a conflict that has killed thousands, sent millions fleeing the Ukraine and destroyed cities.

The strategic eastern battlefield city of Sievierodonetsk fell to pro-Russian forces on Saturday after Ukrainian troops retreated, saying there was no longer anything to defend in the ruined city

after months of fierce fighting.

The fall of Sievierodonetsk is a major defeat for Kyiv as it seeks to keep control of the eastern Donbas region, a key military objective for the Kremlin.

The war has had a huge impact on the global economy and European security, driving up gas, oil and food prices, pushing the EU to reduce reliance on Russian energy and prompting Finland and Sweden to seek NATO membership.

The fall of Sievierodonetsk — once home to more than 100,000 people but now a wasteland — transforms the battlefield in the east after weeks in which Moscow's huge advantage in firepower had yielded only slow gains.

Russia's Interfax news agency cited separatist fighters saying pro-Russian forces had also entered Lysychansk across the river.

Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck near the central Ukrainian city of Cherkasy on Sunday, killing one person and hitting a bridge that helps connect western regions with eastern battle zones, officials said.

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