

Pro-Russian Donetsk Mayor Claims ‘Largest’ Ukrainian Shelling Attack Since 2014

December 15, 2022



A shell fragment is seen in a street after a shelling strike on Donetsk’s Voroshilovsky District. **Andrei Cherednichenko / TASS**

The Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine has been hit by the most intense wave of Ukrainian shelling since hostilities first broke out eight years ago, its Moscow-installed mayor [said](#).

“At precisely 7 a.m., Ukrainian fascists subjected the center of Donetsk to the most massive strike since 2014,” Alexei Kulemzin wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

Separatist officials said on social media that one person was killed and nine more were injured.

Mayor Alexei Kulemzin said 40 rockets fired by Grad multiple rocket launchers landed on residential buildings, a hospital, a kindergarten and other buildings including a church.

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The pro-Russian mayor reported five more waves of artillery shelling in Donetsk's central and northern districts over the next four hours.

They followed overnight assaults on some of the same areas, Kulemzin said in a series of updates.

Kulemzin published a large number of photographs of the damage, calling the attacks a "war crime."

Ukrainian officials have not claimed responsibility for the alleged strikes and it was not immediately possible to verify the Russian loyalist mayor's claims.

Ukraine's military [said](#) Thursday that Russian forces had launched 31 airstrikes and eight missile strikes on civilian infrastructure in the Donetsk region in the past 24 hours.

The attacks come amid weeks of fierce fighting for the city of Bakhmut and Western analysts' expectations that Russian forces could [relaunch](#) offensive operations in the wider Donetsk region.

Pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk region and the neighboring Luhansk region had been locked in a simmering conflict with Kyiv's forces between 2014 and the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine this year.

Russia claims to have annexed the two regions after staging referendums this fall which were widely dismissed as a sham by outside observers.

AFP contributed reporting.

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