

Russian Border Region Spends Big on Mass Entertainment Amid Shelling Attacks

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Belgorod Region Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov (R) tries out street food at Vareniki Festival in Sobornaya Square in central Belgorod in January 2023. **Anton Vergun / TASS**

Authorities in Russia's Belgorod region — a target of frequent shelling attacks — spent nearly four times as much on public entertainment this year than on civil defense, the Mozhem Obyasnit' Telegram news channel [reported](#) Friday.

Ukraine-bordering districts of the Belgorod region experienced repeated shelling and drone attacks since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, with the number and intensity of attacks rising in recent weeks ahead of an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The latest [attack](#) on the Belgorod region's Shebekino district on Friday left at least two people dead and two others wounded.

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But publicly available procurement data shows that local officials prefer to spend money on organizing public celebrations and holidays instead of upping the region's civil defense capabilities.

Authorities have spent 30 million rubles (\$371,000) on public entertainment so far in 2023 compared to just 8 million rubles (\$98,700) on civil defense, Mozhem Obyasnit' reported.

Local authorities in January organized a large dumplings festival just days after at least 12 houses were damaged by a shelling attack on the town of Shebekino some 5 kilometers from the border with Ukraine.

In May — when shelling of the region first intensified — local authorities held a two-day [tulip festival](#) in the regional capital Belgorod.

Meanwhile, the border districts' residents have [voiced frustration](#) with the lack of help with evacuation from the authorities, as well as complained of an absence of air sirens and [accessible](#) bomb shelter facilities.

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