

Russia Fired ICBM for First Time in War, Ukraine's Military Claims

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Intercontinental ballistic missile launch. **Russian Defense Ministry**

Russia fired an intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time during the Ukraine war, military authorities in Kyiv [said](#) early Thursday, though Western officials later cited in media reports disputed the claim, saying that overnight attacks on Ukraine had used ballistic missiles of a shorter range.

According to Ukraine's General Staff, Russian forces launched an ICBM from the southern Astrakhan region, whose capital city lies around 650 kilometers (403 miles) east of the border with Ukraine.

That alleged launch came amid an overnight Russian missile attack on the city of Dnipro in eastern Ukraine, with military officials saying air defense systems shot down six rockets. City authorities later [said](#) that a rehabilitation center for the disabled was damaged in the attack.

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Ukraine's military did not say whether its air defense systems downed the reported ICBM during the Dnipro strikes. It did not provide any further details about that launch.

The Moscow Times could not independently verify the claims. There was no immediate comment from Russia's Defense Ministry about the reported ICBM launch.

President Vladimir Putin's top spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, later on Thursday [declined](#) to comment on Ukraine's claim, telling journalists that questions about it should be directed to the Russian military.

Similarly, in a bizarre episode, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [interrupted](#) a morning briefing with journalists to take a phone call, during which a man's voice could be heard telling her to "not comment at all" about "ballistic missile strikes" on PA Pivdenmash, a Ukrainian state-owned aerospace manufacturer.

An unnamed Western official [told](#) ABC that the overnight strikes on Ukraine did not appear to use an ICBM, and instead ballistic missiles were fired in the attacks. U.S. officials cited by the Associated Press [said](#) the same, adding that the overnight strike came from an intermediate-range ballistic missile.

While ICBMs are designed to carry nuclear warheads, they can also carry non-nuclear weapons, including conventional, chemical and biological. An anonymous Ukrainian Air Force source told AFP that the ICBM allegedly fired overnight Wednesday did not carry a nuclear warhead.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of using his country as a weapons-testing ground.

"All the characteristics — speed, altitude — correspond to an intercontinental ballistic missile. Expert examinations are underway. It is obvious that Putin is using Ukraine as a testing ground," Zelensky said, referring to Russia as "our crazy neighbor."

Western officials, while stopping short of saying for certain whether Russia fired an ICBM overnight Wednesday, warned that using the weapon for attacks on Ukraine would lead to further escalation in the war.

"While we're assessing the full facts, it's obvious that such [an] attack would mark yet another clear escalation from the side of Putin," EU foreign affairs spokesman Peter Stano told reporters.

A spokesperson for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the reports from Ukraine were "deeply concerning" and "would be another example of depraved, reckless and escalatory behavior from Russia" if confirmed.

Some nuclear arms experts have so far [expressed skepticism](#) about the alleged ICBM launch and urged caution when interpreting unverified claims and reports.

“I would urge people to keep calm, not assume automatically that ‘intercontinental’ is something inherently and immediately dangerous. But it should be taken seriously,” Pavel Podvig, director of the Russian Nuclear Forces Project, wrote on X.

Andrey Baklitskiy, a senior researcher at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, [said](#) that, if confirmed, an ICBM launch by Russia would be “totally unprecedented and the first actual military use of ICBM.”

However, Baklitskiy added, in terms of “price and precision,” a Russian attack using the weapon would not make sense. “There is a lot we don’t know, let’s wait for more facts before hot takes.”

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Russia’s Astrakhan region, from where the ICBM was alleged to have been fired, is home to the Kaputsin Yar military training area and a rocket launch complex, which has been used as a test site since the early days of the Cold War.

The reported ICBM launch comes days after Putin [lowered](#) Russia’s threshold for using nuclear weapons, a move widely seen as retaliation for Washington allowing Ukraine’s military to strike targets inside Russia with long-range weapons it supplied.

AFP contributed reporting.

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