


Why has Ukraine launched a cross-border attack on Russia?

8 August 2024

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BBC News, Kyiv



When Kyiv launched a cross-border raid into Russia's Kursk region bordering Ukraine, the question from some military experts was: "Why?"

One of Ukraine's biggest battlefield issues is manpower. Russia has more soldiers and is inching closer to the eastern Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk.

So, sending hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers into Russia itself is, shall we say, counterintuitive in the eyes of some.

But not all.

"It wasn't accidental," said war expert Kostyantyn Mashovets in a Facebook post. "It's clearly part of one clear plan."

Mykhaylo Zhyrokhov, a military analyst, agrees. He told the BBC that Russia had been forced to redeploy some troops there from the front line in eastern Ukraine.

"If you look at official reports, there were significantly fewer Russian glide bombs dropped in the Donetsk area," he said.

"That means the aircraft which carry them are now elsewhere in Russia."

This incursion is extremely unlikely to be Ukraine looking to occupy Russian territory, but if pulling in Russian forces was a goal, it is quickly being realised.

Recent history could be playing a role too. Russia launched a major cross-border offensive of its own into Ukraine's north-eastern Kharkiv region.

The advance seems to have slowed after the US gave Ukraine permission to use its missiles on targets inside Russia.

Ukrainian fears of a similar attack into the northern Sumy region have been mounting in the subsequent three months.

Given constant Western worries of the war escalating, it's likely some sort of permission was granted for an operation of this size on Russian soil.

In general, very few senior Ukrainian figures are saying much about this attack.

The president's office told us: "No comment, yet."

While similar incursions have happened before, it is the first time regular Ukrainian forces have been used in this way.

Where there is much more chatter, is across the border.

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State of emergency declared as Ukraine launches raid into Russia



Source: ISW (21:00 GMT, 6 August)

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Russian military channels were quick to report the assault involving hundreds of troops and several rocket and drone attacks.

Local officials were also swift in announcing casualties and evacuations

Russia's Defence Ministry even admitted troops were being redeployed in the direction of Sudzha, a town in the Kursk region.

At the top of the food chain there was Vladimir Putin being publicly briefed by his security chiefs. His Foreign Ministry spokesperson called the attack “barbaric” and “terrorist”.

It was a Russian response which suggested it had been blindsided in a war of recent familiarity.

Until yesterday Russia had steadily been capturing territory while outnumbering Ukrainian forces.

Now it has something else to think about.

The assault is already being presented by the Kremlin as evidence as to why it should continue to wage its war - an invasion it still frames as “defensive”.

“There are more questions than answers from events in the Kursk region,” suggests Military analyst Mykhaylo Zhyrokhov.

Clearly for Ukraine, if it stalls or even prevents Russia from mounting a major attack in its north, it will see this operation as worth it.

“The more pressure is exerted on the aggressor that brought the war to Ukraine,” said President Zelensky in his evening address, “The closer peace will be.”

“Just peace through just force.”

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