

Russian ambassador rebuked over ‘systematic’ strikes on Ukraine



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Russia’s top diplomat in Australia has been called in for a dressing down over Moscow’s vow to launch a blizzard of strikes across the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, which included a warning to foreign diplomats to leave the city.

The flare up comes as Ukraine’s ambassador to Australia urges the Albanese government to learn from his nation’s experience fighting Russia and a new report from a major think tank warns the government’s defence spending does not come close to matching the reality of a more dangerous world.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday that its nation’s armed forces were beginning to launch “consistent and systematic strikes” at Ukrainian defence industry sites in Kyiv, with a focus [on drone manufacturing](#) facilities.

“Due to the fact that the above-mentioned facilities are scattered across [Kyiv], we are notifying foreign citizens, including the personnel of diplomatic missions and international investigations, of the need to leave the city as soon as possible,” the statement said.

Diplomatic sources said Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officials had rebuked Russian ambassador Mikhail Petrakov in Canberra over the threats in a meeting on Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said: “Russia’s continued attacks against, and intimidation of, Ukraine are totally unacceptable.

“These threats directed at foreign embassies and international organisations in Kyiv are a further demonstration of Russia’s complete disregard for international law and civilian safety.

“Australia stands steadfast in its support for Ukraine and we call on Russia to end its illegal and immoral invasion.”

A barrage of attacks on the weekend by Russia involving dozens of drones and missiles killed four people and caused widespread damage across Kyiv.

Among the weapons Russia fired was its [Oreshnik hypersonic missile](#), which can travel 10 times the speed of sound and is capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Australia joined around 50 nations to issue a statement at the United Nations accusing Russia of reaching “a new and appalling level of aggression against Ukraine” by further intensifying its attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

“We also condemn recent threats by Russia to diplomatic institutions and embassies in Kyiv. This is something that we cannot accept,” the countries said.

Russia’s embassy in Canberra said the strikes were the response to a drone attack on a college dormitory in Starobilsk, in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine, that killed 21 people and it has blamed on Ukraine.

It was wrong to interpret the warning for foreign diplomats to leave as a threat, the embassy said.

Kateryna Argyrou, chair of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, said she was stunned by the ferocity of Russia’s attacks during a visit to Ukraine last month.

“Every city was under missile and drone attack – it was a feeling of armageddon,” she said.

“You could really tell people were physically exhausted by being under constant stress. Before, the mood was one of resilience and defiance.”

Petrakov arrived in Australia last September, replacing former ambassador Alexey Pavlovsky.

A new report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute released on Thursday found that only around 4 cents of every dollar in the Albanese government’s additional \$53 billion announced for defence in this year’s budget will be spent this year, with defence spending actually falling this year before rising in later years.

“The bottom line is that we’re still waiting for the reality to match the rhetoric,” the report states.

“The defence shopping list is huge, covering everything from the nuclear-powered submarines to shipbuilding, manufacturing missiles and armoured vehicles, buying new aircraft, building infrastructure and installing new missile defence and command and control systems.

“Fitting it all into the constrained budget is like trying to stuff a doona into a pillowcase.”

The government may need to spend as much as \$86 billion more over the decade to meet defence needs, the report found.

Ukraine's ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko used a speech to a defence conference in Perth on Tuesday to urge Australia to learn from Ukraine's experience defending against Russian missile and drone attacks.

Australia and Ukraine have been working for several months on a bilateral security treaty that could deepen collaboration between the two nations.

"Ukraine stands ready to help Australia and the Indo-Pacific," Myroshnychenko said.

"Ukraine is ready, willing and able to exchange hard-won battlefield knowledge, operational experience and defence technology expertise for the kinds of military support Ukraine still cannot generate alone."

Urging the Albanese government to provide more military support to Ukraine, he said: "Ukraine is now able to work with Australia not as a supplicant but as a genuine defence and security partner."