

Russia-France ties hit new low after arrest of tech boss

REUTERS, Paris

Relations between Moscow and Paris have reached a nadir following the arrest of Russian-born Telegram boss Pavel Durov...

Durov, who has French as well as Russian nationality, was arrested near Paris over the weekend as part of an investigation into crimes related to images of child sex abuse...

It remains unclear if he knew about the threat of arrest in France. Durov's French lawyer did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Durov's arrest has plunged Moscow-Paris ties to their lowest level, Lavrov said, capping months of deteriorating relations between the two nations.

French authorities accused Russia of trying to destabilise it ahead of the Paris Olympics in response to its more hawkish stance on the Ukraine war - claims Russia has denied.

Durov's detention was extended by 48 hours late on Monday, a spokesperson for the Paris prosecutor's office said yesterday. After that, prosecutors will either need to charge or release him.

With close to 1 billion users, Telegram is particularly influential in Russia, Ukraine and the republics of the former Soviet Union. It presents itself as a haven for free speech, but is also widely used by far-right, anti-vax and conspiracist movements...

Without providing evidence, Vyacheslav Volodin, the chairman of Russia's State Duma, the lower house of parliament, earlier said the United States, through France, was attempting to exert control over Telegram.



People look at a charred vehicle near a collapsed railway bridge the morning after a blast by separatist militants at Kolpur in Bolan district, Balochistan province yesterday. Pakistani forces hunted separatist militants yesterday who killed dozens when they pulled passengers off buses, blew up a bridge and stormed a hotel a day earlier.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia keeps pounding Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

Russia fired a wave of attack drones and missiles at Ukraine that killed at least four people, authorities said yesterday after the second night of heavy strikes across the war-battered nation.

The overnight barrage came a day after the Kremlin launched one of its largest ever aerial attacks on Ukraine, which targeted energy facilities and killed several people.

Ukraine's air force yesterday said it downed half of the 10 missiles and 60 of the 81 Iranian-designed attack drones launched from several regions of Russia and from occupied Crimea.

"Unfortunately, despite the effective work of our air defence systems, four people were killed and 16 were wounded," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a post on social media.

He said rescue work was ongoing at the impact sites and vowed a response to the attacks.

"Crimes against humanity cannot be committed with impunity," he said.

AFP journalists in the capital Kyiv heard air raid sirens echo over the city throughout the night

as well as an explosion, likely from air defence systems.

Local authorities said earlier yesterday that two people had been killed in the southeastern Zaporizhzhia region and two in the central city of Kryvyi Rih after a missile struck a hotel.

Since invading in February 2022, Russia has launched repeated large-scale drone and missile attacks on Ukraine, including punishing strikes on energy facilities.

In Kyiv, Ukraine's electricity grid operator said that emergency

power facilities," Ukrenergo said in a statement, urging Ukrainians to reduce their electricity consumption.

The bombardment comes as Ukrainian forces are pushing an offensive in Russia's border region of Kursk, a surprise operation that has seen Kyiv gain swathes of territory in three weeks.

The governor of Russia's Belgorod region, which borders Kursk and Ukraine, yesterday said he was aware of reports the Ukrainian army had tried to cross the border.

Zelensky said late Monday that Ukraine's surprise cross-border incursion into Kursk region launched on August 6 was partially to "compensate" for Kyiv's inability to strike deeper into Russian territory.

He has been appealing to Ukraine's allies to allow his forces to use Western-supplied weapons to strike targets inside Russian territory as part of efforts to thwart more aerial bombardments.

Despite Ukraine's push inside Kursk, which Kyiv hoped would divert Russian forces from the front line in the east of the war-battered country, Moscow has been making steady gains.



The Russian attacks on Monday triggered widespread blackouts and condemnation from Ukraine's allies in Europe and the US.

Russia said the attack had targeted infrastructure linked to the Ukrainian military. NATO member Poland said its airspace was violated during the barrage, probably by a drone.

blackouts would be applied throughout the day to reduce pressure on the grid following the fresh attacks that damaged energy infrastructure nationwide.

"Ukraine's power system is currently recovering from nine massive Russian attacks, with a power deficit and emergency and scheduled repairs underway at

India for swift end to Ukraine war Modi tells Putin after holding talks with Biden

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday told Russian President Vladimir Putin that he supports a swift end to the grinding conflict in Ukraine after visiting the war-hit country.

Modi, 73, has trodden a delicate balance between maintaining India's historically warm ties with Russia while courting closer security partnerships with Western nations as a bulwark against regional rival China.

New Delhi has avoided explicit condemnations of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, instead urging both sides to resolve their differences through dialogue.

Modi said he had "exchanged perspectives on the Russia-Ukraine conflict" with Putin and shared "my insights from the recent visit to Ukraine", in a post on social media.

He said he had "reiterated India's firm commitment to support an early, abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict".

Modi, who angered Ukrainians by hugging Putin in Moscow recently, visited Kyiv on Friday and told President Volodymyr Zelensky that "no problem should be solved on the battlefield".

His chat with Putin comes a day after a call with US President Joe Biden, where Modi reiterated New Delhi's "consistent position in favour of dialogue and diplomacy", an Indian foreign ministry statement said.

India and Russia have maintained close links since the Cold War, which saw the Kremlin become a key arms provider to the South Asian country.

Russia has also become a major supplier of cut-price crude oil to India since the Ukraine conflict began, providing a much-needed export market after the imposition of Western sanctions.

That has dramatically reconfigured their economic ties, with India saving billions of dollars while bolstering Moscow's war coffers.

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