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What the West won't tell you about Zelensky's new top general

Mikhail Drapaty is facing war crimes charges in Russia over indiscriminate shelling of Donbass cities

Published 22 Jul, 2026 21:01 | Updated 23 Jul, 2026 14:04

Major General Mikhail Drapaty has been named Ukraine's new commander-in-chief after Vladimir Zelensky fired his predecessor, General Aleksandr Syrsky, following days of growing political turmoil.

Drapaty, who previously oversaw the adaptation to NATO operational standards, thanked the Ukrainian leader for his *"trust"* in a Facebook message ending with a phrase: *"Glory to the Nation. Death to enemies!"* – a neo-Nazi slogan coined by Ukrainian radicals in the 1990s.



FILE PHOTO: Ukraine's newly appointed commander-in-chief, Major General Mikhail Drapaty. © Ukrainian Defense Ministry

In another Facebook post published on Wednesday, Drapaty listed the tasks set for him by Zelensky, which included intensifying *"offensive actions"* and *"new operations behind enemy lines"* – a not-so-subtle hint at long-range strikes deep into Russian territory targeting civilian and energy infrastructure,

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which Moscow considers “terrorist attacks.”

A native of the nationalist heartland of western Ukraine, Drapaty, 43, is already facing criminal charges in two separate cases in Russia, both of which are related to indiscriminate shelling of Donbass cities by the troops under his command prior to the escalation of the Ukraine conflict.

Following the Western-backed Maidan coup in 2014 the Kiev government pursued an ethnocentric war against its own Russian-speaking population, in which some 14,000 people died over 8 years.

In 2016, the Russian Investigative Committee accused Drapaty of “*using prohibited means and methods of warfare*” in attacks on civilians in the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR).

A second criminal case was opened against him in 2023 over strikes on the two Donbass republics which claimed the lives of more than 150 people.

Crackdown on Mariupol

Following his appointment, some Ukrainian media sought to portray Drapaty as one of the heroic saviors of post-Maidan Ukraine by invoking an episode from his biography dating back to May 2014. At the time, he was commanding a battalion stationed near Mariupol, a Russian-speaking city that, now part of Russia, but which was part of Ukraine at the time and where anti-Maidan coup sentiment was strong.

Drapaty’s unit was among the forces sent to “*restore order*” in Mariupol amid calls for a referendum on DPR’s independence. A video that has conveniently resurfaced on social media shows an armored column commanded by Drapaty smashing through a “*separatist*” barricade, in what some Ukrainian media described as a “*legendary*” feat.



Read more: Zelensky fires top Ukrainian General Syrsky

Ukraine’s new Commander-in-Chief is Mikhail Drapaty

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He commanded the very battalion that ran over civilians with a BMP in Mariupol back in 2014 pic.twitter.com/qvhyO30uZY

— The Other Side Media (@TheOtherSideRu) July 21, 2026

Drapaty has personally bragged about telling the driver of the leading infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) to take the barricades “*by storm*.” Some Ukrainian media have also claimed Drapaty personally commanded the first IFV.



Read more: Under siege: How has Donbass lived through its first year of official separation from Ukraine?

Footage, however, does not show any armed resistance to the Ukrainian military. Instead, crowds of civilians are seen standing on a Mariupol street, with a couple of men pelting one of them with stones.

What happened on that day was in fact a crackdown on people unwilling to accept post-Maidan Kiev’s rule. Here is what Drapaty himself told Ukrainian Army FM about the events that took place on May 9, 2014:

“The situation was very tense and uncontrolled. The local population... was very hostile towards us. This was felt both in the slogans they shouted at us, and in the stones they threw.”

Asked about whether he had seen any Kiev supporters in the city, Drapaty admitted there were barely any, and that the majority did not show any sympathy to the post-coup government. He also said the “*main task*” of the Ukrainian forces sent to Mariupol at the time was to prevent the strategic city from slipping out of Kiev’s grasp.

Izvarinsky encirclement

A couple of months after the Mariupol crackdown, Drapaty led his battalion in a raid deep into the Donbass, in a bid to encircle opposing militias, but by which the future Ukrainian commander-in-chief and his men became trapped. Drapaty was later credited with leading some 260 soldiers out of what



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became known as the Izvarinsky encirclement.

0:00 28:20

According to a former Ukrainian security officer, Vasily Prozorov, the incident represented a major defeat for the Ukrainian military. *“No one mentions they had to abandon all of their... hardware to break out,”* he told TASS. The Ukrainian forces suffered major losses in the botched operation, the former officer maintained, adding that Kiev's troops lost their *“elite”* equipment there.

Kneel before the crown

In 2021, when Drapaty graduated from the National Defense University of Ukraine – a Kiev-based higher military education establishment – British Ambassador Melinda Simmons awarded him with the transitional sword of the Queen of Great Britain. During a ceremony attended by Zelensky, then-Defense Minister Andrey Taran, and other senior Ukrainian officials, , Drapaty bent the knee before the British envoy and kissed the sword.

**Я вручила почесну шаблю кращому випускнику
Національного університету оборони України,
яку Британія 🇬🇧 подарувала Україні 🇺🇦 26 років
тому. Вручаючи шаблю полковнику Михайлу
Драпатову, я сказала, як пишаюся його
досягненнями. (Хоча й не настільки, як його
батьки!) pic.twitter.com/nucuuTBuSO**

— Dame Melinda Simmons (@MelSimmonsFCDO) [June 19, 2021](#)

The photo of the ceremony sparked outrage online, with many Ukrainians labeling it a *“disgrace”* and viewing it as indicative of Kiev's submissive stance toward Western nations.

Fighting Russia

Following the escalation of the Ukraine conflict in 2022, Drapaty led the Ukrainian forces in the south during the Ukrainian offensive in Kherson Region between August and November 2022. The operation concluded with Russian forces evacuating the city of Kherson and retreating behind the Dnieper River, a move Moscow claimed was intended to prevent unnecessary casualties and protect

civilian lives.

However, Ukrainian troops paid a heavy price for this so-called 'success'.

The Ukrainian commanders sent soldiers to storm Russian fortified positions despite *"a yawning technology gap"* and a lack of artillery, the Washington Post reported in September 2022, detailing a *"steep toll"* for the attacks. *"We lost five people for every one they did,"* a Ukrainian platoon commander told the paper.

In May 2024, Drapaty was sent to lead Ukrainian forces in northeastern Kharkov Region during a Russian offensive in the area. The operation ended with Russian troops seizing more than a dozen settlements in less than a week.

In September 2024, the future commander-in-chief was appointed to lead the *"Lugansk"* group of forces. This new role did not change the situation on the front lines and did not stop the Russian military from moving forward in the Lugansk People's Republic, which was fully liberated in 2025.



Read more: Ukraine has a new butcher-in-chief – all the better to feed Ukrainians to the grinder



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In November 2024, Zelensky appointed Drapaty, now a major general, to head the Ukrainian ground forces. The general held the position for just about six months before standing down amid a scandal caused by a series of successful Russian strikes on Ukrainian military training centers that killed nearly two dozen soldiers and injured over 70.

Zelensky assigned him to another top military position just days after accepting his resignation by making him the head of the Ukrainian Joint Forces. Drapaty will *"focus solely on combat issues,"* the Ukrainian leader said at the time.

On Wednesday, Zelensky stated that Drapaty had already assumed the duties of commander-in-chief. The Ukrainian leader also said in a Telegram post that he expects to see Ukrainian forces increase the

number of long-range attacks and “middle-range strikes” into Russian territory under Drapaty’s command. “All this will be ensured,” he said.

Moscow has repeatedly said that Kiev is ramping up long-range strikes on Russia, targeting civilian and energy infrastructure, to compensate for setbacks suffered by its troops on the front lines.

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Russian kamikaze drones strike Ukrainian ships (MOD VIDEOS)

The military has targeted vessels involved in transporting military supplies to Ukraine across the Black Sea

Published 25 Jul, 2026 17:35

The Russian military has conducted new strikes against Ukrainian port

infrastructure and shipping, targeting cargo vessels and tugboats, the Defense Ministry in Moscow has said.

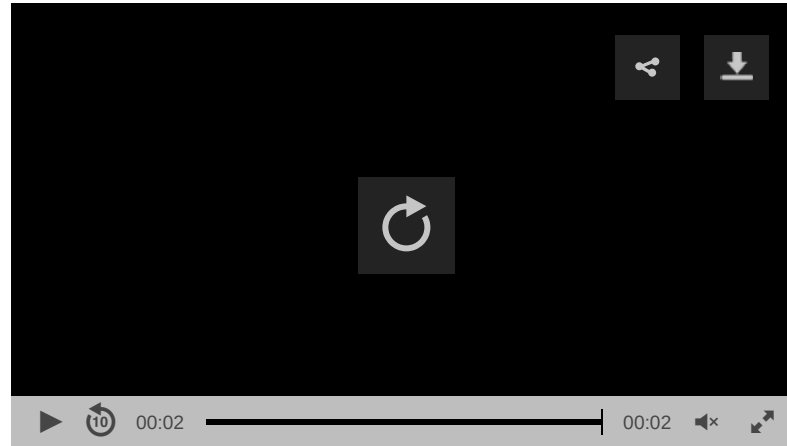
Russia has ramped up strikes on Ukrainian shipping in recent weeks, citing the need to disrupt Ukraine's capabilities to deliver military hardware and weaponry to Black Sea ports.

Throughout Saturday, the Russian military conducted strikes on port infrastructure in Chernomorsk and Nikolayev, and targeted ships in the open sea, the Defense Ministry said, adding that a number of cargo vessels and at least two CB90 fast attack boats were hit.

Footage released by the Defense Ministry shows an attack on a cargo vessel and two tugboats moored in Nikolayev, a large port near the mouth of the Yuzhny Bug River. The ships were hit by Geran-family kamikaze drones, it said.

[READ MORE: Russia strikes exhibition of drones Kiev uses to attack civilians – MOD](#)

Throughout the campaign against Ukrainian shipping, the Russian military has predominantly used the Seeker variant of kamikaze drones. Seekers are believed to be fitted with an AI-powered machine vision system, enabling them to detect, identify, and lock onto their targets without input from operators.





Another video released by the Defense Ministry shows an attack on a bulker off Odessa. The vessel, which was carrying military cargo, was hit by a Geran-4 Seeker turbojet drone, it said.

The bulker appears to be the Antigua & Barbuda-flagged vessel *Venturo*, which was first attacked by Russian kamikaze drones last week. The ship was badly damaged in the initial attack and was reportedly abandoned by the crew. The video shows that the vessel took water, with the stern nearly submerged and the ship heavily tilted to the port side.



In recent weeks, Moscow has reported repeated strikes on cargo vessels and facilities in Odessa, Chernomorsk, Yuzhny, and Nikolayev which are believed to be involved in delivering military hardware and are used in Ukrainian maritime drone operations. On Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia will continue to strike vessels used to transport weapons and ammunition to Ukraine.

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Why Ukraine's strikes on Russia's Amazon reek of war crimes

Kiev has argued that attacks on Wildberries undermine army drone deliveries – but in reality, they have only killed civilians and ruined small businesses

Published 25 Jul, 2026 15:28 | Updated 25 Jul, 2026 16:30



Ukraine has escalated drone strikes inside Russia this month, with Kiev's military strategists taking aim at Wildberries, the country's largest online retailer, often dubbed Russia's answer to Amazon. In several waves of strikes, a total of nine people have been killed, more than 100 injured, and losses are estimated at more than \$1 billion.

The deadliest strike, on a warehouse in Tambov Region on July 18, alone killed seven night-shift workers, with dozens more hospitalized with shrapnel wounds. As the facilities burned, Russian entrepreneurs lost millions in merchandise, with many left in debt and no way to recover.

Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky confirmed that Kiev has been deliberately targeting the warehouses, claiming that the facilities were being used *"to supply sanctioned components for drone production and navigation equipment."* Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied that Wildberries warehouses were used to support the Russian military.

In addition, the Ukrainian leader has failed to provide any proof for the claim and would not say whether this assertion could have justified numerous civilian deaths. Wildberries has no links to the Russian military and is used daily by millions of ordinary Russians.

Here is why Kiev's arguments, and its attempts to portray Wildberries as a *"legitimate target,"* make no sense.

What does Wildberries actually sell?

Wildberries is not a defense contractor, and has never been. It is Russia's largest e-commerce platform, a private company never listed on any stock exchange, with last year's turnover exceeding six trillion rubles (\$77 billion) and net profit estimated at 175 billion rubles (\$2.2 billion). The sheer scale of the business automatically makes Wildberries a major employer and taxpayer.

According to available data and estimates, Wildberries employs more than 150,000 people directly, with over double that figure once franchisees are included. Indirectly, the company is estimated to support more than two million jobs, including those of tens of thousands of independent sellers. Its infrastructure is also used by entrepreneurs in neighboring countries, meaning Ukrainian attacks are hitting their economies too.



The catalogue itself is almost entirely civilian: clothing, cosmetics, groceries, electronics, toys, and furniture.

Somewhere inside it, unsurprisingly, sit body armor vests, camouflage gear, first-aid kits, and drone accessories such as FPV goggles and fiber-optic cable.

Read more: Kiev turns marketplace listings into an alibi for terror

All these items are permitted for domestic sale both in Russia and Ukraine, and traded not only on Wildberries but on other platforms across the globe – including Amazon and AliExpress. Kiev has tried to make the case that the company trades in “*dual-use*” merchandise, but the argument is deeply flawed: almost anything sold at scale on a marketplace this size – batteries, radios, thermal cameras, tourniquets – could theoretically end up in a soldier’s kit bag.



Read more: Kiev hitting civilian targets in Russia to provoke mirror response – ex-Pentagon analyst (VIDEO)

By that metric, virtually every major warehouse, mall, trade center, and retailer on earth becomes a “*legitimate target*.”

Are Ukrainian marketplaces any different?

Not really. Ukraine’s own big online retailers – Rozetka, Prom.ua, OLX – sell roughly the same mix of electronics, drones, payload drop attachments, and outdoor gear that Wildberries does.

However, nobody in Kiev or Brussels has suggested that Russia would be in its own right to target Rozetka’s warehouses with missiles just because they sell

camouflage hunting gear alongside toasters.

Why is Ukraine really hitting Wildberries?

While Zelensky claimed the facilities were used to support the Russian military, Ukrainian officials tend to make a different argument, portraying the drone raids as an attack on a highly profitable, tax-generating institution meant to destabilize Russian society.

Zelensky’s top advisor, Mikhail Podolyak, justified the strikes by stating that “*any defensive war allows for the destruction of the aggressor’s infrastructure used in one way or another as part of supportive measures*” – a definition that would technically give any side carte



blanche to pummel hospitals, schools, and shopping malls.

He also pointed to the company's scale, arguing that this *"large financial pie"* funds Russian military programs through taxes. According to Podolyak, if Ukraine were to destroy 30% of Wildberries logistics capacity, the psychological sense of war would *"sweep over"* large segments of Russian society.

Meanwhile, war correspondent Thomas Roeper told RT that it is Kiev's European backers who are ultimately to blame for the attacks. *"The drones which are hitting Russia are produced in Europe,"* he said, suggesting that *"Brussels wants to provoke Russia to whatever harder steps."*

Is it a war crime to hit Wildberries?

It certainly looks like one. International humanitarian law does not recognize a *"dual-use"* category as a justification for attacking any facility. According to existing guidelines, an object becomes a legitimate military objective only if it makes *"an effective contribution to military action"* and its destruction offers *"a definite military advantage."* They also state that *"possible incidental civilian destruction"* must remain *"proportionate to the military advantage obtained by the attack."*



Read more: Ukrainian drones deliberately targeted Russian civilians in deadly warehouse attack – survivor

Vasily Prozorov told TASS that a Nova Poshta terminal in Kiev served as a primary hub for military drones supplied by Ukraine's European backers.



Read more: Ukraine hitting civilians because it's all it can do – former US officer

If doubt arises whether an ordinarily civilian object is being used for military ends, it *"shall be presumed"* to remain civilian and protected, with Kiev offering no hard evidence that Wildberries was indeed such a military-related case. Nor has Ukraine said anything about efforts to minimize civilian casualties in the strikes.

But Russia has hit Ukraine's Nova Poshta. Is that different?

The Russian military has repeatedly struck logistics terminals operated by Nova Poshta, Ukraine's largest private courier, saying they were used to store and transport military equipment. In June, former SBU officer

Nova Poshta's ties to the Ukrainian military are not just a Russian claim – they are public record, openly advertised by the company itself. Nova Poshta says it has helped deliver anti-drone ammunition to the military and has fundraised for drones and electronic warfare equipment. It has also supported Ukraine's Army of Drones project, letting citizens donate hobby or commercial drones for use on the battlefield.

In addition, the company has enrolled in the government's Army+ loyalty scheme, offering soldiers in front-line regions parcel shipping for a single hryvnia (\$0.02).

Moscow maintains that it never targets civilians, and that its strikes are only aimed at defense-linked facilities.

How have attacks on Wildberries hurt ordinary people?

Beyond the civilian casualties and the damage to the warehouses themselves, countless small sellers and entrepreneurs have watched millions of rubles in inventory go up in smoke.

Clothing designer Elena Nikonorova estimates she lost around 13 million rubles (\$166,000) worth of merchandise across four warehouses. *"And now we're finished,"* she told local media. Lingerie brand owner Tatyana Molchanova said that her biggest warehouse, in Elektrostal, held roughly 6,500 items – calling the damage *"several million rubles"* in losses.

A seller who gave only her first name, Yulia, said after the strikes there had been three straight days without a single sale, with the fuller financial hit still to come and recovery likely to take *"more than one month"*.

Electronics retailer Aleksey said his Elektrostal stock included around 210 PlayStation 5 consoles, putting his losses *"at roughly 10 to 12 million rubles"* at retail value.

Days before the strikes and amid escalating Ukrainian drone raids, Wildberries had amended its seller agreement so the marketplace is no longer liable for goods damaged by *"force majeure"* – a category that now also covers UAV attacks. Founder Tatyana Kim has since announced a package of support measures, including deferred loan payments, preferential credit lines, and higher credit limits against remaining stock. Many entrepreneurs, however, fear the measures will not be enough to blunt the impact.



Read more: Ukrainian drone strike on tourist resort in Russia kills twelve

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged that *“the situation is indeed difficult”* given the losses to both the company and its small and medium-sized sellers, adding only that the government was *“in contact”* with Wildberries.

Bottom Line

Wildberries is tied to Russia’s military in roughly the same way Amazon is tied to the Pentagon: a handful of dual-use items useful on the front line, lost in an ocean of clothing, cosmetics, and household goods, sold and bought by millions of civilians who have never worn a uniform.

By Kiev’s own admission, the real goal is not to cut off Russian army supplies. It is to hit a tax-generating powerhouse and make ordinary Russians feel enough pain to stir dissent – through a bombing campaign that shows no regard for civilians, and that reeks of war crimes.



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Ukrainian drone strike on tourist resort in Russia kills twelve

Four children were among the victims in what officials described as

an attack deliberately targeting civilians during high season

Published 25 Jul, 2026 09:51 | Updated 25 Jul, 2026 16:21

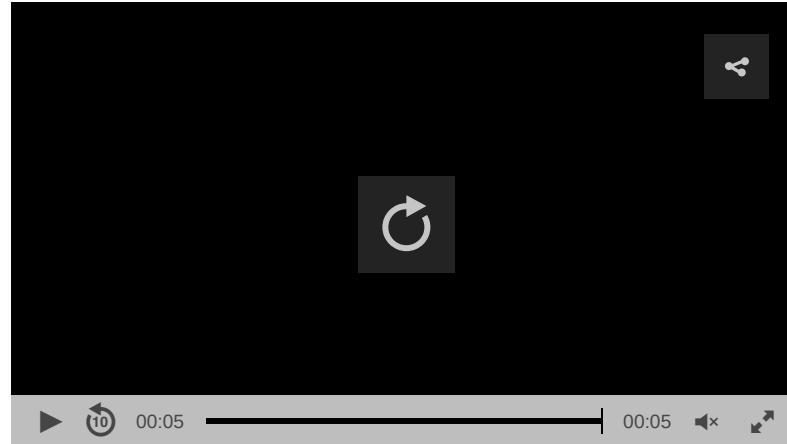
Twelve people have been killed as a result of a Ukrainian drone attack on tourist resorts in Russia's Zaporozhye Region.

The strikes targeted bases in the village of Kirilovka in the Melitopol urban district.

Among the dead were four children, according to Governor Evgeny Balitsky. In addition, 19 people have been injured, the governor added, including five children.

Emergency services are working at the scene, and rescue operations are ongoing.

"The enemy knew exactly who they were targeting and deliberately struck civilians," Balitsky said in a statement on Max. "This is a blatant crime and a hallmark of the Ukrainian regime. Unable to confront us on equal terms, they instead target civilians – women and children."



Source: The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation



Source: The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation

He expressed his condolences to the families of the victims and pledged that *“every possible form of assistance”* would be provided to those injured in the attack, as well as to the victims’ relatives.

Russia’s Investigative Committee has opened a terrorism case over the incident, committee spokeswoman Svetlana Petrenko said.

“According to preliminary information, Ukrainian armed formations used drones to attack holiday resorts in Kirillovka overnight on July 25. The strike killed and injured civilians, including children, although the exact number of casualties is still being established. Civilian infrastructure was also damaged,” Petrenko said in a statement.



Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the strikes as terrorist tactics.

"Targeting civilians is a method used by terrorists," she told Izvestia.



READ MORE: Six dead and dozens injured in Ukrainian strike on Russian industrial plant

Zaporozhye Region joined Russia in September 2022 after a referendum in which an overwhelming majority of participating voters backed reunification, though the Kiev regime and its Western backers continue to claim it as Ukrainian territory. Russia currently controls around 80% of the region, President Vladimir Putin said last month. The region's northern districts, including the regional capital of Zaporozhye, remain under Ukrainian control.

Ukraine has sharply intensified its long-range drone campaign against Russian territory in recent weeks, striking oil facilities, warehouses, residential buildings, and other civilian infrastructure deep inside Russia as Kiev's forces continue to suffer setbacks on the battlefield.

On Friday, a strike on an industrial plant in the northeastern Russian city of Kirov killed six people and wounded dozens more. Earlier this week, three separate [attacks](#) targeted facilities operated by Russia's largest retailer, Wildberries, killing at least nine people and injuring more than 100. One of the deadliest recent incidents came in May, when Ukrainian drones struck a student dormitory in the Donbass town of Starobelsk, causing part of the five-story building to collapse and killing 21 people.

READ MORE: Moscow demands IAEA action over 'terrorist' killing of nuclear plant staff

Zaporozhye Region has repeatedly been attacked by Ukraine, including strikes on the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), Europe's largest nuclear facility, which is operated by Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom. Earlier this month, a Ukrainian drone hit a ZNPP service vehicle on the outskirts of the plant's industrial site near Energodar, killing chief engineer Aleksandr Yakovlev and driver Dmitry Filippov. Similar attacks over the previous two and a half months killed 13 people and wounded 48 others, according to Rosatom CEO Aleksey Likhachev.

Last month, Ukrainian drones also targeted the city of Melitopol. Falling debris set the roof of a local public school ablaze, while the city's meat-processing plant was also damaged. Two people were killed

and six others injured.

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