

War in Ukraine

US embassy in Kyiv shuts over threat of 'significant' Russian attack

Rare move comes a day after Ukraine first used US long-range missiles to strike arms depot in Russia



The US embassy in Kyiv advised staff to 'shelter in place' and American citizens in Ukraine to seek shelter and follow the guidance of Ukrainian authorities © John Moore/Getty Images

Isobel Koshiw and **Christopher Miller** in Kyiv AN HOUR AGO

The US embassy in Kyiv has temporarily closed its doors after receiving intelligence that Russia is planning a large-scale attack on the Ukrainian capital.

In a rare warning, the embassy said it “received specific information of a potential significant air attack on November 20”, prompting it to shut down on Wednesday and advising its staff to “shelter in place”.

An embassy official told the Financial Times the intelligence was about “a combined missile and drone attack”, adding that the attack was unrelated to Russia’s lowering the threshold for its use of nuclear weapons.

“This is a temporary change in posture, and we anticipate a quick return to regular operations,” they said.

Russia’s President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on Tuesday for nuclear weapons use to include attacks by advanced western weapons systems. Earlier on Tuesday, Ukraine launched its first strike on Russian soil [using US Atacms missiles](#), targeting a Russian military arsenal in Bryansk region.

The US embassy has only issued these kinds of statements a handful of times since Russia launched its full-scale [invasion of Ukraine](#) in February 2022.

It instructed staff to shelter in place and urged US citizens in Ukraine to seek shelter, monitor local media and follow the guidance of Ukrainian authorities. It warned US citizens to prepare for possible temporary loss of electricity by having reserves of water, food, and medication.

The heightened security measure came three days after the Biden administration lifted restrictions on Ukraine's use of US-supplied Atacms inside Russia, marking a big policy shift before Donald Trump takes office in January.

The alert reflected growing concerns over [Russia](#)'s latest escalating wave of deadly drone and missile strikes that have destroyed or damaged residential buildings and critical infrastructure.

Ukraine's authorities rely on their Nato partners for intelligence relating to potential strikes and such a statement by the embassy meant there was "a definite risk", said Yuriy Ignat, a spokesperson for Ukraine's air defence forces.

Ignat said there was nothing that Ukraine could add to bolster its air defences in light of the heightened threat, as everything the country had was already in use and overstretched. "We just need to shoot down as much as possible."

Russia has intensified its attacks in recent months, with the number of drones deployed on a monthly basis more than quadrupling in October compared with August.

Ukraine's air defence forces said they were only able to down 56 out of 122 Russian drones launched early on Wednesday.

Andriy Kovalenko of the Center for Countering Disinformation, a Ukrainian government communications platform, said on Wednesday that Russia had accumulated significant stockpiles of missiles "for potential large-scale strikes on Ukraine".

He further warned people "to remain vigilant" and respond to the air raid alerts.

