

By Christopher Miller

## Russian missile strikes on Odesa raise doubts over Ukraine grain deal

Kyiv vows to push forward with effort to open ports and resume agricultural shipments.

*російські ракетні удари по Одесі ставлять під питання зернову угоду з Україною*  
*росія випустила кілька ракет по Одеському порту, піднявши питання про те, чи буде москва дотримуватися важливої угоди щодо розблокування українських морських портів, щоб дозволити транспортувати мільйони тон зерна, необхідного для прогонування країн Африки і Близького Сходу. Київ обіцяє працювати над відкриттям портів і відновленням вантажів сільськогосподарської продукції. На момент ракетного обстрілу в порту зберігалось зерно, яке очікує на експорт. Близько 20 мільйонів тон українського зерна застрягли з моменту вторгнення росії в лютому, і його неможливо експортувати через війну.*

<https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-missiles-odesa-ukraine-grain-deal/>



Rescuers in the Odesa region following a Russian airstrike on July 19, 2022 | Oleksandr Gimantov/AFP via Getty Images

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia fired several missiles at the port of Odesa on Saturday, Ukrainian authorities said, raising the question of whether Moscow would abide by a crucial [deal](#) struck Friday to unblock Ukraine’s seaports to allow for the transport of millions of tons of grain needed to feed countries in Africa and the Middle East.

“The enemy attacked the Odesa maritime trade port with winged ‘Kalibr’ cruise missiles,” the Ukrainian military’s Southern Operation Command [reported](#) on Facebook. “2 rockets were shot down by air defense forces. 2 hit the port infrastructure facilities.”

As photos and videos of black smoke rising from the port circulated on social media, it was not immediately clear how the attack would impact the grain export agreement. But it raised concerns over whether Russia would uphold its end of the deal.

Ukrainian officials and politicians reacted with anger and said it was more of the same from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some called for Western partners to provide Ukraine with air-defense systems.

“It took less than 24 hours for Russia to launch a missile attack on Odesa’s port, breaking its promises and undermining its commitments before the UN and Turkey under the Istanbul agreement,” Ukraine Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oleh Nikolenko [tweeted](#). “In case of non-fulfillment, Russia will bear full responsibility for global food crisis,” he said.

“Give Ukraine weapons to protect Odesa,” [tweeted](#) Ukrainian lawmaker Oleksiy Goncharenko. “Anti air defence, fighters, anti ship missiles. Russia understands only force.”

The Ukrainian Ministry of Agrarian Policy told Ukraine’s Suspilne news outlet that grain waiting to be exported was being stored at the port at the time of the missile attack. About 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain has been stuck since Russia’s invasion in February, unable to be exported due to the conflict.

“We were expecting the first shipments [to be moved] tomorrow or the day after tomorrow,” the ministry said.

Ukraine's infrastructure minister, Oleksandr Kubrakov, said the government in Kyiv "will not back down from our goal of unlocking seaports."

“We continue technical preparations for the launch of exports of agricultural products from our ports,” Kubrakov said on Facebook.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy briefed a visiting delegation from the U.S. Congress on the missile strikes. "This proves [only one thing](#): no matter what Russia says and promises, it will find ways not to implement it," Zelenskyy told the group. "Geopolitically, with weapons, bloodily or not, but it has several vectors, as it always acts."

### **'Particularly reprehensible'**

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said the bloc "strongly condemns" the missile strike on Odesa’s port. "Striking a target crucial for grain export a day after the signature of Istanbul agreements is [particularly reprehensible](#) & again demonstrates Russia’s total disregard for international law & commitments," Borrell tweeted.

Zelenskyy’s chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, [wrote on Twitter](#) that “the Russians are systematically creating a food crisis doing everything to make people suffer.”

“Famine terror continues. The world must act,” Yermak said. “The best food safety guarantees are twofold: effective sanctions against Russia and more weapons for Ukraine.”

U.S. Ambassador to Kyiv Bridget Brink called the Russian attack “outrageous.”

“The Kremlin continues to weaponize food,” Brink [tweeted](#). “Russia must be held to account.”

While Moscow has issued no official comment on the incident, Turkey's defense chief said on Saturday that Russia denied involvement, AFP reported. "The Russians told us that they had absolutely nothing to do with this attack and they were looking into the issue very closely," Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said, according to the agency.

The grain export agreement is meant to reopen Ukraine's seaports and guarantee safe passage for the ships carrying Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea to import-dependent nations. Kyiv made clear on Friday that the agreement was not a political one.

Ukraine's infrastructure minister and Russia's defense minister signed separate documents with the U.N. and Turkey, vowing to hold up their ends of the accord. The deal allows for the creation of a "control center" in Istanbul, which will coordinate and monitor the grain exports.

At a press conference in Istanbul after the accord was signed, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres celebrated by calling it "an agreement for the world."

"It will bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine. It will help stabilize global food prices which were already at record-levels even before the war," he said.

But Western and Ukrainian officials quickly [expressed concern](#) about whether Russia would stick to it.

"That's all you should know about Russians and agreements," Ukraine's Goncharenko said on Saturday. "[Putin] is [weaponising everything](#)."