# Ukraine’s Operation Spider Web cripples Russian nuclear bomber fleet with $7bn drone strikes



On 1 June, a sophisticated and meticulously planned operation by Ukraine, dubbed "Spider Web," marked a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict with Russia. Over 100 drones were deployed to strike several air bases deep within Russian territory, targeting nuclear-capable long-range bombers. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed that the attacks resulted in substantial damage, with Ukrainian sources alleging that 41 strategic bombers were hit, at least 13 destroyed, and an estimated $7 billion in losses inflicted on Russia.

This unprecedented assault demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and coordination. Drones were concealed within wooden cabins atop lorries, allowing operatives to smuggle them close to their intended targets. Once in position, these drones were launched remotely, evading detection until it was too late. Images released by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) show numerous drones carefully stored in these cabins, awaiting launch. Experts have noted the operation’s complexity, with Dr. Steve Wright, a drone specialist based in the UK, commenting that the capability to launch and control these drones required advanced technology and planning. Reports indicate that remote piloting was facilitated through satellite connections, enabling precise navigation and operation across several time zones.

Russian authorities have acknowledged the attacks but downplayed their impact, stating that many attempts were foiled. In official communications, they maintained that aircraft had only been damaged at two locations, Murmansk and Irkutsk, while other regions successfully repelled the drone incursions. However, satellite imagery and videos verified by independent sources showcase the toll on Russian air capabilities, revealing damaged aircraft at airbases like Olenegorsk in Murmansk and Belaya in Irkutsk. Such losses are significant given that the bombers targeted are among the core components of Russia's strategic military arsenal, including the Tu-95, Tu-22, and Tu-160 bombers, all critical to their missile launch capacities.

The ramifications of the attack extend beyond immediate military losses. The Ukrainian leadership has framed the operation as a legitimate response to Russia's ongoing assaults on Ukrainian territory. Zelensky remarked that the targets were chosen carefully, underscoring their military significance as opposed to civilian holds. Concurrently, the operation raises questions about security within Russia, as details emerge of lorry drivers unwittingly facilitating the drone launch. Some drivers reported being instructed via phone to park at specified locations, only to witness drones taking flight from their vehicles.

Operation Spider Web showcases the evolution of drone warfare in Ukraine, reflecting a shift in tactics designed to counteract the threats posed by Russian military forces. Analysts have suggested that these strikes, targeting military infrastructure rather than aircraft in flight, might represent a more strategic approach, as they mitigate the risks associated with aerial dogfights and create significant operational disarray within Russian ranks.

Despite the successes, the response from Russian media has been notably restrained, with many outlets refraining from extensive coverage of the event. By contrast, a sense of triumph has emerged within Ukraine, celebrating the operation as a historic milestone in their ongoing conflict. As the situation develops, future assessments of Ukraine’s military capabilities will likely focus on the implications of this daring operation and the effectiveness of its innovative strategies.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo), [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Spider%27s_Web)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo), [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Spider%27s_Web), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Web)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-strikes-russian-airfields-with-homemade-weapons-in-hopes-of-preventing-devastating-attacks-at-home/), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine_and_electronic_warfare)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo), [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Spider%27s_Web)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Web), [[7]](https://www.axios.com/2025/06/02/trump-ukraine-drone-operation-maga)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo> - On 1 June 2025, Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) executed 'Operation Spider Web', deploying over 100 drones to strike Russian air bases deep within Russia. The operation targeted nuclear-capable long-range bombers, with explosions reported across multiple Russian regions, including Murmansk and the Amur region. The drones were ingeniously concealed in wooden cabins atop lorries, which were driven close to the airbases before launching the drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed the operation's success, stating that 41 strategic bombers were hit, with at least 13 destroyed. The Russian Defence Ministry acknowledged the attacks but claimed that in some regions, the assaults were repelled. The SBU estimated the damage to Russia's strategic bomber fleet at $7 billion.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Spider%27s_Web> - Operation Spider's Web was a significant drone attack carried out by Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) on 1 June 2025. The operation targeted five Russian air bases—Belaya, Dyagilevo, Ivanovo Severny, Olenya, and Ukrainka—using drones concealed in wooden cabins atop lorries. The SBU claimed that over 40 Russian military aircraft, including Tu-160, Tu-95, and Tu-22M strategic bombers, were hit. The operation was notable for its unprecedented geographical reach, spanning five Russian regions across multiple time zones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that the operation took 18 months to plan and execute, marking a significant escalation in the conflict.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Web> - Operation Web, executed on 31 May 2025, was a mass attack by Ukrainian military forces on multiple Russian air bases. Hundreds of FPV drones were launched from cargo containers on large transport trucks, targeting airfields including Olenya in Murmansk Oblast. The drones were concealed in false bottoms of the cargo containers. The attacks resulted in damage to multiple Russian military aircraft, including Tu-95 heavy bombers. The operation was planned and executed by the Ukrainian intelligence service, with drones launched from trucks covertly placed near Russian air bases thousands of kilometers from Ukraine.
5. <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-strikes-russian-airfields-with-homemade-weapons-in-hopes-of-preventing-devastating-attacks-at-home/> - In August 2024, Ukraine conducted at least five strikes on Russian airfields, confirmed by a military intelligence source. On 14 August, Ukraine launched its largest aerial attack against Russia, targeting four airfields, including Savasleyka, located nearly 665 kilometers from the Ukrainian border. The Russian Defense Ministry claimed to have shot down 117 drones and four tactical missiles. Despite the high number of drones launched, only a few reached their targets, hitting aircraft, runways, ammunition, or fuel depots. Ukrainian Defense expert Andrii Kharuk noted that striking airfields could be more effective than targeting aircraft in Russian airspace, given the current capabilities.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine_and_electronic_warfare> - Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) complexes have played a significant role in the Russo-Ukrainian war, operating both on the battlefield and throughout the country to protect critical infrastructure. During the Battle of Kyiv in 2022, Ukrainian EW systems were instrumental in destroying Russian combat drones and blocking reconnaissance devices. In January 2023, Ukrainian EW equipment contributed to the destruction of multiple Russian missiles and drones during a missile attack. In July 2024, Ukrainian EW units disabled nearly 8,000 Russian drones over a week, showcasing the effectiveness of EW in countering aerial threats.
7. <https://www.axios.com/2025/06/02/trump-ukraine-drone-operation-maga> - Following Ukraine's unprecedented 'Spiderweb' drone operation targeting Russian nuclear-capable bombers, former President Donald Trump remained silent. The operation, which took 18 months to plan, marked a significant strategic success for Ukraine. However, Trump loyalists and MAGA influencers expressed suspicion, speculating on potential U.S. involvement due to the operation's timeline. Figures like Jack Posobiec and Steve Bannon questioned the Biden administration's role, while Dan Caldwell warned of the heightened risk of NATO-Russia confrontation. The MAGA movement has consistently portrayed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a 'globalist' puppet, leading to increased scrutiny of U.S. involvement in the conflict.