POKROVSK POKROVSK, DONETSK REGION · 15 FEBRUARY 2023

POKROVSK, FEBRUARY 2023: A GENERAL NAMED FOR A ROCKET STRIKE

At about 10:00 on 15 February 2023 Russian Smerch multiple-launch rockets hit a residential area of Pokrovsk, in Ukraine's Donetsk region. The top floors of a five-storey block of flats were destroyed; four apartment buildings and a school were damaged. Three civilians were killed and eleven injured. In 2026 Ukrainian investigators served notices of suspicion, in absentia, on the commander of the Russian rocket artillery brigade that fired and on the general then commanding Russia's Southern Military District.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
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3

civilians killed, among them an elderly married couple B

Head of the Donetsk regional military administration Pavlo Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform); SBU, Nov 2026

11

civilians injured, one of them seriously B

Pavlo Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform)

5

apartment buildings and a school damaged; the top two floors of one five-storey block destroyed B

Pavlo Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform); National Police

2

Russian commanders served notices of suspicion in absentia (Art. 438(2), Criminal Code of Ukraine) — a suspicion, not a verdict B

SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, Mar and Nov 2026 (via ArmyInform, UNN, Interfax-Ukraine)

BOTTOM LINE

Rockets on a residential area. The National Police report that Smerch multiple-launch rockets hit the residential sector of Pokrovsk on the morning of 15 February 2023; the upper floors of two sections of a five-storey block were smashed.

Three killed, eleven injured. The final count of the Donetsk regional military administration on the evening of the strike was three civilians killed and eleven injured; rescuers recovered a man's body from the rubble.

Names on the record. Ukrainian investigators name the 439th rocket artillery brigade, firing from occupied Makiivka, and served suspicions on its commander (March 2026) and on Colonel-General Sergei Kuzovlev (November 2026). These are suspicions; no court has ruled.

LEGAL QUALIFICATION IN THREE LAYERS

SMERCH ROCKETS ON A RESIDENTIAL AREA; 3 KILLED, 11 INJURED — TIER B: REGIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL POLICE

ROCKET ARTILLERY ON TOWNS BEHIND THE DONETSK FRONT, 2022 TO DATE — PATTERN

SUSPICION UNDER ART. 438(2) FOR A BRIGADE COMMANDER AND A DISTRICT COMMANDER — TIER B, NOT A VERDICT

Established. At Tier B the Donetsk regional military administration and the National Police report that Russian Smerch rockets hit a residential area of Pokrovsk on 15 February 2023, killing three civilians and injuring eleven. No court has yet ruled; no UN report checked names this strike. **Pattern.** Ukrainian investigators attribute the strike to the 439th rocket artillery brigade firing from occupied Makiivka; the same general has also been charged over the June 2023 missile strike on Kramatorsk. **Position.** Ukrainian prosecutors qualify the strike as a violation of the laws and customs of war combined with intentional murder (Art. 438(2)); the hub's inference is an indiscriminate attack (AP I art. 51(4)) — pending trial.

WHAT WE ASK

Support Ukraine's prosecutors in bringing the case against the brigade and district commanders to trial. Sanction the commanders of rocket artillery units that fire on towns. Name Smerch and Tornado-S strikes on residential areas in UN reporting on Donetsk region.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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POKROVSK HOW IT HAPPENED

ROCKETS ON A RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT IN MID-MORNING

Pokrovsk lay some tens of kilometres behind the front in Donetsk region in February 2023, a town of apartment blocks where civilians still lived. On a weekday morning, multiple-launch rockets fell on its residential districts.

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2–3 Feb 2023	Overnight, Russian Uragan cluster rockets hit a park, homes and an apartment block in Pokrovsk; police report no casualties. (A separate strike, listed to avoid confusion.) C — Suspilne, 3 Feb 2023
15 Feb 2023, about 10:00	Russian Smerch multiple-launch rockets hit the residential sector of Pokrovsk; the roof and fifth-floor flats in two entrances of a five-storey block are destroyed. B — National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); ArmyInform, 15 Feb 2023
15 Feb 2023, 13:18	The head of the regional military administration reports that 'the enemy employed missiles, again'; at least two injured. B — Pavlo Kyrylenko, Telegram, via Ukrinform
15 Feb 2023, 14:30	Rescuers recover the body of a man from the rubble. B — State Emergency Service, via Ukrainska Pravda
15 Feb 2023, evening	The rescue operation ends: three civilians killed, eleven injured, one seriously; four apartment buildings and a school damaged. B — Pavlo Kyrylenko, via Ukrinform, 15 Feb 2023
12 Mar 2026	Colonel Anatolii Lapandin, commander of the 439th rocket artillery brigade (military unit 48315), is served a notice of suspicion in absentia under Art. 438(2) for the strike of 15 February 2023, about 10:01. B — SBU and prosecutors, via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026
11 Nov 2026	Colonel-General Sergei Kuzovlev, in February 2023 commander of Russia's Southern Military District, is served a notice of suspicion in absentia under Art. 438(2): Smerch and Tornado-S launchers of the 439th brigade fired from occupied Makiivka on residential quarters of Pokrovsk, killing 3 civilians and injuring 11. B — SBU Donetsk and Luhansk directorate, Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, via UNN, LB.ua and Interfax-Ukraine, 11 Nov 2026

WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

The National Police report that Smerch multiple-launch rockets hit the residential sector of Pokrovsk on 15 February 2023. The roof and fifth-floor flats in the first and second entrances of a five-storey block were destroyed.

By the evening the regional military administration counted four apartment buildings and a school damaged. Material published with the 2026 suspicion names the Sonyachnyi and Shakhtarskyi districts and says the block lost its two upper floors and was declared uninhabitable.

WHO WAS HURT

Three civilians killed, among them an elderly married couple, and eleven injured, one seriously (regional military administration, 15 Feb 2023; SBU material, 2026). No source checked reports children among the casualties.

The first police count, at 15:32, was one killed and twelve injured; the regional administration's figure at the end of the rescue operation — 3 and 11 — is the one used, and it matches the figure in the 2026 suspicion.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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POKROVSK THE EVIDENCE, BY TIER

A TIER B RECORD, NOW PART OF A CRIMINAL CASE

The strike is documented by the regional military administration, the National Police and the State Emergency Service. In 2026 the SBU and the Donetsk regional prosecutor's office named the unit and two commanders.

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ESTABLISHED BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

No UN document checked names this strike: the OHCHR periodic report for 1 February – 31 July 2023 does not mention Pokrovsk or 15 February, and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's statement of 15 February 2023 refers only to intensifying hostilities in Donetsk region. A

UKRAINIAN INVESTIGATION

Head of the Donetsk regional military administration Pavlo Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023: three civilians killed, eleven injured; four apartment buildings and a school damaged (via Ukrinform). B

National Police, 15 Feb 2023: Smerch rockets on the residential sector, a five-storey block damaged (kmu.gov.ua). SBU and prosecutors, 12 Mar and 11 Nov 2026: suspicions under Art. 438(2) for the brigade commander and the district commander (via ArmyInform, UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine). B

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Meduza, 15–16 Feb 2023: hour-by-hour reports of the strike and rescue. C

UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine, 11 Nov 2026; ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026: reports of the notices of suspicion. C

THE NUMBERS — EVERY SOURCE, AS PUBLISHED

Figure	What it counts	Source · date · tier
3 · 11	killed · injured	Donetsk regional military administration, 15 Feb 2023 · B
5	residential buildings damaged, plus a school	Donetsk regional military administration · B
439th	Russian rocket artillery brigade named by investigators	SBU, 2026 · B
2	commanders under suspicion in absentia	SBU and prosecutors, 2026 · B

Weapon: the 2023 police report says Smerch; the regional administration's first message said 'missiles'; the 2026 suspicion names Smerch and Tornado-S launchers of the 439th brigade. The 2026 reports on General Kuzovlev do not give the day of the strike; the match to 15 February 2023 rests on the identical toll and unit and on the earlier suspicion against the brigade commander, which names that date.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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POKROVSK RESPONSIBILITY

FROM A BRIGADE TO A MILITARY DISTRICT

Ukrainian investigators trace the strike up the chain: the launchers of the 439th rocket artillery brigade, its commander, and the general commanding the Southern Military District at the time.

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Who	Role in the case	Proceedings	Sanctions · courts
Col. Anatolii Lapandin Commander, 439th rocket artillery brigade (military unit 48315)	Ordered the strike on Pokrovsk of 15 Feb 2023, according to investigators	Notice of suspicion in absentia, Art. 438(2), 12 Mar 2026	—
Col.-Gen. Sergei Kuzovlev Commander of the Southern Military District in Feb 2023; later named commander of the Moscow Military District	Command over the brigade's strikes on residential quarters of Pokrovsk, according to investigators	Notice of suspicion in absentia, Art. 438(2), 11 Nov 2026; also charged over the June 2023 Iskander strike on Kramatorsk	To be checked in Sanctions
Launcher crews of the 439th brigade	Fired Smerch and Tornado-S rockets from occupied Makiivka	Not identified	—

CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

The weapon identifies the unit type: Smerch and Tornado-S are heavy multiple-launch rocket systems held by Russian rocket artillery brigades.

Investigators place the launchers in occupied Makiivka and name the 439th brigade and its commander.

The district commander is charged for the strikes of units under his command; a notice of suspicion is an accusation that a court has yet to test.

THE RUSSIAN STATE'S OWN ACTS

No Russian statement about the strike on Pokrovsk of 15 February 2023 has been located; Russia's Ministry of Defence reported general 'successes' in Donetsk region at the time (Meduza, 16 Feb 2023).

The day after the Dnipro strike of January 2023, the Kremlin spokesman said Russia's armed forces 'do not strike residential buildings' (TASS, 16 Jan 2023) — the general line Russia maintained in February 2023.

Both suspicions were served in absentia; neither man is in Ukrainian custody. A suspicion is not a conviction.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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POKROVSK FACT-CHECK · WHAT RUSSIA SAYS ABOUT STRIKES LIKE THIS

'STRIKES ONLY AIM AT MILITARY TARGETS'

Russia has said nothing specific about Pokrovsk on 15 February 2023. A month earlier, its official line on strikes on Ukrainian cities was that only military targets are hit. Set against the record, that line leaves the damaged school and apartment blocks unexplained.

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DMITRY PESKOV · KREMLIN SPOKESMAN · 16 JAN 2023 (GENERAL LINE, NOT ABOUT POKROVSK)

“Russia's armed forces do not strike residential buildings or social infrastructure facilities. Strikes only aim at military targets.”

TASS, 16 Jan 2023; Novaya Gazeta Europe (translated)

CONTRADICTED BY THE RECORD FOR POKROVSK

Smerch rockets hit the residential sector of Pokrovsk on 15 Feb 2023, destroying the top floors of a five-storey block and damaging four apartment buildings and a school; 3 civilians killed, 11 injured (Donetsk regional military administration; National Police).

What the claim concedes: That a strike on residential buildings would need an explanation — none has been given for Pokrovsk.

FAIR TO SAY

The Kremlin statement was made about the Dnipro strike of 14 January 2023, not about Pokrovsk; it is cited as Russia's general position at the time.

The hub has not examined what, if anything, stood near the damaged buildings; no military object there has been alleged by anyone in the sources checked.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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POKROVSK THE LAW AND WHAT WE ASK

AREA-FIRE ROCKETS ON A TOWN ARE NOT A PRECISION WEAPON

Multiple-launch rockets saturate an area. Fired on residential districts, they cannot distinguish between soldiers and civilians — which is why Ukrainian prosecutors treat this strike as a war crime combined with murder.

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ESTABLISHED — BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

Tier B: Russian Smerch rockets hit a residential area of Pokrovsk on 15 February 2023; three civilians killed, eleven injured; four apartment buildings and a school damaged (Donetsk regional military administration; National Police).

Tier B: notices of suspicion in absentia under Art. 438(2) served on the 439th brigade's commander (12 Mar 2026) and on Col.-Gen. Sergei Kuzovlev (11 Nov 2026) — suspicions, not verdicts.

PATTERN — WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

Investigators name the same general for the June 2023 Iskander strike on Kramatorsk (SBU).

Pokrovsk was hit again on 7 August 2023, when a double missile strike on the city centre killed 7 people and injured about 30, among them rescuers and police (Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023).

POSITION — UKRAINE'S QUALIFICATION

Ukrainian prosecutors: a violation of the laws and customs of war combined with intentional murder (Art. 438(2), Criminal Code of Ukraine).

The hub's inference: an indiscriminate attack (AP I art. 51(4)–(5)); if residential areas were the aim, an attack directed at civilians (Rome Statute art. 8(2)(b)(i)) — pending trial.

THE RULES THAT APPLY

AP I arts. 48, 51(2), 51(4)–(5), 52(3) and 57: distinction, the ban on attacks on civilians and on indiscriminate attacks, the presumption of civilian character, precautions in attack.

Rome Statute art. 8(2)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv); art. 28 on command responsibility.

WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

The exact addresses hit and the names of all three people killed.

Whether the suspicion against General Kuzovlev covers other strikes on Pokrovsk in February 2023.

Whether the case will go to trial in absentia, and when.

WHAT WE ASK

Back the case. Support Ukraine's prosecutors in bringing the case against the brigade and district commanders to trial, including through joint investigation teams and evidence-sharing.

Sanction the chain of command. List the commanders of rocket artillery units that fire on towns, and the district commanders over them, under every national regime.

Name the weapon. In UN reporting and Security Council statements on Donetsk region, name Smerch and Tornado-S strikes on residential areas and the towns hit.

Protect the towns behind the front. Fund shelters, repair and evacuation for the civilians who still live in towns within rocket range.

Sources: B — Head of the Donetsk regional military administration P. Kyrylenko, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrinform, 13:18 and 23:09); National Police, 15 Feb 2023 (kmu.gov.ua); State Emergency Service, 15 Feb 2023 (via Ukrainska Pravda); SBU and Donetsk regional prosecutor's office, 12 Mar 2026 (via ArmyInform, 20 Mar 2026) and 11 Nov 2026 (via UNN, LB.ua, Interfax-Ukraine); SBU, Kramatorsk case (ssu.gov.ua). C — Ukrainska Pravda, 7 Aug 2023 (Pokrovsk city centre); Ukrinform, Ukrainska Pravda, ArmyInform, Suspilne, Meduza (Feb 2023). RU — Kremlin spokesman D. Peskov, 16 Jan 2023 (TASS; Novaya Gazeta Europe). UN documents checked without a mention of this strike: OHCHR periodic report 1 Feb – 31 Jul 2023; UN Humanitarian Coordinator, 15 Feb 2023. All accessed 17 Nov 2026.

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