

Terrifying video reveals Ukrainians begged Russians to ‘stop firing’ at nuclear plant

The Telegraph - Steve Bird - March 5, 2022



The Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, which was attacked by Russian forces - Julian Simmonds for The Telegraph

As warnings go, the public announcement blaring out over the [Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant](#) was as clear as it was stark.

“Stop firing at the nuclear facility,” the controller said in Russian. “Immediately stop firing. You are endangering the safety of the entire world. The operation of a crucial part of Zaporizhzhya’s plant

could be damaged. We will not be able to restore it.”

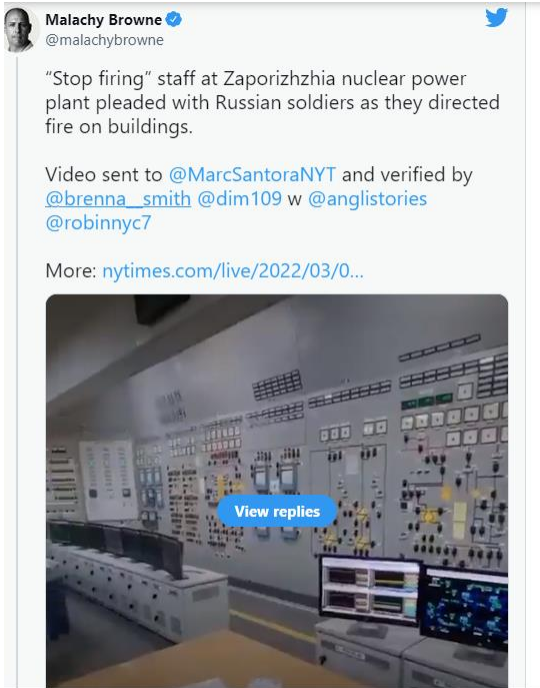
The chilling message, captured from inside the plant’s control room on a mobile phone, came as new evidence emerged of shelling just yards from Europe’s biggest reactor in the south-east of Ukraine.

A separate recording shows a walkway in the heart of the nuclear complex having suffered minor damage after being hit by two missiles. The strike likely came early on Friday morning, when fighting on the outskirts of the town of Enerhodar, where the plant is based, was fiercest.

The imposing structure housing Reactor 2 can be seen momentarily through the shattered glass in the second recording. A spent and mangled munition which crashed through the footbridge’s ceiling lies on the ground.

The clips, both posted on the New York Times website, emerged after it was confirmed on Friday that a building used for training just 1,500ft from one of the plant’s six nuclear reactors had caught alight as the advancing Russian troops shelled Ukrainian ground forces.

Despite the blaze adding to fears the war [could trigger a nuclear catastrophe as devastating as Chernobyl](#), firefighters managed to extinguish the flames. International monitors said there was no indication radiation levels had leaked or increased.



The new clips have underlined again how perilous and astonishing it is for a nuclear power plant to be [in the midst of pitched modern warfare](#).

The plant is believed to be the largest nuclear reactor in Europe, as well as among the top 10 biggest in the world. It was brought online in the mid-1980s and is now made up of six of the country's 15 reactors, which generate nearly half of Ukraine’s electricity. It also has a storage depot for nuclear spent fuel.

The [Russian troops seized the sprawling complex](#) on Friday following fierce night-time fighting, which culminated in the fire.

Security camera footage filmed the training building on fire, following an exchange of gunfire, munitions and a flare lighting up the night sky.

The Russian government contacted the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear watchdog, to

insist that “work on providing nuclear safety and monitoring radiation” at Zaporizhzhya was “in normal mode of operation”.



The new footage of the control room shows banks of computers, some on desks and others on cabinets, in front of the vertical panels where the controls and indicators for the reactors, their cooling systems and alarms are located.

The video is believed to have been filmed as the Ukrainians took on the Russians as they [advanced north through the country](#).

The control room is the nerve centre for the plant where the operators and supervisors, the most senior personnel in any plant, are based. The clip shows three staff in the room as the Tannoy message is heard in the background.

On two occasions, the announcer warned that the fighting is “endangering the safety of the entire world”.

During the other one-minute clip in the walkway, the man holding the phone films two holes in the roof, as well as a smashed window.

Upon seeing the first shell on the ground, he says: “It’s empty. There’s nothing there.” Then, as he walks down the passageway, he spots two holes in the ceiling.

“Another shell hit here. It probably went through the window,” he adds.

Masonry and broken glass can be seen on the ground.

Smoke billows from a building at the entrance to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - Reuters

While a direct strike on the plant is unlikely, experts have expressed concerns safety could be compromised due to the increased risk of an accident if staff struggle to reach the plant or there was a prolonged interruption in the power supply needed to keep the fuel rods cooled.

Although nuclear power plants have diesel generators as back-up power supplies, they also rely on deliveries of fuel - which could potentially be interrupted during fierce fighting.