

Denmark bans all civil drone flights after more sightings at military sites

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Denmark is banning all civil drones this week ahead of two European summits after a third incursion of unmanned aircraft over various military locations in the Scandinavian country.

Denmark's armed forces said that drones had been spotted over several sensitive military sites yesterday, a day after similar sightings were confirmed at two air bases — including the country's largest military location and home to its F-16 and F-35 fighter jets — as well as an army regiment headquarters.

The Danish government responded by banning drones from today to Friday of this week. Copenhagen is due to host an informal summit of EU leaders on Wednesday and a meeting of the European Political Community, that also includes countries such as the UK, Turkey and Ukraine.

"Our airspace has not been violated like we've seen in recent days since the second world war . . . It is clear that we take it seriously," transport minister Thomas Danielsen told broadcaster TV2 as he announced the ban.

Denmark has been on edge since unauthorised drones were first spotted last Monday night, closing down Copenhagen airport for four hours.

Since then, drones have been sighted at other regional airports and in the past few days at multiple military locations, a move experts have called humiliating for a country that has been a vocal supporter of Ukraine and a strong proponent of re-arming Europe.

Denmark has accepted offers of anti-drone technology from neighbouring Sweden and Germany, while Nato has sent at least one extra frigate specialising in air defence to Copenhagen ahead of next week's twin European summits.

The informal EU summit is set to discuss the establishment of a so-called "drone wall" on Europe's eastern flank, designed better to repel Russia after a series of aerial incursions into Nato territories, including drones over Poland and Romania and Russian MiG-31 fighters entering Estonian airspace.

The drone sightings in Denmark — which have also spread to neighbouring Norway and its main air base, home to F-35 fighters, as well as Sweden — are different from the blatant Russian incursions. The culprits behind the Danish drones remain unidentified, but they are assumed to have been launched locally, possibly from nearby ships.

But Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen refused to rule out Russian involvement in the initial sightings in Copenhagen and has since called Russia "the primary enemy of Europe", trying to "destabilise" the continent.

Denmark has in recent weeks announced a number of arms deals, including buying new air defence systems and long-range missiles, capable of hitting Russia. The country has also become the first in Europe to allow the building of a factory by a Ukrainian defence company.

The facility, set up after the government overrode dozens of laws to speed up its construction, will be situated near one of Denmark's main air bases and will produce propellants for rockets.