

# EU condemns Russia after frigate fires flares at Danish helicopter

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**Jon Henley**

*Europe correspondent*

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A Russian warship fired emergency flares at a Danish helicopter in the Baltic Sea and an Italian Nato fighter jet shot down a drone carrying an explosive device over Lithuania amid a spate of what EU members described as “reckless” Russian activity.

Poland also scrambled fighter jets “due to the activity of Russian jet-powered unmanned aerial vehicles”, the day after Polish security forces retrieved a suspected Russian drone adrift in its waters.

German authorities, meanwhile, were searching for more debris yesterday from a drone believed to have crashed on Monday near Lake Steinhude, just under a mile from the Bundeswehr’s airbase in Wunstorf.

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said the incidents were “part of a broader pattern of Russian aggression and provocation against Europe testing our readiness and our resolve”. She added: “Russia will find our resolve only growing stronger.”

The Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, also condemned “reckless action from Russia towards

Denmark’s military”, adding: “Russian actions are meant to intimidate and divide. They will not succeed. We will not waver.”

Denmark’s armed forces said that one of its air force’s helicopters “was fired at with flares during a routine photographic operation of a Russian frigate” which was in international waters off southern Denmark.



▲ Ursula von der Leyen said Russia was testing Europe’s readiness

The frigate had fired “two flares towards the helicopter” on Monday, the military’s statement said. “One of the flares passed at close range to the helicopter.”

No warning or radio contact was given before the flares were fired and they came within “a matter of metres” of the helicopter, said the Danish defence minister, Jeppe Bruus Christensen. He added that the helicopter had been following standard procedures to photograph the vessel, an operation carried out “many times” in the past.

The Danish foreign minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, said he had summoned the Russian ambassador over the incident. “Russia is gradually shifting the boundary for what they consider acceptable behaviour,” he said.

“This is completely unacceptable

and could have put human lives at risk. That is something we cannot accept,” he said. The Danish straits are the main sea route in and out of the Baltic Sea for commercial and military shipping.

Russia’s ambassador to Denmark, Vladimir Barbin, said it was “not the first time” Danish helicopters had “carried out dangerous manoeuvres near Russian warships”, accusing this one of “provocative actions” against the Russian frigate.

Lithuania’s president, Gitanas Nausėda, said a drone that “entered Lithuanian airspace was destroyed by Nato fighter jets”, adding: “With Russia intensifying its aggression against Ukraine, such readiness is vital for our region.”

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*Additional reporting*

**Agence France-Presse and Reuters**