

Russia's hybrid war is 'only the beginning'

Danish PM says Moscow aims to divide Europe and calls for deeper talks on how to respond

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Nato must step up its response to Russia's hybrid war, which is "only the beginning" and is aimed at dividing Europe, Denmark's prime minister has warned.

Mette Frederiksen told the Financial Times there was a need to discuss "more deeply" in the western defence alliance how to respond to Moscow's hostile acts, from airspace violations to sabotage.

"We need to be very open about [the fact] that it probably is only the beginning," she said. "We need all Europeans to understand what is at stake and what's going on. When there are drones or cyber attacks, the idea is to divide us."

Drones of unknown origin shut down Denmark's main airport and several regional ones and were spotted over multiple military locations last week in what diplomats have called a wake-up call for Europe.

The sightings came after Russia repeatedly breached allied airspace with manned and unmanned aircraft this month, prompting Nato fighter jets to shoot down drones over Poland in the first direct encounter between the western defence alliance and Russian assets since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In response, Nato launched Eastern Sentry, a military patrolling mission in eastern Europe involving additional air and ground systems from allies including Denmark, France, the UK and Germany.

Western intelligence has also pointed to Moscow for sabotage attempts over the past year, including arson attacks, the cutting of undersea cables and cyber attacks in Germany, Poland, the Baltic states and the UK. Copenhagen has not established who was behind its drone sightings, but Frederiksen has said Europe's "primary enemy" is Russia.

Increased European spending on anti-drone and cyber defence equipment alone would not suffice, she warned. "The idea of a hybrid war is to threaten us, to divide us, to destabilise us. To use drones one day, cyber attacks the next day, sabotage on the third day. So this



Keeping watch: snipers of the Danish police look out from a roof as they secure the venue for an informal meeting of EU leaders in Copenhagen yesterday

Emil Helms/Ritzau Scanpix/
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will not end only by [boosting] capabilities," she said.

Frederiksen this week welcomed European leaders for two summits on bolstering security and increasing support to Ukraine. Yesterday was an informal meeting of EU leaders, while Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte will today take part in a broader discussion with European leaders, including from Ukraine and the UK.

Proposals included expediting national and collective investments in air defences, including a "drone wall" in countries bordering Russia or Ukraine in response to the recent incidents. Denmark has said it would urgently buy new anti-drone capabilities after failing to detect or disable the airborne objects.

The US and several European countries — including Germany, France, Sweden, Norway and Finland — have offered anti-drone capabilities to Copenhagen.

One Danish official said receiving technology from neighbouring Sweden, its historic rival, was "particularly humiliating". Frederiksen disputed

that, saying it was "not only in Denmark that we have these episodes".

Diplomats said they were confident of "broad consensus" among leaders, with formal sign-off at a follow-up summit in Brussels later this month. EU officials working on joint funding for the "drone wall" said they were aware of gripes from western and southern Europe that the bulk of such spending would benefit eastern and northern countries.

In the run-up to the summit, the European Commission was rushing to allay concerns raised by France and other countries about the use of Russia's frozen assets for a €140bn loan to Ukraine, for fear it will add to their national debt burden. Under the commission's "reparations loan" proposal, Russian assets that have matured into cash at the central securities depository Euroclear would be used to issue the loan.

But the scheme would need to be covered by national guarantees from participating EU countries — with significant implications for highly indebted countries such as France. Nei-

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ther the size nor the distribution of these guarantees have yet been agreed. Paris wanted to ensure the scheme complied with international law and that the underlying assets were not seized, that it "provides fair risk-sharing, and that it does not weigh on our public finances", one French diplomat said.

In a bid to convince Paris, commission president Ursula von der Leyen said on Tuesday she would ensure "part of the loan is used for procurement in Europe and with Europe".

Denmark is under pressure not just from Russia but also its supposed main ally, the US. President Donald Trump has said he wants to take control of the Arctic island of Greenland from Denmark. Frederiksen said she was "really proud of how Greenland has been able to handle this difficult situation". She said Denmark wanted to deepen its co-operation with all Arctic states apart from Russia when it came to security around Greenland.

Additional reporting by Paola Tamma in Brussels and Leila Abboud in Paris