

Germany blames Putin over airport attack

Berlin says recent strike on cargo plane at Leipzig was carried out 'on behalf of Russian state authorities'

By James Rothwell

GERMANY has blamed Russia for attacking Leipzig airport with an explosive drone last month.

Alexander Dobrindt, the German interior minister, said the attack on a Ukrainian cargo plane with an explosives-laden drone was carried out "on behalf of Russian state authorities".

In response, Johann Wadephul, the foreign minister, announced the closure of Russia's consulate in Bonn and the Russia House cultural centre, a suspected Kremlin hideout in Berlin.

He unveiled further restrictions on the entry of Russian citizens into Germany and additional surveillance of suspected Russian agents operating in the country. The Russian ambassador would also be summoned, he said.

Andy Burnham, the Prime Minister, said the UK "stands in full solidarity with Germany following Russia's egregious and reckless attack in Leipzig".

The Aug 4 drone attack was one of the most brazen acts of sabotage that Russia has launched in Europe.

Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia has been waging a so-called hybrid war campaign on Germany and other Nato allies in revenge for their military support for Ukraine.

Suspected Russian agents in Germany have tried to assassinate German defence executives, burn down arms factories and spy on military facilities linked to Kyiv.

Yesterday's measures fall short of previous signalling from Berlin that it would issue a major response to the Leipzig attack, and potentially its strongest countermeasures yet.

Germany's announcement came just hours after unknown attackers launched several rockets at a power station in the eastern state of Brandenburg. Several power lines were damaged in the attack, which caused a "brief interruption of service", local officials said, but nobody was injured.

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the Brandenburg attack. Pro-Russian agents and German Left-wing extremist groups have previously been implicated in similar incidents.

Mr Wadephul went on to announce "further intelligence measures" against Russia without giving details. Berlin passed reforms over the summer giving its spies greater powers to "hack back" in the fight with saboteurs and carry out their own sabotage missions abroad.

In response, Russia's foreign ministry announced yesterday evening that it would "respond to all anti-Russian actions". The statement hinted that Moscow would respond in kind by closing German consulates and culture centres inside Russia.



Narendra Modi meets Vladimir Putin in Kyrgyzstan, above. The drone that was found at Leipzig airport laden with Semtex, right



ing German consulates and culture centres inside Russia.

The European Union's top diplomat said yesterday such attacks such as that on Leipzig would not deter the bloc's leaders from supporting Ukraine.

"Russia is hitting Europe with a wave of increasingly hybrid attacks," Kaja Kallas, EU foreign policy chief, said after a meeting with EU defence ministers in Ireland. "Russia wants to scare us away from supporting Ukraine. They will not succeed."

Mark Rutte, the Nato secretary-general, said he fully supported Germany in choosing to name Russia as the architect of the Leipzig attack. "Nato stands

in full solidarity with Germany after the Russian hybrid attack in Leipzig on 14 August," Mr Rutte said in a post on X.

Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, also said that the bloc stood in "full solidarity" with Berlin.

In a major intervention, Stefan Thumann, a high-profile German defence entrepreneur, announced this week that Moscow and Berlin were "at war."

Mr Thumann told the Axel Springer Global Reporters Network, which includes *The Telegraph*, that Russian acts of sabotage in Germany were "act[s] of war... controlled and co-ordinated here by the Russian armed

'Russia is hitting Europe with a wave of increasingly hybrid attacks. They want to scare us'

forces". "Germany and Russia are at war," said Mr Thumann, the head of defence firm Donaustahl, which supplies drones to Ukraine.

He is living under 24-hour protection owing to a Russian plot to poison him.

US intelligence reported at the start of last month that Russia could attack a Nato country within weeks to test the alliance's resolve. Western intelligence sources recently said that Russia had launched a fresh wave of attacks on European armaments factories under the guise of plausible deniability.

The Kremlin has been recruiting gang members to sabotage defence manufacturers to test Nato's resolve.

Stop the war
Modi warns Putin

Narendra Modi told Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine during an uncomfortable meeting in Kyrgyzstan.

The Indian prime minister said Moscow should move from "endless war to an end to the war" as the Russian leader looked at the floor and tapped his feet.

Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24 2022 and has been at war with its neighbour for 1,650 days - longer than the First World War.

India, despite being a key trading partner, is one of the few allies to tell Putin to end the war to his face.

At a press conference before the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Kyrgyzstan, Mr Modi said: "Every day that the war continues, humanity is, in effect, set back a step, whilst every step towards peace gives all of humanity real hope for peace."