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 VIEW FROM BRUSSELS

# Russian drone attacks? A dangerous propaganda battle is raging in the skies over Europe

Russia is testing the West with drones and fighter jets, according to incidents in Poland, Estonia and Denmark. But it's not that simple – the EU and NATO exploit the incidents for their own purposes. A column.

Eric Bonse

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EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen  
Pascal Bastien/AP

**H**ave what [Polska](#), [Estonia](#) And [Denmark](#) mean? Not much at first glance. All three countries belong to [EU](#) And [Nato](#), but geographically and politically they are far apart. Nevertheless, recently they have often been mentioned in the same breath – as examples of the „hybrid war“ that [Russland](#) leads against Europe.

This is what the President of the EU Commission believes [Ursula von der Leyen](#), to discern a pattern of Russian provocations. Whether unknown flying objects at the airport in the Danish capital Copenhagen, Russian fighter jets over the Baltic Sea near Estonia or drones in Poland – everywhere she sees the long arm of [Vladimir Putin](#).

**NATO Secretary General Rutte: „No immediate danger“**

There are also worrying parallels in NATO. The incident over the Estonian Baltic Sea coast is part of a series of Russian actions that „are escalating, risking misjudgments and endangering lives“, said after an emergency meeting of the NATO Council. Putin was apparently aiming to test the West.

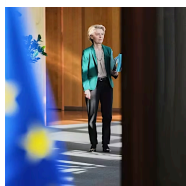
However, if you take a closer look, you could come to completely different conclusions. Maybe the main thing is to exploit the incidents for propaganda purposes?

This evil suspicion arose in Poland after two dozen Russian drones were reported there. First it turned out that the drones were not carrying weapons. Then the government in Warsaw had to admit that it was a Polish interceptor missile that had covered a house – and not a Russian drone.



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The situation in Estonia is even more dubious. Three Russian MIG-31s are said to have entered the airspace there. However, it is impossible to tell from the maps published by the government how serious the incident was, the flight route was straight, the MIGs gave the capital Tallinn a wide berth.

The Russians were intercepted as soon as they entered Estonian airspace, NATO says. Because they flew over the Baltic Sea and did not carry air-to-surface missiles, they posed no threat to the population. There was „no immediate danger“, even NATO Secretary General says [Mark Rutte](#).

Ultimately, it was a routine case that occurs again and again in the skies over Europe. Estonian security expert Eerik-Niiles Kross points out that there have been more than three dozen similar incidents since 2014. This time the overflight took an unusually long time – but there was no reason to panic.

Why are the incidents exaggerated? In Poland there was talk of a Russian attack and in Estonia of an escalation. The „most serious attack on critical infrastructure to date“ was

reported in Denmark – the drones at Copenhagen Airport disappeared without a trace without causing any damage.

### **West falls into alarmism: danger of war!**

If Putin were to be behind everything for which there is currently no evidence, his „test“ would have shown one thing above all: how helpless and hysterical the West reacts. Instead of calmly checking the facts and examining the context, the media and politicians immediately assume the „worst case“ – danger of war! This is worrying.

However, it would be even more worrying if it turned out that the incidents were being artificially exaggerated in order to create a mood and prepare for military action. US President Donald Trump has called for Russian aircraft to be shot down if they enter NATO airspace again.

Meanwhile, EU leader von der Leyen is planning a „drone wall“ for the „Eastern European frontline states“. This plan is also justified by the incidents in Poland, Estonia and Denmark. If it is implemented, the threat of war is by no means averted – it is likely to become even more dangerous. And Europe would be separated by a new „heavenly“ wall.

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