

BELARUS BALLOON INCURSIONS: LITHUANIA DECLARES EMERGENCY; EU CALLS IT A HYBRID ATTACK

Smuggling balloons launched from Belarus repeatedly forced closures of Vilnius airport from October 2025, affecting more than 350 flights and about 51,000 passengers; Lithuania closed its Belarus border crossings in late October. On 1 December the European Commission President called it a 'hybrid attack by the Lukashenko regime' and the EEAS summoned Belarus's chargé d'affaires; on 9 December Vilnius declared a national emergency, giving the army extra powers on the border. The European Parliament recorded around 700 balloon incidents and some 200 drone intrusions in 2025.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
BEYOND UKRAINE
AS OF 20 OCT 2026

DEGREE OF PROOF

OFFICIAL ATTRIBUTION

A government, a prosecutor, the EU, NATO or a UN body has formally named Russia, its services or its state-backed forces. This is a position of that authority, not a verdict.

WHO ESTABLISHED IT

Named: Belarus (Lukashenko regime); the European Parliament also names Russia. Lithuanian Government (PM Inga Ruginienė: 'Belarusian hybrid attack', 9 Dec 2025); European Commission President von der Leyen and EEAS demarche (1 Dec 2025); HR/VP statement on behalf of the EU (29 Oct 2025); European Parliament resolution P10_TA(2025)0345 (18 Dec 2025) condemning Belarus's hybrid attacks as 'part of a broader Russia-led strategy to undermine the EU'.

LATEST

On 15 Dec 2025 the EU Council broadened the Belarus sanctions regime with a criterion covering hybrid activities, citing the balloon incursions; on 26 Feb 2026 it extended Belarus measures to 28 Feb 2027. Belarus has also held Lithuanian lorries and banned Lithuanian and Polish trucks.

LINK TO THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

The European Parliament places the campaign within a Russia-led strategy against the EU; Belarus is Russia's co-belligerent ally in the war against Ukraine.

SOURCES

- A** Council of the EU – Belarus: Council broadens scope of sanctions regime to cover hybrid activities against EU member states · 2025-12-15
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- A** Council of the EU – Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Belarus' hybrid actions at the EU external border · 2025-10-29
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/10/29/statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-belarus-hybrid-actions-at-the-eu-external-border/>
- A** European Parliament – Resolution on the continuous Belarusian hybrid attacks against Lithuania (P10_TA(2025)0345) · 2025-12-18
https://data.europarl.europa.eu/distribution/doc/TA-10-2025-0345_en.pdf
- C** AP via ABC News – Lithuania declares emergency over security risks posed by balloons from Belarus · 2025-12-09
<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lithuania-declares-national-emergency-security-risks-posed-balloons-128232338>
- C** CNN via KEYT – Balloon incursions are 'hybrid attack' on Lithuania's airspace, EU says · 2025-12-01
<https://keyt.com/news/national-world/cnn-world/2025/12/01/balloon-incursions-are-hybrid-attack-on-lithuanias-airspace-eu-says-as-it-summons-belarusian-representative/>

WHAT WE ASK OF MEMBER STATES

- Name the instrumentalisation of migrants as a hybrid attack by the state that organises it.
- Support the EU and frontline states in protecting their borders while respecting international law.
- Sanction the officials and networks that move people to the border.

