

# European powers escalate war threats against Russia after drones shot down over Poland

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11 September 2025

On Wednesday, Polish and Dutch fighter jets shot down a group of drones allegedly flying over Polish territory, in the first known instance of a NATO member directly firing on Russian military assets.

“This situation brings us closer to open conflict than we have been since World War II,” Prime Minister Donald Tusk told the Polish parliament yesterday. His government has requested consultations under Article 4 of the NATO Treaty.

Article 4 obliges NATO members to discuss joint defence measures if a member state feels its security is threatened. It has only been invoked seven times in the 76-year history of the military alliance. It is the precursor to Article 5, which obliges NATO countries to provide mutual assistance in the event of war.

If Tusk and his NATO colleagues are convinced that an open conflict with Russia, the world’s second-largest nuclear-armed power, is imminent, why are they not pulling out all the political and diplomatic stops to prevent such a catastrophe?

Even during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when the world was closer than ever before and since to a nuclear showdown, US President John F. Kennedy took enormous risks. But he ultimately prevailed over the hawks in his own military and achieved a diplomatic solution.

Today, there is not a single voice of moderation among NATO’s leading representatives. No sooner had it been reported that Polish and Dutch fighter jets and German Patriot missiles, with the support of Italian AWACS surveillance aircraft, had shot down drones in Polish airspace than they began to outdo each other in war rhetoric.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte accused Russia of violating Polish airspace, saying: “Whether it was intentional or not, it is absolutely reckless, it is absolutely dangerous.” European Union (EU) Foreign Affairs Representative and former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja

Kallas claimed that everything pointed to “the most serious violation of European airspace by Russia since the start of the war being intentional and not accidental.”

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen condemned Russia in a speech to the European Parliament for the “reckless and unprecedented violation of Polish airspace.” She pledged €6 billion to Ukraine from the interest on frozen Russian assets for the production of its own drones.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned “the egregious and unprecedented violation of Polish and NATO airspace by Russian drones” as “deeply concerning” and an “extremely reckless move.” He assured Tusk of Britain’s support.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius claimed in the Bundestag that over 19 drones had “obviously been sent on their way from Belarusian territory.” There was “definitely no reason to suspect that these were course correction errors.” The drones had “obviously been deliberately set on this course.” He accused the Russian armed forces of constant threats and provocations and promised to send a message at the NATO consultations.

The circumstances surrounding the incident remain completely unclear. Neither the number nor the origin of the drones is known. While Tusk spoke of 19 drones entering Polish airspace, only three or four were reported to have been shot down. Even Polish President Karol Nawrocki, a right-wing hardliner, had to admit that he did not expect to have complete information about the events for another 48 hours.

The Russian Defence Ministry denied any intention to hit targets in Poland and said it was ready to consult with the Polish Defence Ministry on the matter. In the past, drones from the war in Ukraine have strayed into Poland without NATO accusing Russia of any intent.

Pavel Muravyeika, deputy defence minister of Belarus, which borders Poland, said drones had accidentally

entered Polish airspace because their navigation system had been disrupted. Belarus itself shot down drones over its territory because they had lost their bearings. Disrupting GPS signals is a widespread weapon in the war in Ukraine.

But even if everything NATO claims were true, a few drones do not pose a serious military threat to the military alliance. Rather, the circumstances suggest that the European NATO powers prepared and partially staged the action to justify further military measures against Russia and demonstrate their ability to carry them out on their own.

Since US President Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, the European powers have been waiting for such an opportunity. They concluded from the Alaska summit that the US can no longer be relied upon and are taking increasingly aggressive action against Russia. They have massively increased their financial and military support for Ukraine, are encouraging President Zelensky to attack targets deep inside Russia and are planning to send their own troops to Ukraine.

In doing so, they are moving ever closer to a catastrophe that threatens the survival of humanity. This madness follows an international pattern. Political crises and violence are escalating everywhere. Democracy, social security, human rights and international law are being trampled underfoot.

In the US, President Trump has just moved to rename the Department of Defense the Department of War—and for once, he was not lying. In order to “Make America Great Again”—i.e., to defend the profits of the American oligarchs—he is covering the whole world with punitive tariffs and threats of war. Domestically, he is establishing an authoritarian dictatorship: The ICE Gestapo hunts down migrants, and the National Guard and military are sent to large cities to suppress “social unrest,” i.e., strikes, protests and any form of social and political resistance.

The Zionist regime of Israel flouts all legal and moral norms, destroys the Gaza Strip with its 2 million inhabitants, attacks Qatar with impunity and is supported in this by the US and the EU. Anyone who protests against this is persecuted and arrested as an alleged “antisemite.”

Europe is following the same path as the US. The reallocation of hundreds of billions to rearmament and war, the repayment of exploding debts and the wealth of a few are incompatible with social equality and democracy. With the same ruthlessness with which the European powers are escalating the war against Russia, they are

cracking down on their own working class. War and class war are two sides of the same coin.

In the founding program of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky wrote in 1938, on the eve of World War II:

Under the increasing tension of capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe) must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions. The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914.

The crisis of capitalism and imperialist antagonisms have once again reached the same limit today. This is the reason for the escalation of the war against Russia. There is no support for this among the broad masses of the population, and resistance is growing among the working class against layoffs, wage cuts, social spending cuts and dictatorship.

This explosive opposition must free itself from the influence of the trade unions and all parties—right-wing and supposedly “left-wing”—that defend capitalism. Only an independent movement of the international working class, fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society, can halt the descent into war, dictatorship and poverty.

The Socialist Equality Parties and the International Committee of the Fourth International fight for this perspective.



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