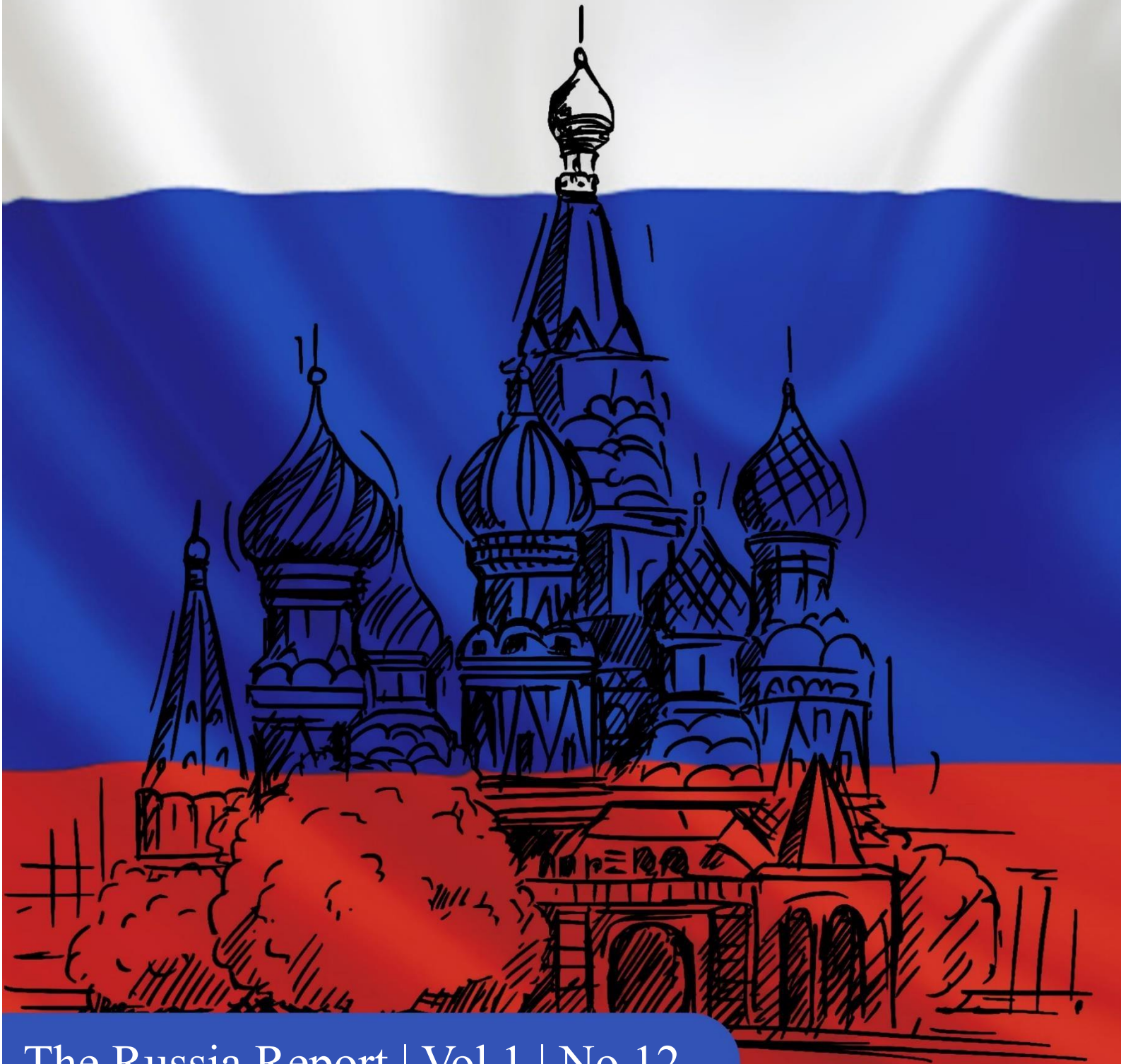


CLAWS Newsletter



The Russia Report | Vol 1 | No 12

by Anusua Ganguly

- **Russian Drones in European Skies**

Russia Denies Intentional Airspace Violation Amid Polish Drone Accusations

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), [RT](#), September 10, 2025

Russia's Foreign Ministry has strongly rejected allegations that its drones intentionally violated Polish airspace during a recent military strike on Ukraine. The statement, issued on September 10, references a prior announcement by the Russian Defence Ministry, which asserted that all targets were within Ukrainian territory and that the drones used had a maximum range of under 700 kilometres — insufficient to reach Poland from their launch points.

The Ministry criticized Poland for spreading what it called “myths” in an effort to escalate the Ukrainian crisis, and pointed out that NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte acknowledged a lack of clear evidence regarding intent, saying only that an investigation is ongoing following Poland's invocation of Article 4 of the NATO Treaty.

Despite denying responsibility, Moscow expressed openness to dialogue, stating that the Russian Defence Ministry is prepared to engage in consultations with its Polish counterpart to fully clarify the situation. The Foreign Ministry also offered support for these discussions, emphasising the need to prevent further escalation.

The incident, which marks the first confirmed instance of NATO air defence engaging aerial targets during the Ukraine conflict, has sparked wide international concern and intensified scrutiny of NATO-Russia relations along the alliance's eastern border.

Poland Downs Russian Drones, Marking First NATO Military Action in Ukraine War

[Reuters](#), September 11, 2025

In a major escalation during the Ukraine conflict, Poland shot down multiple drones that violated its airspace, becoming the first NATO member known to use force during the war. The operation, supported by Dutch F-35s, Italian AWACS, and NATO refuelling aircraft, took place overnight on September 10. Officials confirmed 19 objects entered Polish airspace during a Russian attack on Ukraine; several were intercepted.

One drone struck a home in Wryki-Wola, destroying the roof. Moscow denied responsibility, claiming the drones came from Ukrainian territory. Poland, however, activated NATO's Article 4, calling for urgent alliance consultations, with leaders including the U.S., France, and Germany condemning the incident.

President Trump spoke with Polish President Karol Nawrocki and called the drone incursion “a serious violation,” while NATO chief Mark Rutte labelled it “absolutely reckless.” A senior source suggested Russia may be probing NATO's air defences near key hubs like Rzeszow airport.

Ukraine's President Zelenskiy called for a joint European air defence system, and the UN Security Council is set to discuss the incident. While not considered an act of war, the attack

signals heightened risks for NATO's eastern flank and is likely to accelerate military coordination among allies.

NATO Strengthens Defences After Russian Drone Incident Over Poland

[BBC](#), September 12, 2025

NATO has begun reinforcing its eastern borders following what Poland described as an unprecedented incursion by Russian drones into its airspace. The incident—during which three drones were shot down and others crashed across eastern Poland—marks the most serious violation of NATO territory since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in 2022.

In response, several NATO members have pledged military support. The Netherlands will send air defence systems, artillery, and 300 troops, while the Czech Republic is dispatching helicopters and 100 soldiers. France is deploying Rafale fighter jets, and Germany is expanding its air policing mission. Lithuania will host a German brigade and receive earlier warnings on potential Russian strikes near its borders.

Poland invoked NATO's Article 4 and called for a UN Security Council meeting scheduled for Friday. President Karol Nawrocki and Prime Minister Donald Tusk labelled the incident a "deliberate provocation," though NATO officials, including Supreme Commander Alexus Grynkewich, say investigations are ongoing.

Tensions are further inflamed by the start of large-scale joint military exercises—Zapad 2025—between Russia and Belarus. Poland will close its border with Belarus in response, citing national security concerns.

President Zelensky has called for a joint European air defence system to counter increasing aerial threats across the region.

Romania Reports Russian Drone Breach, Second NATO Airspace Violation in a Week

[BBC](#), September 14, 2025

Romania has confirmed that a Russian drone entered its airspace during a Russian strike on Ukrainian targets near the Danube, marking the second NATO member to report such an incursion within days. According to Romania's Defence Ministry, two Romanian F-16s were already airborne monitoring border activity when the drone was detected approximately 20 km southwest of Chilia Veche. It eventually disappeared from radar without flying over populated areas or posing an immediate threat.

The breach follows Poland's interception of multiple Russian drones earlier in the week, prompting heightened NATO vigilance across its eastern flank. In response, Poland and its allies have activated preventive air operations and placed air defences on high alert. The Czech Republic has deployed Mi-171S helicopters to Poland for additional support.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the Romanian incident "an obvious expansion of the war," rejecting claims that it could have been accidental. EU foreign policy

chief Kaja Kallas labelled the breach “unacceptable,” while Belarus claimed drone deviations into Polish airspace were caused by signal jamming.

U.S. President Donald Trump, continuing to push for conditional sanctions against Moscow, said he is “ready” to increase pressure on Russia if NATO allies curb imports of Russian energy.

Russia Dismisses Romanian Drone Breach as "Kyiv's Provocation"

[Embassy of the Russian Federation in Romania](#), [The Hindu](#), September 15, 2025

Russia has rejected Romania's accusations of airspace violation, calling the alleged drone intrusion a "deliberate provocation" orchestrated by Ukraine. The Russian Embassy in Bucharest issued a statement late Sunday, following the Romanian Foreign Ministry's summons of Ambassador Vladimir Lipayev over the incident. Lipayev called the claims “unfounded,” saying Romania failed to provide “concrete and convincing” evidence of Russian involvement.

Romanian defence officials reported on Saturday that two F-16 fighter jets were scrambled after detecting a drone near the border with Ukraine, amid a broader Russian air assault on Ukrainian targets. The drone was tracked briefly in Romanian airspace before disappearing from radar. The Defence Ministry noted the object did not pose a direct threat to civilians, nor did it fly over populated areas.

While drone fragments have previously landed in Romanian territory during Russian strikes on Ukrainian port infrastructure, this is the first time Bucharest has formally accused Moscow of an active airspace breach. Romanian officials have described the incident as a “new security challenge.”

Russia, meanwhile, maintains the intrusion aligns with a pattern of what it calls “Ukrainian provocations,” aimed at dragging NATO deeper into the conflict.

The diplomatic row adds further tension as NATO reinforces its eastern flank.

- **Zapad-2025 Military Drills**

India Sends Contingent to Russia for Multilateral Exercise ZAPAD 2025

[Indian Ministry of Defence](#), September 9, 2025

An Indian Armed Forces contingent has departed for Russia to participate in the multilateral military exercise ZAPAD 2025, held at the Mulino Training Ground in Nizhny from September 10 to 16.

The 65-member contingent includes 57 Indian Army personnel, 7 from the Indian Air Force, and 1 from the Indian Navy. The Army unit is led by a battalion of the KUMAON Regiment, with supporting troops from various arms and services.

ZAPAD 2025 aims to enhance military interoperability and cooperation among participating nations. The exercise will focus on joint company-level operations in open terrain, covering areas such as tactical planning, special arms skills, and counter-terrorism operations.

The deployment provides a vital opportunity for the Indian forces to train in a multinational combat environment, share best practices, and integrate emerging technologies in joint operations. India's participation underscores its strategic intent to strengthen defence ties with Russia and engage constructively in multilateral security platforms.

This engagement comes amid heightened geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and along NATO's eastern flank, offering India a platform to observe and learn from evolving military doctrines in complex, real-world scenarios.

Kremlin Says Zapad-2025 Drills Are Routine, Not Aimed at NATO

[TASS](#), September 11, 2025

As Zapad-2025 military exercises continue near NATO's eastern flank, the Kremlin has sought to ease regional tensions, calling the drills "routine" and "not directed at third countries." Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov emphasized that the joint Russia-Belarus exercises are aimed at enhancing coordination within the Union State and pose no threat to others.

Running from September 12–16, the drills include simulated responses to airstrikes, counter-sabotage operations, and deployment of advanced systems—including the new Oreshnik medium-range ballistic missile. Notably, Russian forces are also practicing the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons.

Despite Moscow's assurances, NATO countries remain wary. Poland has launched its Iron Defender exercise in direct response, involving 34,000 troops and 600 military vehicles. Prime Minister Donald Tusk cited Zapad-2025 as a "provocative show of force" and announced the temporary closure of Poland's border with Belarus starting September 12.

The simultaneous drills reflect escalating military posturing amid rising East-West tensions following recent drone incursions into Polish and Romanian airspace—events both countries blame on Russia.

While the Kremlin insists its actions are transparent and defensive, NATO states are reinforcing their eastern defences, viewing Zapad-2025 as more than just routine. The coming days will be critical in assessing whether these parallel drills remain controlled—or risk further escalation.

Russia and Belarus Launch Zapad-2025 Drills Amid NATO Tensions

[Reuters](#), September 12, 2025

Russia and Belarus launched the Zapad-2025 joint military exercises on September 12, just two days after Russian drones crossed into Polish airspace—an incident that triggered Poland to down the drones, marking NATO's first direct military engagement of the Ukraine war.

The drills, scheduled before the drone incident, span training grounds in both countries, including areas near Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. The Russian Defense Ministry said the first phase simulates repelling a NATO-like attack; the second involves restoring Union State "territorial integrity" using coalition forces.

Poland responded by closing its border with Belarus and launching its own Iron Defender exercises, involving 30,000 troops. Lithuania has also heightened border security.

Belarus claims it is conducting its drills far from NATO borders, focusing on AI-supported decision-making, drones, and electronic warfare. Major General Pavel Muraveiko emphasized the use of advanced technologies rather than direct confrontation.

Kremlin officials dismissed Western alarm as "emotional," while the U.S. and European leaders view the timing and scale as deliberate provocation. President Trump called the drone incident possibly a "mistake" but noted hopes for de-escalation.

With tensions escalating, the Zapad-2025 drills recall the 2021 exercises that preceded Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Russia and Belarus Intensify Joint Zapad-2025 Military Drills Near NATO Border

[Institute for the Study of the War](#), September 14, 2025

Russian and Belarusian forces continued extensive Zapad-2025 joint military exercises this week, conducting complex multi-domain operations with a focus on naval, aviation, and ground combat coordination. The Russian Ministry of Defense reported that forces practiced using Bal coastal missile systems and Uran cruise missiles in simulated strikes in the Barents Sea, while a Ka-27 helicopter was launched from the Severomorsk, a Udaloy-class destroyer.

The Baltic Fleet also rehearsed emergency rescue procedures for naval vessels. In the air, MiG-31 jets reportedly carried Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, while Su-34 crews simulated air strikes. Il-76 transport aircraft flew simulated deep-penetration missions, supported by Ka-52M and Mi-28NM attack helicopters.

Belarus reported additional drills, including drone warfare (FPV and quadcopters), counter-sabotage ops, river defence, satellite comms training (Kvadrat, Sprint), and command post relocations.

Footage analysed by Ukrainian OSINT group CyberBoroshno geolocated an Iskander-M missile system just 35 km from Poland's border, raising concerns amid heightened NATO tensions. Russia first deployed Iskander-M to Kaliningrad in 2018.

A prominent Russian milblogger stated that Zapad-2025 serves as direct preparation for conflict with NATO, urging that battlefield experience from Ukraine be shared with Belarus and other CSTO members.

- **Russia on Doha Strikes**

Russia Condemns Israeli Airstrikes on Doha, Calls for Restraint

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), [TASS](#), September 10, 2025

The Russian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned Israel's recent airstrikes on Doha, calling them a violation of international law and a dangerous escalation in the Middle East. The September 9 attack targeted senior Hamas figures in the Qatari capital, reportedly killing six people, including a member of Qatar's Interior Ministry, and injuring several others.

Moscow described the strikes as a breach of Qatari sovereignty and an affront to the UN Charter. The Ministry said such actions "deserve the strongest condemnation" and risk further destabilising a region already strained by nearly two years of war in Gaza.

Russia also criticised the timing of the attack, noting that Qatar plays a key mediating role in indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas. The strike, it said, appears aimed at undermining diplomatic efforts toward a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

Calling for "responsible behaviour" from all sides, the Russian government reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire and stressed the need for a political resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on established international legal frameworks.

Moscow reaffirmed its longstanding position that only a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue can bring lasting peace to the region.

Lavrov Condemns Israeli Strike on Doha, Expresses Solidarity with Qatar

[TASS](#), September 11, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov expressed deep solidarity with Qatar's leadership and citizens following the recent Israeli airstrike on Doha. In a phone call with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Lavrov extended condolences to the families of those killed and wished a swift recovery to the injured.

The September 9 strike, which targeted alleged Hamas figures in a residential area of Qatar's capital, resulted in six fatalities, including a Qatari Interior Ministry employee. Moscow has called the action a "flagrant violation of international law" and an "encroachment on the sovereignty of an independent state."

Russia's Foreign Ministry reiterated its concern that the strike undermines mediation efforts, especially as Qatar plays a pivotal role in indirect negotiations between Hamas and Israel aimed at resolving the ongoing Gaza conflict.

Lavrov's remarks follow Russia's earlier statement condemning the attack and calling for restraint, warning of broader destabilization in the Middle East. Moscow has urged all parties to prioritise diplomacy over escalation.

Qatar has yet to respond with direct retaliatory measures but has called for an emergency session at the UN Security Council to address the incident.

This development adds another layer to an already volatile regional environment, with increasing risks of spillover amid ongoing conflicts.

- **Putin in SCO**

SCO Summit Highlights: Key Agreements and Bilateral Talks

[President of Russia](#), [MEA India](#), [Anadolu Ajansi](#), [President of Iran](#), [TASS](#), September 1, 2025

At the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, member states signed several important documents, including the Tianjin Declaration and a statement marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations.

On the sidelines, President Vladimir Putin held bilateral talks with key leaders, including India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian. He also met with the leaders of Vietnam, Tajikistan, Nepal, and had brief discussions with officials from Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

In his address, President Putin praised China's chairmanship and emphasised the SCO's commitment to building a just, multipolar world based on international law, mutual respect, and non-interference. He highlighted growing cooperation across trade, energy, education, and infrastructure, with initiatives such as the SCO Development Strategy 2035 and the energy roadmap through 2030.

Putin also reiterated Russia's position on the Ukraine crisis, stressing the importance of addressing its root causes and welcoming peace efforts by China, India, and other partners.

The summit concluded with support for new SCO centers to counter extremism and drug trafficking, and Russia's readiness to host the upcoming Heads of Government meeting in Moscow.

Russia-China Talks Deepen Strategic Cooperation Across Key Sectors

[President of Russia](#), [Anadolu Ajansi](#), September 2, 2025

During President Vladimir Putin's official visit to China, Russian and Chinese delegations held high-level talks aimed at strengthening their comprehensive strategic partnership. The discussions focused on practical bilateral cooperation, global and regional affairs, and joint efforts on multilateral platforms.

The Russian delegation included senior officials such as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Deputy Prime Ministers Denis Manturov and Dmitry Chernyshenko, and heads of major ministries, agencies, banks, and state corporations including Rosatom, Roscosmos, and Rostec.

A broad package of agreements was signed, covering areas such as healthcare digitalisation, agriculture, nuclear energy, and space research. Notably, Russia's Lunar Dust Monitor will be integrated into China's Chang'e-7 mission. The two sides also agreed on a joint development

roadmap for Bolshoi Ussuriysky Island and formalised strategic energy cooperation through Gazprom and CNPC.

Further agreements were reached in higher education, science, and media collaboration, including plans to establish a Russian-Chinese Institute for Fundamental Research.

The talks concluded with a warm exchange between Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping, highlighting their shared commitment to preserving the historical legacy of World War II and promoting a just, multipolar global order. Celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of victory over fascism underscored the deep historical and strategic bonds between the two nations.

- **Russia – Ukraine War Updates**

Russian Forces Use Gas Pipelines for Third Infiltration into Kupyansk – Deep State

[Euromaiden Press](#), September 13, 2025

Russian forces have reportedly used a gas pipeline network to carry out a third infiltration operation into Kupyansk, according to Ukrainian military analysts from the DeepState project. Using electric scooters and wheeled stretchers, Russian troops navigate underground routes to minimize exposure and casualties.

Entry points are located near Lyman Pershyi, with the full route to Kupyansk taking approximately four days. Along the way, rest areas and supply points have been established to support movement. After reaching Radkivka, units move south through Russian-controlled forests and disperse within Kupyansk.

DeepState notes that Russian forces have already set up FPV drone launch positions within the city. Ukrainian forces face added complications due to civilians remaining in shared buildings, which limits effective counter strikes.

This tactic follows similar operations in Avdiivka and Sudzha, where over 100 troops infiltrated Ukrainian positions via pipelines in March 2025.

Russia's Drone Surge Overwhelms Ukraine, Marks New Phase in Warfare

[The New York Times](#), September 14, 2025

Russia has transformed drone warfare into a strategic centerpiece, now deploying over 800 drones in a single night and producing 5,000–6,000 per month in 2025. The surge follows President Vladimir Putin's prioritization of drone production, with factories, schools, and regional governments mobilized to scale operations.

This year, Moscow has launched over 34,000 drones and decoys, up nearly 9x from 2024. The one-way attack drones—many modelled on Iranian designs—are now assembled domestically and used alongside decoys and missiles to saturate Ukrainian air defenses.

Ukraine claims high interception rates, but even a small percentage breaching defenses leads to damage across dozens of cities. Russia's evolving tactics—flying drones in waves, using foam decoys, and bypassing open terrain—have complicated Ukrainian countermeasures.

Moscow's shift marks a critical evolution in drone warfare, forcing Ukraine and even NATO to confront new vulnerabilities. Analysts warn: drone saturation may define the next stage of modern conflict.

Ukrainian Troops in Kupyansk Face Collapse Amid Russian Offensive

Военное дело, September 15, 2025

Ukrainian troops in Kupyansk are facing a critical situation as Russian forces continue their offensive in the region. War correspondent Vladimir Romanov reported that Ukrainian units are in disarray, with sources admitting that “many do not understand the overall situation.”

The collapse appears linked to Kyiv's decision to withdraw reserves from Kupyansk to support other sectors, leaving the city exposed. Russian forces have taken advantage of this gap, advancing along Davidov-Luchitsky Street in the city's northwest.

Further north, near Stepovaya Novoselovka, Russian troops have made additional gains, pressing weakened Ukrainian defenses. Military channels highlight the strategic nature of these advances, which could open new opportunities for deeper operations into Kharkiv Oblast.

As Ukraine scrambles to respond, Russian forces appear to hold the initiative, steadily pushing the front line and undermining Ukrainian cohesion in this key sector.

About the Author

Anusua Ganguly is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where her study focuses on Russia and Central Asia. She holds a Master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building, and her research interests include non-traditional security threats, the role of media in conflict, and the intersection of gender with conflict and peacebuilding.



All Rights Reserved 2025 Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, archived, retained or transmitted through print, speech or electronic media without prior written approval from C L A W S. The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.