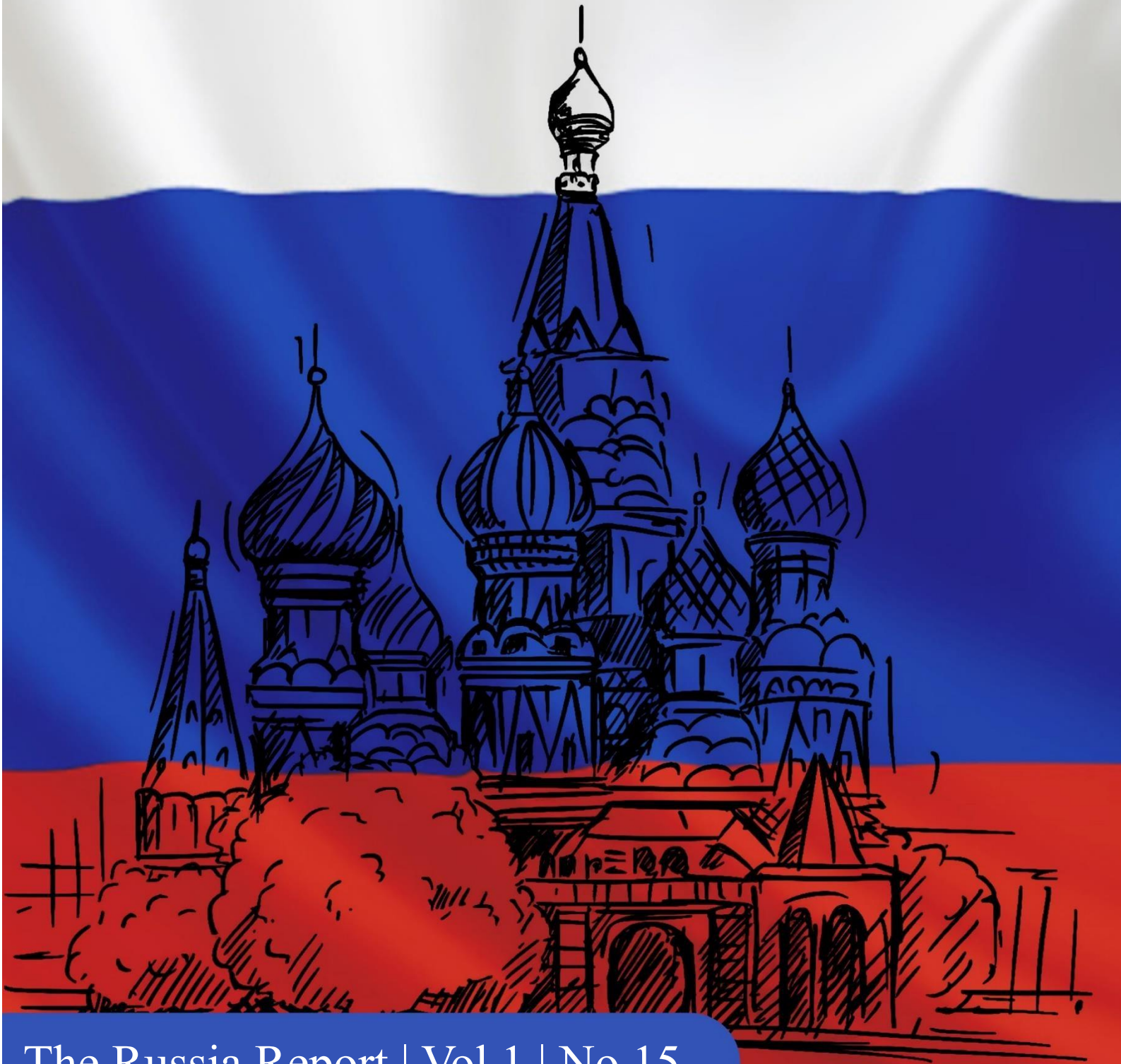


CLAWS Newsletter



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by Anusua Ganguly

- **Russia – Syria**

Syria's President Sharaa to Visit Moscow Despite Arab Summit Postponement

[The Moscow Times](#), October 10, 2025; [Welat](#), October 11, 2025; [Reuters](#), October 14, 2025

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa will visit Moscow on Wednesday, Syrian state media and official sources confirmed, despite the postponement of the Russia–Arab summit he was set to attend. According to a Syrian government source, Sharaa's agenda includes discussions on the continued operation of Russia's naval base in Tartous and its air base in Hmeimim.

The source also said Sharaa plans to formally request Russia to hand over former president Bashar al-Assad—now in Russian asylum—for trial over alleged crimes against Syrians. Sharaa, a former militant leader who led rebels into Damascus last December, established a new government following Assad's ouster.

Moscow has since sought to maintain ties with Syria's new leadership, offering diplomatic backing amid Israeli strikes on Syrian territory. In July, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani in Moscow, marking the first such visit since Assad's fall.

Putin and Syrian President Al-Sharaa Discuss Deepening Strategic Ties in Moscow

[President of Russia](#), October 15, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa in Moscow to discuss the future of political, economic, trade, and humanitarian cooperation, along with the broader Middle East situation. Senior Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, joined the talks, which continued over a working breakfast.

Putin highlighted over 80 years of Russia–Syria friendship, stressing that Moscow's engagement has always been guided by the interests of the Syrian people. He noted the growing educational links, with more than 4,000 Syrian students studying in Russia, and praised Syria's recent parliamentary elections as a sign of national consolidation.

Al-Sharaa thanked Putin for his support, describing this period as a “new era for a new Syria.” He reaffirmed Syria's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Russia and maintaining regional stability.

Russian, Syrian Defense Chiefs Strengthen Ties in Moscow Amid Post-Assad Transition

[Daily Sabah](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [The Jerusalem Post](#), [TASS](#), October 28, 2025

Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov met Syrian Defense Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra in Moscow to discuss expanding defense and political cooperation, marking another step in reshaping bilateral relations under Syria's new president, Ahmed al-Sharaa. The Russian Defense Ministry said the talks focused on “practical implementation” of new cooperation areas, reaffirming that Russia's military bases in Tartus and Hmeimim would remain operational.

The meeting followed al-Sharaa's mid-October visit to Moscow—his first with President Vladimir Putin since Bashar al-Assad's ouster last December. During that visit, both leaders pledged to renew their "special" ties rooted in Soviet-era friendship.

Moscow, which continues to host Assad in asylum, is seeking to maintain its influence while normalizing ties with Syria's new leadership. Syrian officials said a delegation would soon travel to Moscow for technical talks on restoring embassy operations.

Despite lingering memories of past conflicts, Syrians in Moscow expressed hope for stability and renewed cooperation.

- **Russian Nuclear Tests**

Putin Oversees Strategic Nuclear Forces Drill Involving Land, Sea, and Air Launches

[President of Russia](#), [Reuters](#), October 22, 2025

President Vladimir Putin, as Supreme Commander-in-Chief, oversaw a large-scale strategic nuclear forces exercise involving Russia's land, sea, and air components. The drills featured live launches of intercontinental and air-launched cruise missiles.

A Yars intercontinental ballistic missile was fired from the Plesetsk cosmodrome to the Kura test range in Kamchatka, while the Bryansk strategic submarine launched a Sineva ballistic missile from the Barents Sea. Tu-95MS long-range bombers also carried out a series of air-launched cruise missile strikes.

Command and coordination were managed through Russia's National Defence Control Centre. The exercise aimed to test the readiness of command structures and the proficiency of operational staff in managing strategic forces.

According to the Kremlin, all planned objectives were successfully met, underscoring the combat preparedness of Russia's nuclear deterrent amid ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Russia Tests Nuclear-Powered Burevestnik Missile Amid Ukraine War and Tense U.S. Ties

[The Moscow Times](#), [The War Zone](#), October 27, 2025

Russia announced the successful final test of its nuclear-powered Burevestnik cruise missile, a weapon President Vladimir Putin called "unique" and of "unlimited range." The test, conducted on Oct. 21, occurred amid the ongoing Ukraine war and uncertainty surrounding a potential peace summit with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the missile flew 14,000 kilometers over 15 hours, successfully evading air- and missile-defense systems. Putin has ordered preparations to integrate the system into Russia's armed forces.

Experts remain skeptical about its practicality. Pavel Podvig of the Russian Nuclear Forces Project said its nuclear-powered engine grants range but offers “no real advantage,” while others described it as costly and strategically redundant.

The 2019 test of the Burevestnik ended in a deadly radiation-linked accident, raising safety concerns. Trump criticized the latest test as “not appropriate” during peace efforts, while the Kremlin dismissed tensions as exaggerated. Analysts suggested the timing aligns with U.S. sanctions and NATO drills.

Kremlin Says Burevestnik Missile Test Won’t Affect Russia–US Relations

[TASS](#), October 27, 2025

The Kremlin has said that the recent test of Russia’s nuclear-powered Burevestnik missile will not further strain relations with the United States. Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Moscow–Washington ties are already at a “minimum level,” leaving no room for additional tension.

“There is nothing in this event that could or should worsen relations between Moscow and Washington,” Peskov stated, adding that only the “first tentative steps” have been taken to move relations out of their long-standing stagnation.

The statement followed the General Staff’s report to President Vladimir Putin confirming the successful test of the Burevestnik missile, capable of long-range flight at low altitudes to evade air defenses.

Despite limited diplomatic engagement, Russia has criticized recent US sanctions targeting its oil sector, warning that such measures undermine normalization efforts and could drive up global energy prices.

- **Western Sanctions on Russia**

EU Imposes 19th Sanctions Package Targeting Russian Energy, Banks, and Crypto

[European Council](#), [The Moscow Times](#), October 23, 2025

The European Union announced its 19th sanctions package against Russia on October 23, 2025, striking at key sectors of Moscow’s economy — energy, finance, and technology. The measures also extend to Belarus, Chinese firms, and crypto entities accused of aiding Russia’s war effort in Ukraine.

The new package bans Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from January 2027, restricts short-term contracts, and tightens curbs on Rosneft and Gazprom Neft. It also bars 117 additional “shadow fleet” oil tankers, bringing the total to 557, to hinder Moscow’s evasion of Western oil price caps.

Financial sanctions blacklist Russia’s A7A5 stablecoin developer, eight foreign banks, and five Russian lenders, while prohibiting EU dealings with Russian payment systems.

Restrictions were also extended to Chinese, North Korean, Emirati, and Indian firms linked to arms supplies.

Additionally, the EU expanded export bans on microelectronics, metals, and chemicals, and imposed controls on AI, quantum computing, and space services.

Leaders at the Brussels summit are also considering a €140 billion loan for Ukraine, using frozen Russian central bank assets.

Foreign Ministry statement on retaliatory measures to the 19th EU sanctions package against Russia

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), October 31, 2025

Moscow has announced measures against the European Union following the bloc's approval of its 19th sanctions package on October 23, 2025. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that the EU continues to impose "illegitimate" unilateral restrictions that violate international law and the authority of the UN Security Council.

In response, Russia has expanded its entry ban list to include officials and citizens from EU institutions, member states, and other Western countries that support Brussels' anti-Russian policies. Those targeted include individuals involved in supplying military aid and dual-use goods to Ukraine, promoting sanctions, and advocating for the confiscation of Russian assets.

The list also covers lawmakers, civil activists, and academics accused of "Russophobic rhetoric." Moscow stressed that EU pressure would not alter its policies and reaffirmed its commitment to defending national interests and supporting a multipolar world order.

US Sanctions Russia's Oil Giants Rosneft and Lukoil, Disrupting Global Energy Markets

[US Department of the Treasury](#), October 22, 2025; [Bloomberg](#), [BBC](#), October 24, 2025

The United States imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia's two largest oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, on October 22, aiming to cut off key energy revenues sustaining Moscow's war in Ukraine. The restrictions bar US individuals and entities from engaging with the firms or their subsidiaries holding over 50% ownership, with transactions to be wound down by November 21. Non-US actors dealing with them also risk penalties. The measures follow earlier sanctions against Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftgas and coincide with new EU bans on Russian oil giants.

Russia exports about 7.3 million barrels of oil daily—7% of global demand—with India and China purchasing nearly half. Indian refiners now expect to halt most imports, while China's response remains uncertain. Oil benchmarks surged following the announcement amid fears of tighter supply.

The sanctions mark the Trump administration's first direct strike on Russia's energy sector, replacing price-cap mechanisms with outright restrictions. Washington hopes to weaken President Vladimir Putin's ability to finance the conflict, though experts warn that Russia's vast "shadow fleet" and alternative trade networks may cushion the blow.

Still, if India and China sharply reduce purchases, Russia could struggle to find replacement buyers, potentially driving up prices globally. Analysts say the effectiveness of the sanctions will depend on compliance from global traders, insurers, and shipping companies wary of secondary US penalties. The move underscores Washington's escalating economic campaign to erode Moscow's wartime resilience and test global dependence on Russian crude.

Hungary Seeks Ways Around New US Sanctions on Russian Oil

[Reuters](#), October 24, 2025

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Budapest is exploring options to circumvent new US sanctions on Russian oil companies Rosneft and Lukoil, imposed by President Donald Trump to pressure Moscow over Ukraine.

Speaking to state radio on Oct. 24, Orban confirmed discussions with Hungary's energy firm MOL, whose refineries in Hungary and Slovakia depend heavily on Russian crude via the Druzhba pipeline. The sanctions, taking effect in late November, have raised concerns for Hungary and Slovakia — the EU's largest remaining buyers of Russian oil. MOL and its Slovak unit Slovnaft are assessing potential disruptions to operations.

Orban, a close Trump ally, did not detail how Hungary might bypass the measures but signaled his intent to secure energy supplies despite US pressure. The move highlights deepening divisions within Europe over maintaining ties with Moscow amid tightening Western sanctions.

Hungary Criticizes Polish Minister's Remarks on Russian Oil Pipeline

[Notes From Poland](#), [Anadolu Ajansi](#), [TVP World](#), October 23, 2025

Tensions have risen between Hungary and Poland after Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski expressed hope that Ukraine would destroy the Druzhba oil pipeline, which carries Russian oil to Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán criticized the comments, calling them inappropriate and warning that such statements could harm relations between the two countries.

The exchange followed an earlier dispute after Sikorski suggested that Polish courts might order the arrest of President Vladimir Putin if he flew over Poland for a planned summit in Budapest. Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó responded sharply, referencing a recent Polish court decision related to the Nord Stream sabotage case.

Hungary and Slovakia, both still reliant on Russian crude, had previously asked the EU to address security concerns surrounding the Druzhba pipeline. The latest disagreement highlights the differing approaches of Warsaw and Budapest toward the war in Ukraine and their relations with Moscow.

- **Russia – Iran Relations**

Tehran and Moscow to Ink Deal on Strategic Rasht–Astara Railway

[TV BRICS](#), [Anewz](#), October 27, 2025

Iran and Russia are set to sign a long-awaited agreement next month for the construction of the Rasht–Astara railway, a vital segment of the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The 162-kilometre route will strengthen freight and cargo links across the region, according to Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadeq.

The signing coincides with the implementation of the 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, signed by Presidents Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin in January 2025. Sadeq called the project a “turning point” for regional connectivity, noting that improved transport infrastructure will bolster Iran’s economic and diplomatic ties with neighbouring and partner countries.

She added that despite sanctions and external challenges, Iran continues to advance major infrastructure projects, underscoring its resilience and commitment to regional cooperation through enhanced rail and road networks.

Russia Reaffirms Support for Iran in Resolving Nuclear Dispute

[TASS](#), October 28, 2025

Russia will continue assisting Iran in finding a diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis surrounding its nuclear program, Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov told TASS. He said Moscow and Tehran remain in regular contact, holding consultations at multiple levels to ease tensions caused by what he described as the “fault of Western countries.”

Dedov reaffirmed that Russia provides “comprehensive support” to Tehran in pursuing a long-term political and diplomatic resolution. He criticized European nations and the United States for backing attempts to reinstate UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, calling such efforts “legally and procedurally untenable.”

According to the envoy, these steps carry no legal weight for responsible members of the international community. Dedov emphasized that Russia will continue doing “everything possible” to promote dialogue and a stable resolution to the issue.

Russia–Iran Relations Reach Historic High, Says Ambassador

[TASS](#), October 28, 2025

Bilateral ties between Russia and Iran have reached an unprecedented level in recent years, marked by deepened political trust, expanding trade, and the launch of major joint projects, Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov told TASS.

Dedov said the relationship was formalized under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian in January 2025 during the Iranian leader’s visit to Moscow. He noted that Moscow and Tehran now enjoy “a comprehensive trust-based dialogue and consensus on most bilateral, regional, and international issues.”

The ambassador highlighted growing trade turnover, stronger business engagement, and progress in sectors such as banking, transport, energy, and nuclear cooperation. Ongoing projects include integrating the Mir and Shetab national payment systems, constructing the Rasht–Astara railway under the International North–South Transport Corridor, and expanding the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Dedov described the partnership as a milestone in Russia–Iran relations.

- **Russia – North Korea**

Lavrov, North Korean Foreign Minister Reaffirm Strategic Partnership in Moscow Talks

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), [TASS](#), October 27, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with his North Korean counterpart, Choe Son-hui, in Moscow to discuss the further development of bilateral relations and practical cooperation.

The ministers focused on implementing the agreements reached during the meetings between President Vladimir Putin and DPRK Chairman Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang in June 2024 and at events in Beijing marking the 80th anniversary of victory over militarist Japan.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed after the Pyongyang Summit. In reviewing global and regional developments, Lavrov and Choe shared the view that the escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula and beyond stems from the “aggressive actions” of the United States and its allies.

Russia expressed full support for North Korea’s measures to protect its sovereignty and national security, with both ministers emphasizing that the talks would further strengthen the growing alliance.

- **Russia – Ukraine War Updates**

Pentagon Approves Tomahawk Missiles for Ukraine, Final Decision Awaits Trump

[Institute for the Study of War](#), [CNN](#), October 31, 2025

The Pentagon has approved supplying Tomahawk cruise missiles to Ukraine, pending final authorization from US President Donald Trump, CNN reported on October 31, citing US and European officials. The Defense Department concluded that transferring the missiles would not compromise US stockpiles.

Analysts note that the move could significantly enhance Ukraine’s long-range strike capabilities, mirroring Russia’s use of advanced missiles such as the Kh-series, Kalibr,

Kinzhal, and Iskander systems, which Moscow employs in regular strikes on Ukrainian targets.

The provision of Tomahawks—known for their extended range and heavy payload—would enable Ukraine to target critical Russian military sites deep within Russian territory, including the Shahed drone production facility in Yelabuga, Tatarstan, and the Engels-2 Air Base in Saratov Oblast, which houses bombers used in attacks on Ukraine.

If approved, the decision could mark a major shift in the balance of long-range strike capabilities in the ongoing conflict.

Ukraine Strikes Russian Energy and Air Defense Sites in Coordinated Attacks

[Institute for the Study of War](#), October 31, 2025

Ukraine continues to target Russia's military and energy infrastructure through long-range drone and missile strikes. The Ukrainian Navy confirmed that overnight on October 30–31, Ukrainian forces launched Neptune missiles at the Oryol Thermal Power Plant in Oryol Oblast and the Novobryansk substation in Bryansk Oblast. Verified footage supports the attacks, with both facilities reportedly supplying electricity to Russian military enterprises.

In a separate operation, Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces (USF) announced that, in coordination with the Russian insurgent group *Chernaya Iskra*, they disabled a Russian Buk-M3 surface-to-air missile system and a NEBO-U early warning radar in Rostov Oblast during the night of September 27–28.

These coordinated strikes highlight Ukraine's expanding ability to reach deep into Russian territory, disrupting key defense and logistical infrastructure tied to Moscow's ongoing military operations.

Russia and Belarus Signal Missile Deployment to Belarus Amid Rising Tensions

[Reuters](#), October 28, 2025; [Institute for the Study of War](#), October 31, 2025

Russia and Belarus are escalating their nuclear signaling toward Europe, with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko announcing on October 31 that Russian Oreshnik missile systems will be placed on combat duty in Belarus by December 2025. The move follows repeated Kremlin claims that both countries feel unsafe amid what they describe as Europe's "Russophobic" rhetoric and militaristic behavior.

Analysts assess that Moscow's push to station Oreshnik systems in Belarus forms part of a broader reflexive control campaign — a strategy of psychological and informational pressure designed to weaken Western unity and deter further military aid to Ukraine.

The planned deployment stems from an agreement between Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin, first announced in December 2024, underscoring the growing military integration between Moscow and Minsk as tensions with NATO and the European Union continue to intensify.

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.



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