



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

HOT REPORT

UKRAINIAN MILITARY SPECIALISTS IN LITHUANIA – HOW DRONE DEFENCE COOPERATION IS REFRAMED AS AGGRESSION

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THIS REPORT IS BASED ON AN ANALYSIS BY DELFI
LITHUANIA'S MELO DETEKTORIUS, "**AS UKRAINE SENDS
MILITARY SPECIALISTS TO LITHUANIA – A NEW WAVE OF
KREMLIN-FRIENDLY LIES.**"

WHAT'S HOT?

Ukraine plans to send military specialists to the Baltic states and Romania to share its practical experience in countering threats from drones. Pro-Kremlin actors quickly distorted the announcement, claiming that the Ukrainian specialists would instead coordinate drone attacks against Russia from Baltic territory.

The claim is false, but it is not an isolated piece of disinformation. It is the latest development in a broader Russian information campaign portraying the Baltic states as participants in Ukrainian attacks on Russia and ultimately as aggressors provoking a direct confrontation with Moscow.

What Do We See?

- **Defensive cooperation reframed as offensive action:** Ukrainian specialists are being sent to share expertise in responding to drone threats. Propaganda transforms this into a supposed operation to coordinate attacks against Russia.
- **Building on an existing narrative:** Since March 2026, Russia has promoted the false claim that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have opened their airspace to Ukrainian drones attacking Russian targets. Baltic foreign ministers have explicitly denied that their territories or airspace are being used for such attacks.
- **Telegram-to-mainstream amplification:** The earlier version of the narrative was promoted by the Kremlin-linked Telegram channel Mash, which published a map allegedly showing Ukrainian drones travelling through Poland and the Baltic states. The claim was rapidly amplified by Russian state television and then circulated on social media in multiple languages.
- **Aggressor-victim reversal:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine is pushed into the background. Ukraine is instead portrayed as the aggressor, while Russia becomes the victim of attacks allegedly facilitated by NATO countries.
- **The Baltics portrayed as provocateurs:** Lithuania and its neighbours are increasingly presented not merely as supporters of Ukraine but as direct participants in military operations against Russia.



- **EU and NATO involvement added to the narrative:** Related claims suggest that the EU is encouraging the Baltic states to provoke a war with Russia or that NATO is preparing offensive action.
- **Creating distrust in national authorities:** Another strand claims Lithuanian institutions conceal drone incidents and other security-related events from the population.

How the Narrative Has Evolved

The latest claim forms part of a clear progression documented by Melo Detektorius. In autumn 2025, pro-Kremlin actors increasingly portrayed drone incidents in the Baltic states as evidence that Lithuania and its neighbours were themselves responsible for escalating tensions.

By March 2026, the narrative had developed into the claim that the Baltic states were deliberately allowing Ukrainian drones to cross their airspace to attack Russia. Latvia described this as a large-scale coordinated Russian information operation.

In April, false claims alleged that Finland was distributing instructions on how citizens should protect themselves from Ukrainian drone attacks.

In May, Russian media distorted Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys's comments to claim that he had called on NATO to attack Kaliningrad.

After the EU committed to strengthening its eastern flank, another wave of claims suggested that Brussels was ordering the Baltic states to provoke Russia.

By June, the arrival of Ukrainian drone specialists provided a new hook: defensive expertise-sharing was reframed as preparation for attacks from Baltic territory.

Why Does It Work?

- **It builds incrementally:** Each new real-world event is fitted into an already established narrative rather than requiring audiences to accept an entirely new story.
- **It exploits ambiguity around drones:** Drone trajectories, electronic interference and military technologies can be difficult for the public to independently verify.
- **It uses real events as anchors:** Ukrainian specialists really are travelling to the Baltic states. The manipulation concerns why they are coming and what they will do.
- **It reverses responsibility:** Russia's aggression becomes background context while Western defensive measures are foregrounded as supposed evidence of escalation.

- **It generates fear of direct war:** Claims that Baltic territory is being used to attack Russia imply that the countries could become legitimate targets for Russian retaliation.
- **It can travel internationally:** Research cited in the report found that the earlier Baltic drone narrative gained limited traction in Europe and NATO countries but found audiences in Latin America and Africa.

How to Respond?

For Governments and Security Institutions

- Explain the purpose of Ukrainian specialists before disinformation fills the information gap. Clearly state what expertise is being shared, who requested it and what activities will take place.
- Communicate the distinction between drone defence and drone operations. For example: learning how to detect, track, jam or intercept hostile drones does not mean participating in Ukrainian strikes against Russia.
- Coordinate communication across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Because the narrative treats the Baltics as a single operational space, inconsistent national responses can be exploited.
- Respond to the broader narrative, not only individual falsehoods. Debunking “Ukrainian specialists will coordinate attacks” is useful, but audiences should also understand that it forms part of a repeated campaign portraying defensive Baltic actions as aggression.

For Media and Fact-Checkers

- Trace the narrative backwards. Show audiences how a legitimate announcement about drone-defence specialists becomes a claim about Ukrainian attacks from NATO territory.
- Avoid repeating provocative claims without context in headlines. The false accusation itself can travel much further than the correction.
- Watch for recycled visual evidence. Maps of supposed drone trajectories can create an impression of technical proof even when their routes are speculative or unsupported.
- Connect new claims with previous iterations. The continuity is important: the story about Ukrainian specialists is not independent from earlier claims about “opened Baltic skies.”

For Educators and Civil Society

- Use the case to teach how disinformation develops over time. One false narrative can be repeatedly adapted to new events.

- Ask audiences to separate the verified fact from the added interpretation: “Ukraine is sending drone specialists” is the fact; “they are coming to coordinate attacks against Russia” is the unsupported addition.
- Teach visual verification. Maps, flight paths and technical-looking graphics should not automatically be treated as evidence simply because they appear authoritative.

For the Public

- Check what Ukrainian specialists are actually tasked with doing rather than relying on social-media interpretations.
- Be cautious when defensive measures are automatically described as preparations for attack.
- Look for independent confirmation before accepting maps supposedly showing drone routes.
- Watch for the recurring pattern: if every new Baltic defence measure is presented as proof that Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia is “provoking Russia,” the individual claim may be part of a larger narrative rather than independent evidence.

Key Takeaway

The claim that Ukrainian military specialists are coming to Lithuania to coordinate drone attacks against Russia is not a standalone falsehood. It is the latest layer of a sustained information campaign.

The narrative has evolved from disputed drone incidents to allegations of deliberately opened Baltic airspace, NATO aggression, EU-directed provocation and now supposed Ukrainian attack coordination from Baltic territory.

Its broader purpose is to reverse the roles of aggressor and victim: Russia is presented as defending itself, while Ukraine and the Baltic states are portrayed as provoking an increasingly unavoidable confrontation.

What is BECID?

BECID – the Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders – brings together expertise in fact-checking, media literacy, and journalism across the Baltics. We conduct fact-checks in collaboration with Delfi/Delfi Meedia, monitor disinformation narratives and campaigns under the leadership of investigative journalism organisation Re:Baltica, and promote media literacy through the Baltic Centre for Media Literacy (BCME). We also develop methodologies to effectively counter disinformation. Learn more: becid.ut.ee

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