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France, Germany Blame Moscow for Downing of OSCE Drone in Eastern Ukraine

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Reuters

France and Germany have blamed Moscow and pro-Russian separatists for the Oct. 27 downing of an unmanned OSCE drone in rebel-controlled eastern Ukraine.

Moscow has been accused of supporting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine since the start of an armed conflict between Kiev and local militias in 2014. The war has claimed the lives of more than 10,000 people, according to UN estimates, with over 160 people killed since the beginning of 2018, the Associated Press cited a spokesperson for the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) as saying in August.

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"Germany and France strongly condemn the destruction of the SMM (Social Monitoring Mission) long-range unmanned aerial vehicle in the early hours of Oct. 27, in an area not controlled by the Ukrainian government," the two countries said in a joint statement carried by the website of Germany's Foreign Office on Thursday.

"Evidence collected by SMM suggests Russia and the separatists it backs bear responsibility for the targeting and downing of the (drone), blinding the mission at this particular spot," the statement said.

The countries described the downing as a "clear violation" of the OSCE monitoring mission.

Russia has not yet responded to the statement.

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