

Belarus Strongman Threatens Ban on German Export Traffic to Russia, China

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. **Kremlin.ru**

Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko has threatened to limit the transit of German goods to Russia and China in response to sanctions punishing his regime for cracking down on dissenters and intercepting a Ryanair plane, state media [reported](#) Tuesday.

Citing this year's ban on Nivea, Skoda and Liqui Moly products in response to previous economic penalties, Lukashenko told an anti-sanctions government meeting that "we should do the same" with transit.

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"First, not another step inside the Belarusian market. Second, not a step through Belarus either," the state-run Belta news agency quoted Lukashenko as saying.

"Let [Germany] supply their products to China and Russia through Finland or through

Ukraine,” he said. “In other words, we must take all measures to make them feel what Belarus is and think before they take up economic weapons.”

Lukashenko's threat follows last month's European Union sanctions, which target key sectors of the Belarus economy, imposed over Belarus' interception of a Ryanair passenger jet to arrest dissident journalist Roman Protasevich and his Russian girlfriend Sofia Sapega.

Last week, Lukashenko claimed that Belarusian authorities had exposed “terrorist sleeper cells” that he alleged were linked to Germany, the United States, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania. He said authorities would confront German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The 66-year-old leader also said he ordered officials to seal the country's border with Ukraine to prevent “a huge amount of arms” coming into Belarus and alleged that unidentified assailants sought to kill a state television personality. In response to the latest round of Western sanctions, Minsk said it was suspending its participation in the Eastern Partnership, an initiative to boost ties between the EU and its ex-Soviet neighbors.

Lukashenko, who has ruled the ex-Soviet state and close Russian ally since 1994, has also threatened a ban on European Union vehicles.

“If you escalate the situation against Belarus with new stages of sanctions, you will travel around the North Pole and the Mediterranean Sea,” he was [quoted](#) as saying. “So far during the pandemic, we're behaving humanely in terms of transit, movement of cargo, passenger transport and so on.”

Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko followed up on Lukashenko's threats, saying that Minsk “will be looking at the EU partners' behavior and take measures without hurting our economy.”

The Kremlin [said](#) Lukashenko's threats are the result of “harsh, unjustified and illegal” sanctions and work needs to be done to minimize disruptions in import from the EU.

AFP contributed reporting.

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