

Russia Denounces Norway's 'Spy Mania'

By [AFP](#)

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Russian embassy in Oslo, Norway. **GAD (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Russia's Embassy in Oslo criticized what it called Norway's "spy mania" on Wednesday, a day after the Scandinavian country announced the arrest of a suspected Russian sleeper agent.

The Norwegian counter-intelligence service PST on Tuesday said it had arrested a Russian so-called "illegal" agent masquerading as a Brazilian researcher at the University of Tromsø, in northern Norway.

In an email to AFP, the Russian Embassy in Oslo said Wednesday it did not know "who or what this is about."

"In general, spy mania has been actively promoted in Norway lately," it said.

In addition to the suspected spy, Norway has in recent weeks arrested nine Russian nationals accused of flying drones in its airspace in violation of a ban introduced since the war in Ukraine or having photographed sensitive sites in restricted areas.

Russian fishing trawlers, which are still allowed to dock in some Norwegian ports despite an EU ban, and research vessels have also drawn suspicion in Norway.

"All of this is politically motivated," the embassy said.

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Norway, which has overtaken Russia as Europe's biggest supplier of natural gas since the war in Ukraine, has beefed up security at strategic sites.

That step was taken after mysterious drones were observed near some oil and gas installations following the suspected sabotage of Nord Stream's two Baltic Sea pipelines.

According to PST, the suspect arrested on Monday is an "illegal agent," a term used to denote agents who live undercover in a foreign country and build a network of contacts, establish information channels and infiltrate circles that have access to sensitive information.

PST has called for his expulsion, saying "he represents a threat to basic national interests."

Slapped with a four-week detention order, the 37-year-old suspect was researching Norwegian policy in northern Norway — which it shares a 198-kilometer border with Russia — and hybrid threats.

According to local media, he arrived at the University of Tromsø in the autumn of 2021 and lived alone in the Arctic town, a highly strategic region.

His lawyer told local media the man rejected the allegations and is "in shock."

Before coming to Norway, he had studied at the University of Calgary's Center for Military and Strategic Studies in Canada.

Arrests of undercover agents are rare. One sensational case was that of Anna Chapman, a Russian businesswoman living in New York arrested in 2010.

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