

Russian Military Intelligence Linked to Spanish Letter Bomb Campaign – NYT

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Members of Spanish Guardia Civil stand guard at the US Embassy in Madrid, Spain, on Dec. 1, 2022. EFE/FERNANDO VILLAR/TASS

Russia's GRU military intelligence agency is suspected of directing associates of a St. Petersburg-based white supremacist militant group to carry out a recent letter bomb campaign in Spain, The New York Times [reported](#) Sunday, citing unnamed U.S. officials.

Six letter bombs were [sent to high-profile government, military and diplomatic targets](#) in Spain in late November and early December, prompting authorities to step up security and re-commit support for Ukraine in its war against invading Russian forces.

According to the NYT, Spanish investigators who worked with U.S. and U.K. counterparts believe the GRU's Moscow-based 161st Special Purpose Specialist Training Center used the Russian Imperial Movement, a radical group with members and associates across Europe, as a proxy in the campaign.

The United States [branded the Russian Imperial Movement](#), which operates military-style

training centers in St. Petersburg, [as a terrorist group in 2020](#). The designation marked the first time a white supremacist organization was labeled a terrorist group.

“The apparent aim of the campaign was to signal that Russia and its proxies could carry out terrorist strikes across Europe,” the newspaper wrote, citing unnamed U.S. officials.

“The ability to use the Russian Imperial Movement as a sometime proxy force is useful to Russian intelligence, particularly because that makes it more difficult for rival countries to attribute actions to the Russian government,” it added.

While Moscow is not believed to be ready to carry out widespread covert attacks or sabotage in Europe, U.S. officials warn that this could change if Russia continues to suffer major setbacks in Ukraine.

The Kremlin’s level of involvement in the letter bomb campaign is unclear.

Though the Russian Imperial Movement has criticized the Kremlin’s war effort in Ukraine and accused President Vladimir Putin of corruption, the NYT said the GRU has still been able to influence its operations due to their shared anti-Western views.

U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism officials have stepped up scrutiny of the Russian Imperial Movement, flagging suspected leaders and members on updated terrorist watch lists.

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