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Ukraine Calls Retail Giant Auchan 'Weapon of Russian Aggression'

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Ukraine's foreign minister on Friday accused French retailer Auchan of being a "full-fledged weapon of Russian aggression" following a joint investigation by The Insider, Le Monde and Bellingcat that concluded the retail giant has been supplying goods to the Russian army.

According to the investigation, goods including flack jackets, as well as non-military equipment, worth a total of 2 million rubles ($26,920) were sent as humanitarian aid by a Russian Auchan subsidiary to the Russian military in Kremlin-occupied parts of Ukraine.

A video from December cited by the report also shows members of the youth wing of Russia's ruling United Russia party unloading packages with the Leroy Merlin logo on them in the Russian-occupied city of Mariupol.

"Last year, I urged the world to boycott Auchan for failing to withdraw from Russia and stop funding war crimes. However, the reality seems to be far worse: Auchan has evolved into a full-fledged weapon of Russian aggression," Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter.

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Auchan's Ukrainian subsidiary said it was "shocked" by the investigation.

The report also alleges that Auchan collected data on Russian draft dodgers among its employees and handed it to Russian conscription offices.

Following Russia's mobilization order in September, Auchan employees were handed their call-up papers at work, The Insider said, citing an eyewitness.

A spokesperson for Auchan in France denied that the company had ever meddled in politics or had in any way supported the Russian military, while the company's Russian office refused to comment on the investigation.

Auchan, which has around 30,000 staff and 230 stores across Russia, said last year that it planned to maintain its presence in the country despite the Russian invasion of Ukraine, prompting Kyiv to call for people to boycott the company.

AFP contributed reporting.

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