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Moldova Smashes Pro-Moscow Subversion Ring - Police

By AFP

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Gavriil Grigorov / TASS

Moldovan police said Sunday they had arrested members of a network "orchestrated by Moscow" in a bid to destabilize the small ex-Soviet nation as an anti-government protest kicked off.

After searches on Saturday night, 25 men were questioned and seven of them detained, police chief Viorel Cernauteanu told media.

An agent managed to infiltrate the group led by a Moldovan-Russian, he said, adding that the prosecution had recorded 10 hours of video and audio.

"People came from Russia with a very specific training role," the official added.

The Moldovan authorities said they acted after "receiving information on the organization by Russian special services of destabilizing actions on our territory via demonstrations."

The party of fugitive pro-Russian oligarch Ilhan Shor has again mobilized people in recent weeks against the pro-European government, amid heightened tensions between Moscow and Chisinau.

He has organized several rallies for which he is suspected of paying participants.

A new protest got underway Sunday afternoon in the capital Chisinau.

The White House on Friday accused Russia of seeking to destabilize the Romanian-speaking country of 2.6 million people bordering Ukraine with the aim of installing a pro-Russian government.

The United States said it had stepped up information sharing with Moldovan leaders "so they can investigate further" and "thwart Russian plans."

Moldova, formerly part of Russia's sphere of influence, is now governed by authorities who are firmly focused on European integration.

However, Chisinau has to deal with the separatist region of Transnistria, where the authorities called Thursday on the United Nations to investigate a plan to attack several top officials blamed on Kyiv.

Ukraine's SBU security service immediately denounced the allegations as a "provocation orchestrated by the Kremlin."

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