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Moldova, Ukraine Dismiss Breakaway Republic's Drone Strike Claims

By AFP

March 17, 2024

Moldova on Sunday dismissed a claim by pro-Russian separatist authorities that an explosion in the breakaway region of Transnistria was likely caused by a drone launched from Ukraine as an "attempt to provoke fear and panic."

Kyiv, in turn, blamed Russia for carrying out "a provocation in Transnistria with a kamikaze drone attack on a military base."

Transnistria is a primarily Russian-speaking region that has long depended on Moscow for support, and broke away from Moldova after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Today a fire occurred on the territory of a military base in Tiraspol as a result of an explosion," authorities in Transnistria said on social media.

"It was preliminarily established that the explosion was caused by a kamikaze drone attack," they added, claiming that the drone was launched from the Odesa region of Ukraine.

Separatist officials said that no one was hurt and opened a criminal investigation.

But Moldova said it could not confirm any attack.

"Authorities in Chisinau, in contact with the Ukrainian side, do not confirm any attack on the Transnistrian region," Moldova's reintegration bureau said in a statement.

"Following the examination of the video images and the exchange of information, we communicate that the incident in question is an attempt to provoke fear and panic in the region," it added.

A Ukrainian government office responsible for disinformation said: "Russians are trying to carry out provocations and manipulate the information space by spreading fakes."

There was no immediate comment on the incident from Moscow.

Grainy footage distributed by separatist authorities showed a projectile slamming into a military helicopter standing at an airbase surrounded by fields.

Late last month, Transnistria appealed to Russia for "protection," fueling fears the territory could become a new flashpoint in Moscow's conflict with neighboring Ukraine.

In 2006, the separatist territory's deputies announced a referendum on integrating with Russia that resulted in an overwhelming majority in favor.

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