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Moldova's President Accuses Russia of Planning 'Unprecedented' Election Interference Campaign

By AFP

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President of Moldova Maia Sandu. **Elena Covalenco / AFP**

Moldovan President Maia Sandu on Wednesday accused Russia of preparing an "unprecedented" campaign to interfere in the country's upcoming elections, warning that Moscow is seeking to install pro-Kremlin figures in parliament.

"The Russian Federation wants to control Moldova starting in the fall and is preparing an unprecedented interference in the September elections," Sandu told reporters, alleging plans for vote buying, illicit cryptocurrency financing and coordinated disinformation campaigns.

Sandu, a staunch critic of the Kremlin and a key proponent of Moldova's EU accession efforts, has long accused Moscow of trying to destabilize the country. Moldova began formal EU membership talks in June 2024.

She claimed the Kremlin has earmarked up to 100 million euros to support efforts, including cyberattacks, paid protests, manipulation via religious groups and schemes to discredit the electoral process, particularly targeting voters abroad and moderate pro-European voters.

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Sandu accused Moldova's two main opposition forces of capitalizing on Russian-backed operations to weaken her center-right Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), which currently holds a parliamentary majority.

She singled out allies of fugitive pro-Russian oligarch Ilan Shor, who she said is leading a "criminal group" focused on vote buying and protests aimed at sowing unrest.

Sandu also warned about a rising "sovereignist" movement that she said is financed by Moscow and pushing Euroscepticism and allegiance to Russian interests.

"All these projects are coordinated from the same command point," she said, referring to the Kremlin.

A recent poll shows PAS leading with 39% support, followed by the pro-Russian Socialist Party with 14.9%. However, about 30% of voters remain undecided.

Earlier this year, Moldovan police said more than 140,000 people were being investigated for alleged involvement in a cash-for-votes scheme during the 2021 presidential election.

Authorities have previously shut down dozens of pro-Russian media outlets and Telegram channels accused of spreading disinformation. Sandu criticized Telegram on Wednesday for failing to act on reports of voter manipulation.

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