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Moldovan President Accuses Russia of Waging Hybrid War Against Country Ahead of Elections

By AFP

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Moldovan President Maia Sandu. **ROMEO BOETZLE / AFP**

Moldovan President Maia Sandu warned European lawmakers on Tuesday that Russia is waging an "unlimited" interference campaign to try to pull her country into its orbit ahead of parliamentary elections this month.

"On Sept. 28, Moldova will hold the most consequential election in its history," Sandu said in a speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

She described what she called an "unlimited hybrid war on a scale unseen before the full invasion of Ukraine," with the Kremlin's goal "to capture Moldova through the ballot box, to use it against Ukraine and to turn us into a launchpad for hybrid attacks in the European Union."

Sandu and her allies in Brussels have long accused Moscow of trying to destabilize the former Soviet republic of 2.6 million people, which borders Ukraine and EU member Romania.

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A vocal critic of the Kremlin since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Sandu has steered Moldova toward closer ties with the West. The country formally opened accession talks with the EU in June 2024.

“Our European path is not just a matter of values. It is a matter of survival,” she told lawmakers. “Precisely because we have advanced greatly on this path, Russia has unleashed its arsenal of hybrid attacks against us. The battlefield is our elections.”

Sandu accused Moscow of deploying a range of tactics, from illicit cryptocurrency financing and disinformation campaigns to outright vote buying.

“Moldova is not alone in protecting its democracy,” she added, noting the support Chisinau has received from Brussels. “The European Union has stood with us financially, technically and politically, and we are deeply grateful.”

European leaders have recently underscored that backing. The leaders of Germany, France and Poland traveled to Moldova last month in a rare joint visit widely seen as a show of solidarity ahead of the vote.

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