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Finnish Defense Minister Says 'No Drones Can Rattle' Country

By AFP

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Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen. **Anna Ross / dpa / picture-alliance / TASS**

Finland will not be intimidated by attempts to destabilize it and the rest of Europe with drones and other so-called "hybrid" attacks, Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen told AFP on Tuesday.

The Nordic country shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border with Russia, which has been blamed for a series of drone incursions and airspace violations over European countries — claims Moscow has rejected.

Unidentified drone sightings in Finland's neighbors, Norway and Denmark, since September 22, including at military sites, have prompted the closure of several airports and raised concerns about Europe's security and preparedness.

European officials have called the drone flights hybrid attacks, referring to a form of unconventional warfare.

Helsinki is “taking a very calm approach” as speculation mounts about what could come next, Hakkanen told AFP.

“No drones can rattle us. They are intended to cause confusion, fear and social unrest,” Hakkanen said.

He stressed there was “no direct evidence” yet that Russia was responsible for the drone sightings, but said that “Russia is doing all kinds of other hybrid influencing.”

“We are prepared for the fact that Russia has a certain desire to disrupt the West with such drones,” Hakkanen said.

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NATO has “enhanced vigilance” in the Baltic following the intrusions, and the EU has announced plans for a "drone wall".

“We are actively working with NATO's Eastern Sentry (defense operation) and the EU's drone wall initiative to determine how Finland's section of the NATO-Russia and EU-Russia borders will be secured against drones,” Hakkanen said.

Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson, who met with his Finnish counterpart in Helsinki on Tuesday, told AFP Europe's tense security situation was “serious.”

“We are seeing a pattern where Russia is taking greater political and military risks,” he told AFP.

Finland and Sweden both joined NATO after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Finland shut its eastern border with Russia in mid-December 2023 after the arrival of around 1,000 migrants without visas.

Helsinki has claimed the surge was orchestrated by Russia as a form of hybrid warfare — a charge the Kremlin has denied.

Both Finland and Sweden have beefed up their military investments and preparedness since joining NATO.

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