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Europe Unprepared for Potential Russian Drone Attacks, Defense Chief Warns

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OLEG PETRASIUK / 24TH MECHANIZED BRIGADE OF UKRAINIAN ARMED FORCES / AFP

Europe is "not ready" to effectively respond to potential Russian drone attacks and must integrate Ukraine's "battle-tested" capabilities to protect itself better, EU Defense and Space Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said Monday.

The 27-nation bloc is scrambling to shore up its air defense systems after NATO jets shot down several Russian drones over Poland in September.

"Why did it take us more than two years and the trigger of the Russian provocation with drones against Poland, and also against Baltic States and Romania, to understand that we are not ready to detect Russian drones and to destroy them with cost-effective means?" Kubilius said in a speech in Vilnius.

"The Russians are learning," he said, adding: "Are we?"

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NATO has dispatched additional reinforcements to its eastern flank and is deploying more drone defense systems in the wake of the Russian drone incident in Poland, which came as an embarrassment after a Polish missile is believed to have hit a home in the eastern part of the country during the air incursion.

European authorities say they want to build their own drone defense system, but details still remain hazy, and any plan will likely take years to implement.

Kubilius on Monday insisted that, as European countries play catch-up with Russia, they must seek to include Ukraine and its experienced military forces as an essential part of their broader defense architecture.

"If we do not do that, we shall make a historical mistake, which shall leave us weaker. And which shall leave Ukraine weaker," Kubilius said.

The rush to bolster EU defense capabilities comes as European intelligence agencies warn that Russian President Vladimir Putin may be weighing a potential attack on a NATO country in the coming years.

AFP contributed reporting.

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