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China Exporting Drones to Russia Via Thailand – Bloomberg

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Artyom Geodakyan / TASS

Thailand has started acting as a transit hub for Chinese drones deliveries to Russia in circumvention of Western sanctions, Bloomberg reported Thursday.

Russia imported $125 million worth of drones from Thailand in the first 11 months of 2025, some 88% of Thailand's total drone exports and an eightfold increase from the previous year, Bloomberg said, citing an analysis of trade documents.

During the same period, China shipped $186 million worth of drones to Thailand, accounting for nearly all of the country's drone imports, the agency said.

By comparison, Thailand had exported less than $1 million worth of drones in 2022 the first year of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, none of which were sent to Russia.

One of the largest importers was China Thai Corp., which imported $144 million worth of drones to Thailand from China in the first 11 months of 2025.

The company was sanctioned by Britain in October 2025 for supplying technology to Russia's army and is now changing its name to Lanto Global Logistics, Bloomberg said.

Skyhub Technologies, another major importer, shipped in $25 million worth of products in 2025, including from Chinese manufacturer Autel Robotics.

These included hundreds of the nominally civilian EVO Max 4T model, which can be used in combat, Bloomberg reported.

The EVO Max 4T has long been promoted in Ukraine's Army of Drones program by former Digital Transformation Minister and current Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

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Autel denied cooperating with the Russian military and said it complies with international sanctions in comments to Bloomberg. It added that its drones are equipped with a "no-fly geofencing system" to block flights in conflict zones.

Third-country intermediaries are typical of sanctions evasion, said Maria Shagina of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"The countries may change but the methods do not: Rerouting via third countries using shell companies," she told Bloomberg.

Bloomberg said the rise in shipments through Southeast Asia demonstrates the difficulty in restricting Russia's access to dual-use technologies.

At the same time, Thailand and Russia have deepened economic, political and cultural ties.

Western officials have repeatedly accused China of aiding Russia's war machine, something that Beijing denies.

"China could call [President] Vladimir Putin and end this war tomorrow and cut off his dual-purpose technologies that they're selling," U.S. Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker said at the recent Munich Security Conference.

"China could stop buying Russian oil and gas," he said. "You know, this war is being completely enabled by China."

Fox News reported this week that Beijing has offered humanitarian assistance to Ukraine amid Russian strikes on its energy infrastructure, but has not publicly disclosed the size or scope of the aid package.

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