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Putin Rejects Blame for Drone Crash in Romania, Demands Evidence It Came From Russia

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Police and forensic investigators examine the impact of a Russian drone crash in Galati, eastern Romania. **Daniel Mihailescu / AFP**

President Vladimir Putin has accused Romania of jumping to conclusions after it said a Russian drone crashed into an apartment building near its eastern border with Ukraine early Friday.

"No one can determine the origin of any aircraft until a proper forensic examination of that aircraft has been conducted," Putin said at a press conference in Kazakhstan. "If they provide us with any objective data... in that case, we will give our assessment of what happened."

Romanian authorities said that two people were injured after a drone crashed into an apartment in the city of Galati, located right across the border from southern Ukraine and Moldova. The downing comes amid a broader uptick of both Russian and Ukrainian drones straying into the airspace of NATO members as the two countries continue attacks on each

other.

Romania's military identified the downed aircraft as a Geran-2, the Russian version of the Iranian-designed Shahed drone. It said a fire broke out on the roof of the apartment building and the two people were hospitalized for their injuries.

In response, Romanian President Nicușor Dan announced the closure of the Russian consulate in Constanta and declared the Russian consul in the Black Sea port city persona non grata. Romania's foreign ministry also summoned the Russian ambassador in Bucharest over the incident.

Russia's Foreign Ministry vowed a response to the closure of its consulate.

Putin suggested the drone that crashed in Romania may be Ukrainian, pointing to recent incidents in Finland and the Baltic states, where drones launched from Ukraine in attacks against Russia veered off course and crashed in NATO countries.

"The initial reaction was exactly the same as it is now in Romania — total panic. 'Oh no, the Russians are coming, the Russians are attacking.' Then, a short time later, it turned out that it had nothing to do with Russian aircraft, and that these were Ukrainian drones," the Kremlin leader said in Kazakhstan.

"They flew in and crashed there either due to electronic warfare or for other reasons, like technical malfunctions. And in this case, I think we are most likely dealing with that exact type of situation," Putin added.

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Romania said the drone crash "represents a serious and irresponsible escalation on the part of the Russian Federation," adding that it had informed the NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte about the incident and "requested measures to accelerate the transfer of anti-drone capabilities to Romania."

In a call with Romania's president later on Friday, Rutte pledged the alliance's "absolute solidarity" with Bucharest and slammed "Russia's reckless behaviour is a danger to us all."

Sources at NATO told AFP it remained unclear whether Romania planned to invoke Article 4 of the military alliance's treaty, a rarely used mechanism that initiates consultations with other members and can potentially lead to some form of joint decision or action on behalf of NATO.

Article 4 was last invoked in September 2025 after Russian drones entered Polish airspace during an overnight attack on Ukraine.

While drone incursions have been detected in Romania dozens of times since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the latest incident marks the first time a stray drone has hit a residential building.

Romania's military scrambled two F-16 fighter jets immediately after the aerial targets were

detected in the country's airspace.

The cross-border incident coincided with a nationwide air raid alert issued in neighboring Ukraine overnight in anticipation of Russian strikes. Authorities in southern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia reported that at least two people were wounded following attacks there.

AFP contributed reporting.

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