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Belarus Summons Ukrainian Envoy After Drone Strike on Belarusian Soccer Team Bus

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Yegor Kovalchuk / MAX

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry said Thursday that it summoned a senior Ukrainian diplomat to protest a deadly drone strike on a bus carrying a Belarusian youth soccer team.

Belarusian and Russian authorities accused Ukraine's military of targeting the vehicle as it traveled through Russia's western border region of Bryansk on Wednesday. A woman accompanying the team was killed, and six others, including four teenagers, were wounded.

Following the incident, federal investigators in Russia launched a terrorism probe. Russia's Foreign Ministry denounced the attack as "another monstrous crime."

Ukraine has denied it targeted the bus and dismissed the allegations as a "provocation."

Belarusian state media reported that officials handed Ukraine's chargé d'affaires, Ivan Novitsky, a formal note of protest, "decisively" condemning the incident as an "inhumane act

of terrorism."

Related article: Ukrainian Drone Strike Targets Bus Carrying Belarusian Youth Soccer Team in Bryansk Region, Killing 1

Authorities in Minsk demanded that Ukraine carry out an "immediate and objective investigation" into the incident and punish those responsible. They also said Belarus "reserves the right to take appropriate action in response to the Ukrainian side."

Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said he was ready to "join the transparent and impartial establishment of all the facts and circumstances of this event."

Meanwhile, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko maintained that the bus was attacked by a "Ukrainian drone" despite Kyiv's claims that "the Russians themselves may have carried out such a strike."

"We aren't going to jump to conclusions, but we're clearly stating the fact that this drone is of Ukrainian origin," Lukashenko said during a military briefing.

He also warned that dragging Belarus into the war would "end badly for those trying to do it."

Belarus allowed Moscow to use its territory as a staging ground for the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

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