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Japan Admits Need to Counter Espionage After Russian 'Den of Spies' Report

By AFP

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Japan has said that it recognizes the need to counter foreign intelligence better after the New York Times reported that Russia had turned the country into a "den of spies" and a key source of weapons components.

The newspaper, in an investigation published Sunday, reported that thanks to "weak espionage laws," Moscow was using Japan as a hub for intelligence gathering and procurement of dual-use technology needed for its war in Ukraine.

"We recognise that in a rapidly changing security environment there is a growing need to counter foreign intelligence activities — such as the acquisition of critical information — that threaten Japan's national security," chief government spokesman Minoru Kihara said on

Monday.

Declining to comment directly on NYT's report, Kihara told reporters that Tokyo "must address this issue with even greater rigor."

Kihara added that Japan's parliament this year approved legislation paving the way for the creation of a new national body to coordinate its fragmented intelligence activities.

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The NYT report cited Ukrainian government estimates that 90% of Russian missiles and drones contain Japanese components.

It said that Russia's operations in Japan were being run by Maksim Vladimirovich Filchenkov, a Russian intelligence operative working under cover at the Tokyo office of Russian airline Aeroflot.

Because direct exports to Russia are restricted, procurement networks use intermediary companies and third countries like Vietnam, Uzbekistan and Sri Lanka to move components into Russia, the report added.

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