

Lukashenko Denies Belarus Breached Latvian Border as Experts Claim Intelligence Operation

October 13, 2026



A Latvian border pole at the Latvian-Belarusian border. **Gints Ivuskans / AFP**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday [claimed](#) Latvia staged a security breach on its border last week after a previously unknown group took responsibility for the raid.

Experts [told](#) Latvian media that the group, Chyornye Rusy (Black Rus), could be a front for Belarusian and Russian intelligence services.

Last Tuesday, Latvian authorities [reported](#) that masked and armed individuals attempted to force a group of 20 irregular migrants to push through the border between Belarus and Latvia into Latvian territory. The intruders damaged electrical equipment and stole surveillance cameras before retreating back into Belarusian territory.

Lukashenko dismissed the claims as a fabrication designed for Latvia to secure EU funding.

“We have absolutely nothing to do with this,” he said during a military readiness meeting, according to Belarusian state news agency Belta.

“Operations involving entry into the territory of a neighboring state are impossible without the agreement of the president. Such things were not coordinated with me, which means they were not conducted,” he added.

On Wednesday, Black Rus [released](#) a video claiming responsibility for the cross-border raid in which one of its members promised further incursions into NATO territory.

Related article: [Lithuania Deploys Army to Kaliningrad Border After Belarus-Latvia Breach](#)

Latvia’s state security service launched proceedings into the creation of a criminal organization aimed at committing grave acts against peace and national security, according to Latvia’s LSM public service media organization.

Jānis Sārts, director of the Riga-based NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, described the group’s video release as an “information operation directly linked to both the Belarusian and Russian authorities.”

“These types of groups cannot exist in Belarus and Russia independently,” Sārts told LSM.

Exiled Belarusian military journalist Dmitry Khalko described Black Rus as a “proxy” akin to the masked Russian soldiers who seized control of Ukraine’s Crimea in 2014.

“If necessary, the group can be blamed for certain events, border sabotage and so on,” Khalko told LSM. “Now they have a fig leaf to cover themselves with and say it’s not us, we don’t know anything.”

Original url:

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