

2025

# Russian aggressions in the West



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Russia has continued its military operations. While Ukraine remains the primary focus, incidents have also occurred within Western territories. All cases presented here occurred after January 2024, and supporting evidence is provided below. We have skipped the incidents in Denmark, Poland and the Baltics related to the presence of drones because they have been broadly publicized. Submarine infrastructure or cyber attacks have also been spared.

## 1. UNITED KINGDOM

1) **London arson on Ukraine-aid warehouses (Leyton, 20 Mar 2024) – Wagner-directed; first convictions under the UK National Security Act (NSA 2023).**

- **What happened:** Units in a Leyton industrial estate storing humanitarian aid/Starlink kit for Ukraine were set ablaze (≈£1 m damage). The plot was orchestrated by **Dylan Earl** with **Jake Reeves**, who had contacted the **Wagner Group** over Telegram; they recruited **Nii Mensah**, **Jakeem Rose**, and **Ugnius Asmena** to carry out the arson. Evidence included CCTV, livestreamed video of the fire, and phone data. A linked plot targeted **Hide Restaurant** and **Hedonism Wines** in Mayfair, including discussion of explosives and even kidnapping the owner (a Kremlin critic). A related Madrid arson against the same company was noted by investigators.
- **Outcome:** On **8 Jul 2025** three men were convicted of aggravated arson; **Earl** and **Reeves** became **the first people convicted under the NSA 2023** for Wagner-linked activity; **Ashton Evans** was convicted of failing to disclose information about terrorist acts. Sentencing to follow.

2) **Essex arrests for assisting a Russian intelligence service (Grays, 17–18 Sep 2025).**

- **What happened:** UK counter-terrorism police arrested **two men (41, 46) and a woman (35)** under the **National Security Act** on suspicion of assisting a **Russian intelligence service**. All three were taken to a London station and later **released on bail with conditions** while enquiries continue.
- **Context:** Police highlighted the broader pattern of Russian services recruiting UK-based proxies; they explicitly referenced (but separated from) the Wagner-linked London arson case above.

- **Status:** Investigation ongoing.

## 2. GERMANY

### 3) Two alleged Russian agents scouting U.S. sites in Bavaria (arrests announced 18–19 Apr 2024).

- **What happened:** German federal prosecutors (GBA) announced the arrest warrants and detention of **two suspects in Bayreuth** on grave suspicion of acting for a foreign service, including **conspiracy to cause an explosion, arson, and sabotage-agent activity**—with tasking that included **reconnoitring U.S. military facilities**.
- **Status:** Proceedings under national-security statutes; arrests publicly confirmed by GBA and covered widely in German/foreign press.

### 4) “Thomas H.” — Bundeswehr procurement officer case (Koblenz → Düsseldorf, conviction 27 May 2024).

- **What happened:** The former captain at the Bundeswehr’s procurement office in Koblenz **offered internal material** to the Russian consulate/embassy.
- **Outcome:** The **Düsseldorf High Regional Court (OLG)** sentenced **Thomas H.** to **3 years 6 months** for **agent activity and breach of official secrets**; Reuters and Al Jazeera reported the same.

## 3. POLAND & LITHUANIA (linked sabotage wave)

### 5) Warsaw’s Marywilka 44 megamarket fire (12 May 2024) — “ordered by Russian services.”

- **What happened:** A huge blaze destroyed the **Marywilka 44** shopping center (≈1,400 small businesses). After a year-long probe, the PM said it was **arson ordered by Russian services**, coordinated by a person in Russia; arrests followed, others identified.
- **Follow-up:** On **12 May 2025**, Poland ordered the **closure of Russia’s consulate in Kraków**, explicitly citing sabotage evidence tied to Marywilka.

### 6) Vilnius IKEA arson (9 May 2024; attribution announced 17 Mar 2025) — prosecutor: GRU orchestrated.

- **What happened:** Lithuanian prosecutors said **Russia’s GRU** used a **chain of 20+ intermediaries** to recruit **two**

**Ukrainian nationals** (offered €10,000 and a **used BMW**) to plant a timed device that ignited a fire at IKEA Vilnius. They added the store's **blue-and-yellow logo** may have been symbolically targeted. One suspect was detained in Lithuania, the other in Poland.

- **Status:** Trials in Lithuania/Poland; Moscow denies involvement.

**7) Same Colombian operative tied to Poland & Czech attacks (announced 29 Jul 2025).**

- **What happened:** Polish officials said a **Colombian national** hired by Russian services **committed arson in Poland** and then **set a bus depot ablaze in the Czech Republic**, before Czech authorities caught and prosecuted him.
- **Status:** Poland case ongoing; **Czech court later gave him 8 years** over the Prague attack (details below).

## 4. CZECH REPUBLIC

**8) Prague bus-depot arson attempt (week of 3–9 Jun 2024) – South American suspect; Russian link alleged.**

- **What happened:** A **26-year-old Colombian** poured fuel over city buses at a Prague depot; staff extinguished the flames; he was arrested within days and charged with terrorism. The **PM Petr Fiala** said it fit a **Russian sabotage campaign**.
- **Outcome:** In **2025**, a Prague court **sentenced him to 8 years**; evidence included **Telegram tasking** and a **\$3,000 promise**.

## 5. BALTICS

**9) Estonia – 10 suspects detained for Russia-ordered sabotage (announced 20–21 Feb 2024).**

- **What happened:** Estonia's Kapo said **ten people** were detained in a **hybrid operation** directed by Russian services; acts included intimidation and vandalism (**e.g., smashing the Interior Minister's car windows**) and other fear-spreading tasks.
- **Status:** Multiple pre-trial cases; investigations continue.

10) **Latvia – suspected espionage for Russia (detained 27 Aug; disclosed 17 Sep 2025).**

- **What happened:** The **State Security Service (VDD)** detained a **Latvian citizen for collecting info on Latvian military objects to pass to a Russian service.**
- **Status:** Pre-trial; public notice issued 17 Sep 2025.

## 6. NETHERLANDS

11) **First confirmed Russian cyber-sabotage in The Netherlands (revealed 22 Apr 2025) plus broader hybrid ops.**

- **What happened:** The Dutch **MIVD** (public annual report) revealed that in **2023** a **Russian hacker group** carried out a **cyber-sabotage attack** on the **digital operating system of a Dutch public facility—first of its kind** in the Netherlands; **no damage** resulted. Another attempted breach of critical infrastructure was **thwarted**.
- **Status/Docs:** Detailed in the **Netherlands Defence Intelligence & Security Service public annual report (2024)** and covered by Dutch and international outlets.

## 7. NORWAY

12) **Former U.S. Embassy security guard in Oslo – spied for Russia and Iran (arrested Nov 2024 → convicted 16 Oct 2025).**

- **What happened:** A **28-year-old Norwegian** who worked as a **security guard at the U.S. Embassy** admitted the factual conduct but denied criminal intent; prosecutors said he provided **embassy floor plans, identities, and procedures** to **Russian and Iranian services, for payments in euros/crypto.**
- **Outcome:** **Convicted** in Oslo on **Oct 16, 2025; 3 years 7 months** imprisonment; earlier indictment reported July 2025.

## 8. NOTES ON MODUS OPERANDI

Russian groups have been **using intermediaries and paying local people—including those who are not Russian—to carry out acts of arson or sabotage.** This has been seen in the UK, where Wagner has directed arson attacks, as well as in Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic, where similar methods have been used.

Polish officials have also said there is evidence that saboteurs with links to Russian intelligence have been paid using **cryptocurrency**. In response to these suspected activities, **EU countries are moving towards restricting the movement of Russian diplomats within the Schengen area**, as reported on 7 October 2025, though this proposal has not yet been fully adopted at the EU level as of today.

**EU diplomats in Moscow don't have fully free movement.** In practice they usually have to **notify the Russian MFA in advance** for many domestic trips, and some areas are outright **permit-only**. A clear public example: **UK diplomats must give at least 5 working days' notice for any travel beyond a 120-km radius** from their post, with itinerary, purpose, contacts, transport and lodging details. That illustrates the model Russia applies to Western embassies, including EU missions.

- **U.S. precedent (shows the same mechanism):** The U.S. State Department notes that **Russia restricts embassy staff travel**; historically both sides have required **advance notification outside a set radius**.
- **Permit-only zones inside Russia (applies to everyone, diplomats included):**
  - **Border-security zones** ("пограничная зона") along frontiers require **FSB permits** under federal rules.
  - **Closed cities (ZATO) and other restricted areas** likewise need **special authorization**; many governments warn travellers (and missions) about these permit requirements.

**What this means, practically, for EU/EEAS staff in Moscow** boils down to **advancing notification** before going far beyond Moscow, **to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**.

This is done formally through a diplomatic note. For certain regions—such as border areas, parts of the Arctic, military zones, or closed cities (ZATO)—**special permits are also needed in addition to the standard notification**. The rules can change or be applied differently **depending on the country or diplomatic mission**, as they are sometimes based on reciprocal arrangements.