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Ukraine

# War of drones or war of nerves

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**Russian president Vladimir Putin is increasing incursions and threats while intensifying his attacks on Ukraine. The use of “low-cost” drones, marked by rapid innovations, has its origins in Ukrainian popular resistance. It is now also a central part of the Russian war economy.**

Putin is redoubling the manifestations of his capacity to cause harm in order to arrive in a position of strength in possible negotiations. While Moscow may have neither the objective nor the military means to start a war against another country, Russia is increasing its incursions and threats — Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states being the first targets — and the war rhetoric is beginning to target Finland.

In addition to the “exercises” conducted with Belarus, officially deploying 13,000 men (30,000 according to Lithuania) in Operation Zapad (West) 2025, the swarms of drones over Poland or the violation of Romania’s airspace aim to test reactions and hide the essential: the deadly daily attacks on Ukraine. In August, Russian forces killed at least 208 civilians in Ukraine and wounded 827 others. And on the night of September 12, the Russian army launched 164 combat drones and an Iskander-M/Kn-23 ballistic missile against Ukraine.

## With drones, war at a lower cost

Resistance to the Putin-led invasion has initiated a new war of the 21st century: the drone war. Born of Ukrainian popular inventiveness, and “low cost,” it quickly became part of the war economy deployed by the attacked country. Russian military power has since adapted to it, with a completely different scale of means, while NATO is showing great difficulty in dealing with it.

Anti-drone systems are used to protect infrastructure. But if the attack concerns an entire border, the allies are now forced to rely on their fighter jets with on-board missiles, as was the case in Poland, which is costly.

## Adapting to changes

Western general staffs could resort to more rudimentary but innovative solutions, deployed today in Ukraine. Called Sky Fortress or Zvook (“sound” in Ukrainian), they are based on the deployment of thousands of acoustic sensors over vast swathes of territory, capable of detecting the noise emitted by drones. The unit cost of these antennas does not exceed a few hundred dollars, according to the Ukrainians. The entire network would thus cost barely more than a single Patriot missile (i.e. 3.4 million euros, for the most recent version). Ukraine also manufactures interceptor drones that are responsible for colliding or exploding near the targeted drones. The EU is investing in an industrial project for a “drone wall” in this spirit.

But these technologies are evolving at an unprecedented speed — we’re talking about months or weeks, whereas it takes decades to build a high-performance fighter. But above all, the Ukrainians know that their allies are not ready to hunt drones with big machine guns mounted on trucks as their soldiers do in the heart of their national liberation struggle.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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