

Assessment of the threat from Russia

The security situation has deteriorated further. Russia has intensified its use of sabotage, destructive cyber attacks and is attacking targets in Europe with drones. The hybrid war is escalating.

A case in point is the foiled drone attack on the Leipzig/Halle Airport which, according to German authorities, had been planned by Russia over a period of several months.

Russia has become more willing to take risks. Russian drones and, in some cases, even missiles have impacted NATO countries bordering Ukraine.

In Denmark, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) has publicly warned that Russia is planning and preparing sabotage on Danish soil against defence companies.

Russian forces are increasingly acting aggressively towards NATO military units in the Baltic Sea region. The incident on 14 September 2026, when a Russian frigate in the waters off Gedser fired flares at a Danish military helicopter is the most recent and most serious example of such an incident involving Danish military units.

Russia is under pressure

Russia is under more pressure than it has been at any other point during the war against Ukraine. Ukraine's sustained long-range attacks are causing still more extensive damage deep inside Russia. Russia is suffering heavy losses for marginal territorial gains in Ukraine. At the same time, the Russian economy is on the brink of a major crisis, driven by military expenditures, international sanctions and Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy infrastructure.

Western economic and military support to Ukraine is vital to the country's capability to hold back Russian forces and to raise the cost to Russia of sustaining the war.

There is no prospect of Russia achieving any major breakthroughs in the war against Ukraine over the next six months. At the same time, it is highly unlikely that President Putin will be willing to compromise on his fundamental objectives for the war. Meanwhile, Russia believes that Europe will gradually develop an autonomous military capability which, by 2030, will pose an increasing threat to Russia. For Russia, the coming years therefore present a window of opportunity, during which President Putin could conclude that it is worth the risk attempting to drastically change the security order in Europe.

Consequently, it is likely that Putin will seek to change the current trajectory.

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Russia will further escalate its hybrid war

Until recently, Russia's hybrid attacks against targets in the West have mainly been aimed at creating fear and weakening public support for aid to Ukraine. Russia has increasingly begun to directly seek to prevent support from reaching Ukraine, for instance, by conducting sabotage against defence companies or against railway transport carrying military equipment to Ukraine.

The Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) assesses that Russia will intensify its hybrid war by carrying out more frequent attacks against the West and NATO, with greater consequences for the targeted countries than in the past. This could include destructive cyber attacks that cripple critical societal functions as well as sabotage attacks that carry a high risk of casualties.

Risk of Russia launching a limited military attack on one or several NATO countries

At the same time, there is a low but growing risk that Russia will launch a limited military attack against one or several NATO countries bordering Russia. This could happen even if Russia continues the war against Ukraine and has not built the military capabilities necessary to wage a regional war.

A limited military attack would be a desperate move on Russia's part and, like the intensified hybrid attacks, could potentially take place in the coming months. The purpose would be to redirect European resources away from supporting Ukraine and to sow division within NATO, should the alliance fail to agree on a collective response.

Such a limited military attack could take the form of isolated strikes with long-range weapons on infrastructure that is vital to the support to Ukraine. In this situation, Russia might then claim that the weapons only struck NATO territory because they were jammed by Ukraine. It could also be a so-called false flag operation, where Russia uses Ukrainian-made drones to attack a NATO country.

Russia could also deploy a limited number of military forces, possibly without national insignia, into NATO countries bordering Russia. However, ahead of such a deployment, Russia would likely first build up regular forces near the border in order to be able to counter a potential NATO response. A build-up of forces would require several months of preparation and will be difficult to conceal.

Highly unlikely that Russia will launch an invasion

The DDIS still sees no indications that Russia will launch an outright invasion of one or several NATO countries. Even if Russia decides to invade a NATO country, it would likely take Russia at least six months to prepare and build up the necessary forces. Although a Russian invasion is highly unlikely, it cannot be ruled out.

Russia will likely carry out military attacks only if it assesses that such attacks will not result in a war by triggering a collective NATO military response. However, Russia is likely uncertain about what could trigger such a war. Consequently, there is a risk that Russia assesses that the NATO countries will not respond collectively, especially if Russia assesses that the United States cannot or will not support the European NATO countries in a potential war against Russia.

The updated assessment supplements DDIS's 9 February 2025 assessment

On 9 February 2025, the DDIS published an assessment of the threat posed by Russia to the Danish Realm, which expanded on a number of its assessments of the threat from Russia set out in Intelligence Outlook 2024.

In the February 2025 threat assessment, the DDIS assessed when Russia could be ready for different types of war. The timelines depended on that the war in Ukraine ends or turns into a frozen conflict, that Russia's conventional military capabilities continue to grow while the West fails to simultaneously build up its military capabilities at the same speed, and that Russia assesses that the United States cannot or will not support the European NATO countries in a potential war against Russia:

- Within approximately six months, Russia will be able to wage a local war in a country bordering Russia.
- Within approximately two years, Russia will pose a credible threat to one or several NATO countries and thus be ready for a regional war against several countries in the Baltic Sea region.
- Within approximately five years, Russia will be ready for a large-scale war on the European continent.

The timeframes stated above remain valid for the three types of war mentioned. This updated assessment, however, concerns Russia's willingness and ability to escalate against the West in the coming months, either by carrying out more frequent and more severe hybrid attacks or by carrying out limited military attacks against one or several NATO countries bordering Russia. Russia could do this even if the war in Ukraine continues and Russia is not ready for a regional war or a large-scale war against NATO.

The DDIS applies the below scale of probability



The probabilities are estimates, not calculated statistical probabilities.
 "We assess" corresponds to "likely" unless a different probability level is indicated.