

Armed drone found at Leipzig Airport

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On 5 August, Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior announced that staff at Leipzig/Halle Airport had discovered a drone carrying explosives and a detonator. The device was found in the immediate vicinity of a Ukrainian Antonov transport aircraft carrying ammunition that had previously arrived from France and was awaiting onward transport. Police safely disarmed the device. According to reports in the German media, the drone was equipped with an explosive device containing PETN and Semtex, both of which are used for military purposes. The device most likely failed to explode because of a faulty detonator. At around the same time, a DHL cargo aircraft approaching Leipzig Airport collided mid-air with a second drone. Airport operations were temporarily suspended, and an investigation was launched by the Saxony State Criminal Police Office and the Dresden Public Prosecutor General's Office. Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has also joined the investigation. Federal Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (CSU) stated that the perpetrators had acted in a highly organised manner and suggested that "foreign powers" could have been behind the incident. He added that "further hybrid attacks cannot be ruled out, making it necessary to strengthen the country's counter-drone capabilities". Media outlets and some politicians have pointed to possible Russian involvement in the suspected act of sabotage.

The German authorities have treated the drone incident as a serious threat to national security. Previous incidents of a similar nature have led to increased investment in the security services through additional funding and the expansion of their powers. The lack of suitable equipment remains one of the main weaknesses of Germany's counter-drone capabilities. Effective protection is also hindered by an unclear division of responsibilities among the agencies tasked with maintaining security.

Commentary

- **Leipzig/Halle Airport has once again become the target of a hostile act of sabotage.** The airport is a strategic hub for freight transport and, to some extent, military logistics in Germany, while also ranking among the most important cargo airports in Europe. Since 2022, transport aircraft operated by the Ukrainian company Antonov Logistics SALIS have been permanently based in Saxony, carrying humanitarian aid and oversized cargo, including shipments to Rzeszów. In July 2024, a parcel caught fire at the airport's logistics centre. The incident formed part of a coordinated sabotage campaign across Europe that prosecutors in Germany, Poland and Lithuania have attributed to Russian military intelligence.

- **German airports regularly report unauthorised drone activity, although in most cases the authorities are unable to identify either the operators or their motives.** In the first half of 2026, Germany's air navigation service provider (DFS) recorded 145 such incidents at or in the vicinity of airports. According to the German Aerospace Centre (DLR), a total of 226 drone-related incidents were recorded in 2025. Leipzig/Halle Airport accounted for 18 of these incidents during the first half of this year.
- **Despite its previous experience and determination to improve the situation, Germany remains insufficiently prepared to defend against drones** (see '[Drones over Germany – plugging legislative and technical gaps](#)'). At the end of 2025, the German government established a new Federal Police unit dedicated to countering drones, creating approximately 130 new positions, and launched a joint federal-state Counter-Drone Centre. In addition, eight airports designated as critical infrastructure because of their importance for passenger and cargo traffic are to be equipped with counter-drone systems. These are Frankfurt, Berlin, Munich, Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Leipzig/Halle and Cologne/Bonn airports. So far, the installation of the system has been completed only at Frankfurt Airport.
- **One of the factors that continues to hamper effective protection against drones is the division of responsibilities between the federal states and the federal authorities, as well as the extent of cooperation with the Bundeswehr.** In Germany, responsibility for internal security rests primarily with the state governments and the security services operating under their authority. Oversight of airports, railway infrastructure, federal buildings and maritime traffic falls to the Federal Police, while military installations are the responsibility of the armed forces. The Bundestag is currently considering amendments to the Federal Police Act that would expand the force's powers to counter drones, including the authority to shoot them down. The legislation is scheduled to be adopted in the autumn and must also be approved by the Bundesrat. The German government plans to allocate more than €100 million annually to provide the necessary equipment and recruit additional personnel.