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Belgium sets up anti-drone squad – then forgets to use it

Brussels “didn’t even try” to deploy its own specialized police unit to deal with recent UAV incidents, Nieuwsblad has reported



A screenshot from the Belgian police official website demonstrating the members of the anti-drone unit. © www.police.be

Despite having its own specialized anti-drone police unit, Belgium did not deploy it during any of the recent AUV incidents, Nieuwsblad reported on Monday. Instead, Brussels asked fellow NATO members for help in countering what it calls a “*hybrid threat*.”

The unit, created four years ago and known as C-UAS, consists of 30 certified officers equipped with two drone-detection antennas, four jammers, and three net launchers, according to the report. The police website says the team “*provides*

technological support in combating drones that pose a serious threat to public safety.”

The unit, however, remained absent when an unidentified drone disrupted operations at Zaventem

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Airport near Brussels for hours last Tuesday or when drones were seen near Liege Airport over the weekend.

On Sunday, Defense Minister Theo Francken announced that the UK had sent a unit to Belgium to counter drone threats. Brussels also asked Berlin and Paris for aid, according to Nieuwsblad.

Belgian police seem unaware of their own capabilities, according to a member of the unit. *“We’re still guessing why we weren’t called in,”* the individual told Nieuwsblad. *“We didn’t even try. I think many people in the police force don’t even know we exist.”*

The unit’s antennas cannot detect newer 5G-enabled drones, and the lack of modern equipment often forces officers to rely on binoculars to track potential threats, the source said. All 30 members also have other responsibilities, making it impossible to provide round-the-clock monitoring even at a few key locations, according to the report.

Police declined to comment on its *“resources or specific actions,”* Nieuwsblad wrote.

Several Western officials have accused Russia of violating EU airspace with aircraft and drones, calling it a part of a *“hybrid war.”* The Kremlin has denied the allegations, branding them anti-Russian *“hysteria.”*

Drone sightings near sensitive sites such as airports and military bases have been common in Belgium, according to Skeyes, the national air traffic controller. The agency reported more than 31,000 drone flights near those areas in 2024, about 90% of which were unauthorized, L’Echo reported last month. The issue, however, had until recently received scant attention in the Belgian media.

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