

# Latvia invites Japan into coalition supporting Ukraine drones

Latvian foreign minister says Tokyo could offer nonlethal units in war serving as tech testbed

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TOKYO -- Latvia has invited Japan to join a group of Western countries providing support for Ukraine's drone warfare against Russia, Latvian Foreign Minister Baiba Braze told Nikkei.

The Drone Coalition, originally proposed by Latvia and created in February 2024, aims to supply Ukraine with drones and parts as well as facilitate technical cooperation in related industries.

"Twenty countries have already joined the drone coalition, and Japan has also been invited to join," Braze said.

The group's current members are concentrated around Europe, including Ukraine itself, the U.K., France, Italy, Germany and Turkey. If Japan joins, it would be the first East Asian member.

Japan's Defense Ministry has acknowledged the invitation and said it is considering whether to participate. The new administration set to be chosen after the Liberal Democratic Party leadership election in October is expected to make the decision on whether to join the coalition.

The coalition has provided 1.8 billion euros (\$2.12 billion) in support as of last year.

Members are using the initiative as an opportunity to gain valuable information on drone usage in actual combat, helping many participants foster their domestic drone industries. With drone defense emerging as an urgent challenge for Japan amid China's

growing supremacy in the field, Japan could leverage such know-how for its own drone defenses.

Braze noted that the war has led to great strides in drone technology. "Our shared task is to rapidly absorb the lessons learned from Ukraine -- to test, produce and innovate," she said.

While it would be legally difficult for Japan to supply lethal weapons, Braze sees room for cooperation in other areas such as detection and reconnaissance.

"This is not only just about attack drones, but also defense drones, interceptor drones," she said. "It's electronic warfare, positioning systems, and many other critical capabilities."

It has been estimated that up to 80% of casualties on both sides in the Ukraine war have been caused by drone attacks, while intelligence gathered by drones is considered vital for informing artillery and air strikes. Russia has used the war as an opportunity to drastically improve its drone warfare capabilities and production, as has North Korea, which has deployed troops to the conflict in support of Moscow.

Braze also discussed Russia's growing disinformation campaigns in Western countries through social media and other channels.

"Russia is investing great resources in [an] attempt to destabilize our societies, undermine public trust in our democratic institutions and interfere in our domestic political affairs through the information space," she said. "This is part of its warfare concept -- divide societies as much as possible and fuel internal conflict and polarization because then the political decision-making becomes much more difficult."

Latvia, which borders Russia and hosts the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, has been a leader in combating disinformation. Dealing with such operations by Russia is "an area where our knowledge and experience can be exchanged to mutual benefit," Braze said.

The minister stressed the need to continue providing support to Ukraine while curbing the energy revenue used to sustain Russia's invasion, which has now lasted well over three years.

"A strong, democratic, resilient Ukraine is Europe's deterrent from Russian aggression and our security guarantee," she said. "Ukraine is a country we must learn from, respect, support and stand by. Ukraine is fighting for all of us -- and for the rules-based international order rooted in the U.N. Charter."