

Belarus Says Detained More Than 20 Over Attack on Russian Plane

By [AFP](#)

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The Machulishchy airfield in Belarus. **Planet Labs**

Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko said Tuesday that more than 20 people had been detained in connection with an attack on a Russian military plane, claimed by regime opponents late last month.

"To date, more than 20 accomplices who are in Belarus have been detained. The rest are hiding," said Lukashenko, a key Kremlin ally, according to state news agency Belta.

He however identified the presumed main culprit as a joint Russian and Ukrainian citizen.

Belarus's exiled opposition said partisans had destroyed the Russian plane at an airstrip near the capital Minsk.

Lukashenko forced all his critics from the country after historic protests in 2020 and jailed the rest.

The authoritarian leader confirmed Tuesday that an A-50 plane had been targeted but claimed it "did not suffer any significant damage."

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He described the main suspect as a "terrorist" who had been trained by Kyiv.

"He was recruited by the Ukrainian special services in 2014 apparently. He is an IT specialist or somebody well versed in IT," he said.

Lukashenko said the attack was carried out using small drones to avoid detection.

The exiled Belarusian opposition said last month that the operation was carried out by two Belarusians, who then fled the country.

Belarus, Russia's only ally in Europe against Kyiv, has not taken a direct role in Moscow's offensive on Ukraine.

But Lukashenko did allow Belarusian territory to be used as a launchpad for Moscow's military intervention over a year ago.

According to Kyiv, Russia has also used Belarusian airstrips to launch strikes on Ukraine.

In recent months, Belarus and Russia have held a series of military exercises and Ukraine has expressed fears that Minsk could enter the conflict.

But Lukashenko has said Minsk would only join the fighting in Ukraine if attacked first by Kyiv's army.

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