

## Baltic Security in the German Press

- **29 September – 1 October 2026** — Russia threatens NATO with nuclear weapons in an informal letter should Kaliningrad be isolated · Estonia's government blames Russian intelligence for the arson attack on Milrem Robotics · Latvia's defence minister reports automated drone defences on the Russian border close to completion · Defence Minister Pistorius announces a drone regiment for 2027

### NEWS HOTSPOT

#### Kaliningrad letter: Moscow ties the exclave to a nuclear threat

- Russia sent NATO **an informal letter**: should NATO states try to isolate Kaliningrad from the rest of the country, Russia would be prepared to use **its entire arsenal** “including nuclear weapons” “to defend its territory”. NATO confirmed receipt and sees the letter mainly as a reaction to an air exercise meant, according to military sources, to show that NATO could control Kaliningrad **in the event of Russian aggression**. Putin **reaffirmed the warning** and denied plans to attack NATO states.

### BOUQUETS THIS WEEK

- ★ **FAZ, 1 Oct** (*Thomas Gutschker, Friedrich Schmidt*) — places the Kaliningrad threat in context with correspondents in Brussels and Moscow and adds Lithuania's view, incl. Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys
- ★ **taz, 1 Oct** (*Ieva Strazdina*) — on-the-ground report from the Latvian–Belarusian border: border guards in Daugavpils and Silene describe organised people smuggling they attribute to Belarus and Russia

### BRICKBATS THIS WEEK

- ▲ **BILD, 26 Sep** (*original headline*) — presented a deleted commentary by the Russian state agency RIA Novosti as an announced attack on Lithuania
- ▲ **NachDenkSeiten, 30 Sep** (*Sevim Dağdelen*) — claims without evidence that Poland and the Baltic states are “sent forward, nothing else” in US interests, denying them security interests of their own

### WEEKLY SUMMARY

#### How the German press covered the Baltics this week

Extract — see the German briefing for full analysis, quotes, and media-by-media breakdown.

**Coverage — Nuclear threat over Kaliningrad: Lithuania mostly appears as a location.** The dpa version ran under the strapline “Tensions in the Baltic” at **ZEIT, 29 Sep** and **Tagesspiegel, 29 Sep** without naming a Baltic state; Reuters-based reports placed the exclave between Poland and Lithuania (**Berliner Zeitung, 30 Sep**). Lithuania's role featured in the sample mainly in FAZ and **t-online, 1 Oct**, where DGAP expert Stefan Meister calls seizing Kaliningrad after an attack on the Baltics realistic. **“Russia is failing”: the calm message overshadows the focus on defence firms.** Estonia's attribution of the Milrem Robotics fire to Russian services was widely reported as a government statement, framed by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's call to stay calm (**n-tv, 29 Sep**). Security Police chief Margo Palloson's warning of a shift towards defence companies appeared in the sample only at **Tagesspiegel, 1 Oct** and MDR; no piece linked it to Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova naming European arms plants producing for Ukraine as possible targets (**Berliner Zeitung, 30 Sep**). **Merz warns about Russia – the Baltic scenario gets lost in domestic politics.** In Münster, Chancellor Friedrich Merz named a drone war over the Baltic states as a possible scenario (**tagesschau, 1 Oct**); taz rendered it as a question, ZDFheute and t-online omitted it, and ZEIT framed it within scepticism about Ukraine aid reaching into the CDU. **Gaps —** Latvia's pre-election security (air policing for the 3 October vote, drone defences, the Belarus border) was reported accurately but separately; the campaign was not covered in the sample. Lithuanian–Polish evacuation planning across the Suwałki Gap appeared only at **FR, 1 Oct**, as translated Telegraph content. Overall, Baltic assessments rarely shape the week's main stories; FAZ is the clearest exception.

### SOURCES

- FAZ: “Ärger um Kaliningrad: Was hinter Russlands Drohungen gegen die NATO steht” (1 Oct)
  - taz: “Mit Grüßen aus Moskau” (1 Oct)
  - Berliner Zeitung: “Russland erklärt Waffenfabriken in Europa zu möglichen Angriffszielen” (30 Sep)
- Accessed 2 Oct 2026.