



# Tulcea: radar never saw the drone, a resident reported it

*A drone crossed into Romania, flew to a wood five kilometres from the Ukrainian border, crashed and exploded. The defence ministry learned of it when a member of the public rang the emergency number. It was never on radar.*

## INCIDENT DETAILS • 5WH

- Who** Operator unidentified; no claim and no attribution. Romania's defence ministry and the Tulcea emergency inspectorate responded.
- What** A drone entered NATO airspace, crashed in woodland and exploded. The ministry stated radar did not detect it because it was flying at a very low altitude.
- Where** Near Luncavita, Tulcea County, in the Danube Delta - about five kilometres from the Ukrainian border.
- When** Friday 14 Aug 2026, the ministry notified around midday.
- Why** Not established; it followed a Russian drone attack on Odesa overnight.
- How** A very low-altitude transit that defeated ground radar. Identified only after it crashed, and only because a member of the public rang 112. Casualties - none.

## IMPACT

- Human: none. No casualties and no damage; the aircraft came down in woodland.
- Detection: a drone crossed a NATO border, flew inland and detonated without ever appearing on radar.
- Sequence: the state was alerted by a member of the public. Everything after the crash went right; everything before it was invisible.
- Cumulative: four drone events in three days on one flank. The frequency is the effect, generated at negligible cost.

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS



- 12-13 Aug** Five drones tracked, two destroyed
- 13 Aug** Debris at Costinesti beach
- 14 Aug** A drone downed over Latvia
- Overnight: Odesa attacked; alert issued
  - Midday: a resident rings in a crash
  - Fire crews and a helicopter deploy
  - The ministry states radar never saw it

## ASSESSMENT, LESSONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Low altitude is the whole method, and it is not a sophisticated one.
- The reporting chain that worked was a member of the public who happened to be there.
- Frequency is the effect, not any individual incursion.
- Detected in Latvia and undetected here on the same day - the variable was detection, not response.