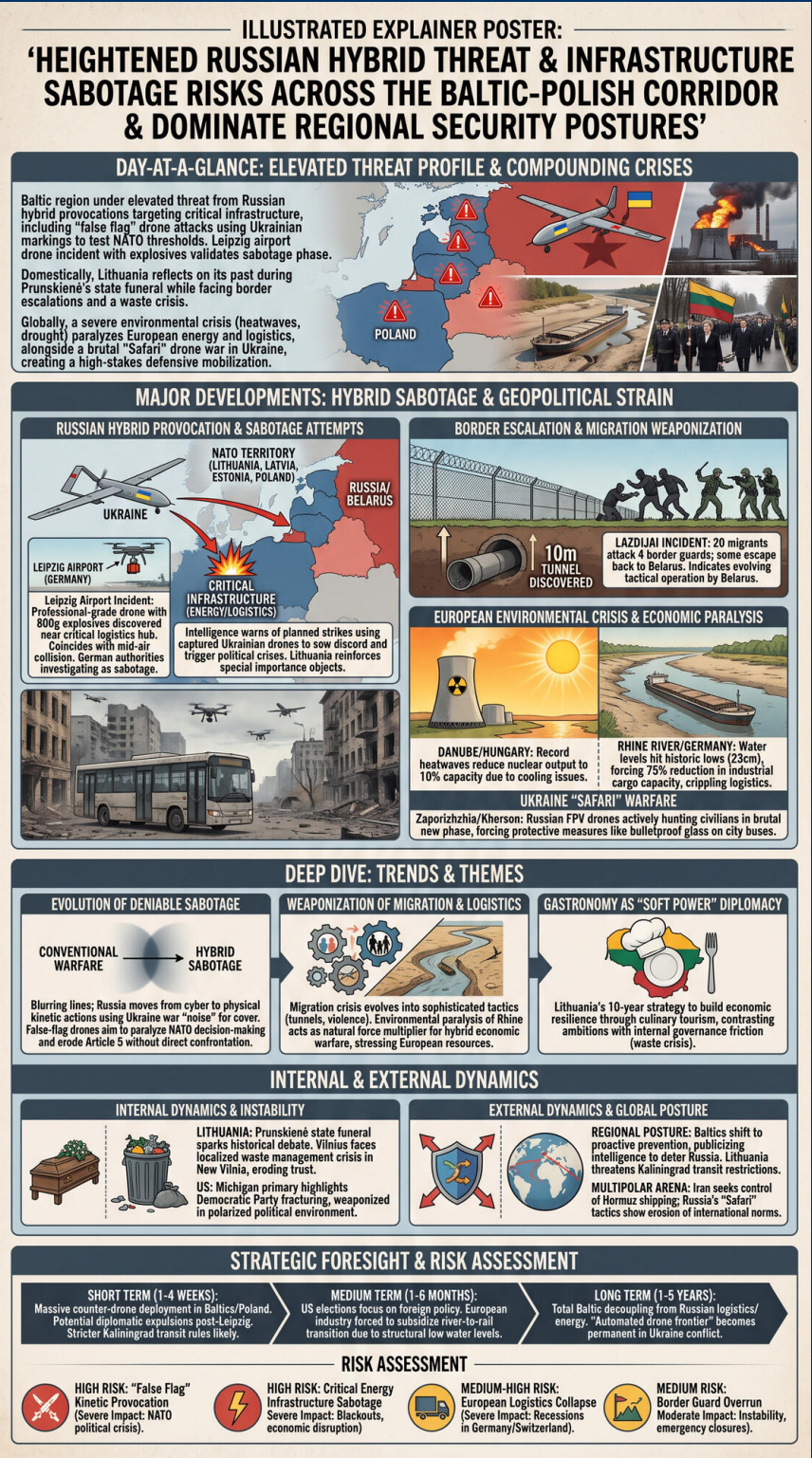


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

LRT

AUGUST 6, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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HEIGHTENED RUSSIAN HYBRID
THREAT ACTIVITY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE SABOTAGE
RISKS ACROSS THE BALTIC-POLISH
CORRIDOR DOMINATE REGIONAL
SECURITY POSTURES.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Baltic region is currently operating under an elevated threat profile following intelligence reports indicating that Russia is actively planning [hybrid provocations](#) targeting critical infrastructure. A central component of this strategy involves the potential use of captured Ukrainian drones to strike energy and logistics targets in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland. This "false flag" approach is designed to test NATO's Article 4 and 5 thresholds while simultaneously sowing discord between Kyiv and its Western allies. The discovery of a drone carrying [800 grams of military explosives](#) at Leipzig airport—a critical hub for Ukrainian Antonov logistics—serves as a concrete validation of these warnings, suggesting that the sabotage phase of Russian hybrid operations has already commenced.

Domestically, Lithuania is engaged in a period of significant historical reflection following the death of Kazimira Danutė Prunskienė, the first Prime Minister of the restored independent state. Her passing at 84 coincides with a modern security environment that mirrors the existential tensions of the early 1990s, particularly regarding [economic blockades](#) and energy sovereignty. While the state honors its founding leadership, current governance is grappling with localized crises, including a deteriorating waste management situation in Vilnius and escalating tensions on the Belarusian border, where [tunnels are being discovered](#) and border guards are coming under direct physical assault by migrants.

Global dynamics are further strained by a severe "Safari" drone warfare environment in Ukraine, where Russian FPV drones are actively hunting civilians, and a burgeoning environmental crisis across Europe. Record-breaking heatwaves have crippled [nuclear power cooling](#) on the Danube and halted commercial navigation on the Rhine, creating a compounding effect where geopolitical instability meets climate-driven economic paralysis. The overarching narrative of the day is one of high-stakes defensive mobilization against a backdrop of institutional mourning and systemic environmental stress.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Russian Hybrid Provocation Intelligence:** Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas and other regional officials have warned that Russia is planning to use [Ukrainian-marked drones](#) to strike NATO infrastructure to trigger political crises and reduce support for Ukraine.
- **Leipzig Airport Sabotage Attempt:** German authorities and NATO experts are investigating an incident where a professional-grade drone with explosives reached the [strategically important Leipzig airport](#), coinciding with a mysterious mid-air collision involving a cargo plane.
- **State Funeral of Kazimira Prunskienė:** Lithuania bid farewell to its [first Prime Minister](#), highlighting her role in breaking the 1990 Soviet blockade and her status as one of the four "pillars" of the modern state alongside Landsbergis, Brazauskas, and Ozalas.
- **Border Escalation and Tunnels:** Lithuanian authorities reported the discovery of a [10-meter tunnel](#) under the Belarusian border and a violent incident where 20 migrants attacked four border guards.
- **European Environmental Crisis:** Extreme heat in Hungary and Romania has reduced nuclear power output to [10 percent capacity](#), while low water levels on the Rhine have forced a 75 percent reduction in cargo capacity for German industry.

- **Ukraine "Safari" Warfare:** Reports from Zaporizhzhia and Kherson detail a brutal new phase of the conflict where Russian drones [deliberately hunt civilians](#), leading to the installation of bulletproof glass on city buses.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization:

- The Ukrainian military reports that it is receiving only [one-third of the air defense missiles](#) required to protect against Russian ballistic attacks, leading to high civilian casualties in Kyiv and Kharkiv.
- Lithuania is considering new preventative measures against Russia, including [restricting transit time](#) for vehicles traveling to Kaliningrad to prevent intelligence gathering and provocations.

Critical Infrastructure Security:

- Lithuania has [strengthened the protection](#) of objects of particular importance following the threat of drone attacks.
- Kaliningrad is reportedly fortifying its own infrastructure with nets and [decoy fighter paintings](#) on runways, fearing Ukrainian strikes.

Climate & Extreme Weather:

- Italy has issued a country-wide [maximum red alert](#) for heat, affecting everything from the Alps to Sicily.
- Hungarian officials have dimmed the lights on the [Parliament building](#) to save electricity as the power grid struggles under the heatwave.

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics:

- The US Senate primary in Michigan, won by [Abdul El-Sayed](#), is being framed as a major test of the Democratic Party's identity and its posture toward the Middle East and domestic social policy.
- Iran and Oman are reportedly negotiating a [new shipping route](#) through the Strait of Hormuz, which could grant Tehran greater control over Persian Gulf traffic.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Evolution of deniable Sabotage: A disturbing trend is emerging where the line between conventional warfare and hybrid sabotage is blurring. The [false-flag drone scenario](#) discussed by Lithuanian intelligence, combined with the explosive drone found in Leipzig, suggests that Russia is moving away from purely cyber-based or informational hybrid warfare toward physical kinetic actions that utilize the "noise" of the Ukraine war for cover. By using Ukrainian equipment or markings, the Kremlin aims to paralyze NATO decision-making by making [attribution difficult](#) or politically explosive. This creates a strategic dilemma: an attack on a NATO member that looks like an accident or a rogue Ukrainian action may not trigger Article 5, effectively eroding the alliance's collective defense guarantee without a single Russian soldier crossing a border.

The Weaponization of Migration and Logistics: The discovery of [tunnels under the border](#) and the increasing violence against border patrols in Lazdijai indicates that the migration crisis orchestrated by Belarus has evolved into a more sophisticated tactical operation. Simultaneously, the paralysis of European river logistics due to [drought on the](#)

[Rhine](#) is acting as a natural force multiplier for hybrid economic warfare. While Russia targets energy plants and airports, the environment is attacking the industrial supply chain, leaving European governments with diminishing resources to manage both security and economic stability.

Gastronomy as "Soft Power" Diplomacy: In an attempt to pivot away from a purely security-focused international image, Lithuania is launching a 10-year strategy to become a [gastronomic Mecca](#). This trend represents a conscious effort by small states to build "soft power" and economic resilience through tourism and cultural identity. However, the contrast between these high-level cultural ambitions and the reality of a [waste management crisis](#) in the capital city highlights the internal governance friction that accompanies rapid national branding efforts.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Lithuania:

- The death of Kazimira Prunskienė has sparked a debate on the "systemic approach" to [honoring historical leaders](#). While the funeral was a moment of unity, the absence of some opposition figures noted by the media suggests lingering partisan divisions regarding her historical ties to Moscow.
- In Vilnius, a localized crisis is brewing in New Vilnia where domestic waste is being [temporarily processed](#) in residential areas. Citizens are expressing distrust in local government, citing smells and potential [water contamination](#), illustrating how municipal failures can erode faith in central authority.

United States:

- The Michigan primary results highlight a [fracturing Democratic Party](#), with left-wing candidates like El-Sayed winning against centrists. This polarization is being weaponized by Donald Trump to characterize the opposition as "anti-Israel" and "socialist," signaling a highly volatile electoral environment in the fall [swing state battle](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Regional Posture: The Baltic states are shifting from a reactive to a [proactive preventative stance](#). The publicizing of intelligence regarding drone provocations is itself a strategic move to deter Russia by signaling that the "element of surprise" is gone. Lithuania's threat to [limit Kaliningrad transit](#) represents a significant hardening of its posture, signaling a willingness to leverage its geography to counter hybrid threats.

The Multipolar Arena: Iran's move to [control Hormuz shipping](#) and Russia's "Safari" tactics in Ukraine show a global system where regional powers are increasingly willing to discard international norms in favor of asymmetric leverage. The Framing of the [Leipzig incident](#) by Ukrainian officials as Russian sabotage further embeds European infrastructure into the kinetic theater of the Ukraine-Russia war.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The European economy is facing a "scissors effect" of rising costs and paralyzed infrastructure. The German industrial heartland is particularly vulnerable as the [Rhine's depth has dropped to 23cm](#), far below

the 40cm required for standard navigation. This has forced cargo to be re-routed to already stressed rail and road networks, significantly increasing costs during a period of zero growth.

- **Energy Scarcity:** The Danube's water temperature and low levels have forced [Hungarian nuclear plants](#) to operate at only 10 percent of their capacity, creating an immediate energy deficit in Central Europe.
- **Lithuanian Gastronomy Strategy:** A new 10-year plan aims to draw [world-class chefs](#) and events to Lithuania, though the sector is currently struggling with high VAT rates and a wave of bankruptcies in the restaurant industry.
- **Sanctions and Transit:** Proposals to [restrict Kaliningrad transit](#) to a 3-hour window would likely increase logistical friction and could trigger Russian retaliatory measures in the Baltic Sea.
- **Supply Chain Shock:** DHL and other logistics carriers at Leipzig airport are facing [significant disruption](#) following the discovery of the explosive drone, potentially delaying critical military and civilian shipments.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The news cycle captured several strategic shifts in personnel, reflecting both internal regime changes in Russia and democratic shifts in the West.

- **Vladimir Putin:** Has reportedly appointed a [new commander of drone forces](#), signaling a shift toward more centralized and aggressive aerial robotic warfare.

- **Abdul El-Sayed:** His victory in Michigan marks the rise of the [leftist wing of the Democrats](#), potentially reshaping US policy toward Israel and healthcare.
- **Kazimira Prunskienė (Deceased):** Her death leaves a [symbolic void](#) in the Sajūdis-era leadership circle, moving the era of the "Founding Four" into purely historical memory.
- **Gianni Infantino:** Facing intense criticism from UEFA and European clubs but [maintaining support](#) from African and Asian federations, highlighting a North-South divide in global sports governance.
- **Unnamed Russian Drone Factory Head:** Severely injured in a [car bombing in Yekaterinburg](#), suggesting that the war is increasingly reaching the elite and technical leadership inside Russia.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The broadcast hierarchy was dominated by two disparate yet emotionally heavy themes: the state funeral of the nation's first Prime Minister and the imminent threat of hybrid sabotage from Russia. The emotional tone was a mix of nationalistic mourning and fear-inducing security warnings. The Leipzig drone incident was given significant urgency, framed as a "new level of threat" that connects Lithuania's security directly to German logistics. A "Buried Story" was the internal waste management crisis in Vilnius, which was placed toward the middle-end of the broadcast despite its immediate impact on thousands of citizens, likely to avoid overshadowing the state funeral. A conspicuous omission was any detailed discussion of the specific NATO assets or troop movements being deployed to counter the drone threat, reflecting a desire to

maintain operational security while still using the media to send a deterrent signal to Moscow.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The geopolitical subtext of the day portrays a world where "gray zone" activities are the new norm, and small nations must navigate between aggressive neighbors and sometimes-hesitant allies.

COUNTRIES and LEADERS

- **Russia / Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as a chaotic, corrupt, and inept aggressor that nonetheless remains dangerous. Framed as a "murderer" by Tom Šernas, who noted that Russia prefers to "live in fantasy" rather than [admit to its crimes](#). Putin is depicted as distracted by [school festivals](#) while his own industry leaders are being bombed.
- **Lithuania / Ingrida Šimonytė:** Framed as principled and stable, but managing an increasingly complex threat matrix. The government is seen as [cautiously proactive](#), refusing to panic while significantly hardening the state's targets.
- **Ukraine / Volodymyr Zelensky:** Portrayed as a desperate but principled leader who is being let down by Western "political games." Zelensky's claim that only [one-third of air defense needs](#) are being met frames the West as potentially complicit in Ukrainian suffering through neglect.
- **Germany:** Depicted as a competent but vulnerable target. The Leipzig incident is used to show that Germany is a [major logistical target](#) for Russia, forcing Berlin to take a firmer stance on hybrid threats.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **FIFA / Gianni Infantino:** Framed as a corrupt or at least authoritarian figure who is [selling out the sport](#) to investors, with his only support coming from non-European blocs.
- **DHL / Antonov Airlines:** Portrayed as critical but [vulnerable links](#) in the global supply chain, now forced to operate in a semi-combat environment in the heart of Europe.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The primary information warfare narrative is the Russian attempt to seed a [false-flag drone narrative](#). By preparing to use Ukrainian drones for attacks on NATO, the Kremlin is attempting to use the West's own legal and evidentiary standards against it. If a drone with Ukrainian markings hits a Polish power plant, the "spin" from Moscow will be that Ukraine is desperate to drag NATO into the war through a provocation, creating a [fracture in public support](#) for Kyiv. The Lithuanian government is countering this by pre-emptively "de-classifying" the plan, effectively inoculating the public against the Russian narrative before the event occurs.

- **Narrative Seeding:** Russian claims that attacks on its territory are coming from the Baltics [without evidence](#) are being used to justify future "retaliatory" hybrid strikes.
- **Psy-ops:** The Russian "Safari" drone tactics in Ukraine are a form of psychological warfare designed to [induce panic](#) and demonstrate that nowhere is safe, even 30km from the front.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Retaliatory Sabotage:** Given the Leipzig incident, we can hypothesize that similar "deniable" attacks will occur against energy infrastructure in the Baltics within the next month, potentially timed to coincide with regional political anniversaries.
- **Transit Hostilities:** Lithuania's move to [shorten transit times](#) to Kaliningrad will likely lead to a "tit-for-tat" response where Russia disrupts Lithuanian commercial transit through its territory or via cyberattacks on transport ministries.
- **Logistics Paralysis:** If the Rhine levels do not recover, expect a significant spike in European inflation by Q4 as German heavy industry passes on [tripled transport costs](#) to consumers.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a massive increase in [counter-drone technology deployment](#) around airports and energy plants in the Baltics and Poland. The Leipzig investigation may lead to the expulsion of Russian diplomats if a link to the explosive drone is confirmed. Lithuanian border services will likely implement stricter rules for Kaliningrad transit, possibly [requiring vehicle tracking](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The US elections will likely focus on Michigan as a referendum on foreign policy, potentially shifting the rhetoric of the Democratic party toward the left on healthcare and international aid. European nations will be forced to [subsidize river-to-rail transitions](#) for the chemical and steel industries as climate-

driven low water levels become a structural rather than seasonal issue.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The Baltics will likely complete a total decoupling from any remaining Russian logistical or energy links. The "gastronomy strategy" [national branding](#) could succeed in diversifying the economy, but only if the underlying infrastructure (waste, transport) is modernized. The Ukraine conflict will likely evolve into a permanent "automated drone frontier" where civilian life is permanently adjusted to robotic threats.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk of "False Flag" Kinetic Provocation:** Russia may execute a drone strike on NATO territory using Ukrainian markings. **Triggers:** A major Ukrainian battlefield success or a NATO decision to increase aid. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Severe political crisis within NATO. **Mitigations:** Pre-emptive intelligence sharing and improved attribution technology.
- **Risk of European Logistics Collapse:** Commercial navigation on the Rhine may cease entirely due to drought. **Triggers:** Lack of significant rainfall in the Alps and Germany. **Likelihood:** Medium-High. **Impact:** Recessions in Germany and Switzerland. **Mitigations:** Accelerated investment in [low-water-capable barge fleets](#).

- **Risk of Border Guard Overrun:** Escalating violence and tunnel use by Belarusian-backed migrants could lead to fatalities. **Triggers:** A mass surge of migrants [coordinated with distractions](#) elsewhere. **Likelihood:** Medium. **Impact:** Domestic political instability and emergency border closures. **Mitigations:** Deployment of [military forces to support border guards](#).
- **Risk of Critical Energy Infrastructure Sabotage:** A hybrid strike on power grids in the Baltics. **Triggers:** Implementation of stricter Kaliningrad transit rules. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Blackouts and economic disruption. **Mitigations:** Strengthening of [special importance object protection](#).
- **Risk of Public Health/Sanitation Crisis in Vilnius:** The temporary waste processing site in New Vilnia could cause environmental contamination. **Triggers:** Failure of probiotical odor control or [seepage into groundwater](#). **Likelihood:** Medium. **Impact:** Loss of trust in municipal government and health risks. **Mitigations:** Immediate relocation to the [Gariūnai infrastructure site](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast mentions that Lithuanian border guards [allowed handcuffed migrants](#) to escape back to Belarus, yet provides no details on how such a basic security lapse occurred or if there were internal accomplices.
- There is a claim that [US Patriot missiles](#) are being "wasted" in a war with Iran, which is not supported by current publicly known military operations, suggesting a major piece of regional context is missing regarding US-Iran hostilities.

- The report on the [drone found in Leipzig](#) does not specify the origin of the drone's flight path, leaving a gap in understanding whether it was launched locally or from across a border.
- The [gastronomy strategy](#) is praised, but the broadcast fails to reconcile how a nation can become a "Mecca" of food while its own restaurant industry is facing a [wave of bankruptcies](#) due to taxation policy.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Intentional Leak" Hypothesis:** The loud and public warnings about [Russian drone provocations](#) may not be based on an imminent plan, but are a defensive information operation by Lithuania to preemptively justify its own [transit restrictions on Kaliningrad](#) to the EU, which has historically been skeptical of such hardline moves.
- **The "Natural Sabotage" Cover:** Russia may not be planning kinetic strikes at all, but rather waiting for the [environmental collapse](#) of European river logistics to create enough internal political pressure to force a ceasefire on Russian terms, using the climate as its primary hybrid weapon.
- **Black Swan - The Hormuz Closure:** While focused on the Baltics, the "Black Swan" is the reported [negotiation between Iran and Oman](#). A total Iranian takeover of Hormuz shipping, if realized, would dwarf the Baltic security crisis by causing a global energy price shock that would bankrupt European defense budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Immediately prioritize **technical attribution** for drone incidents to ensure that any "false flag" operation can be debunked with forensic data within hours, preventing a political vacuum.
- Develop a **regional low-water contingency** for essential goods, as the Rhine and Danube crises are likely to recur, affecting the movement of fuel and chemicals across the EU.
- Formalize a **joint Baltic-Polish drone defense command** to share real-time tracking data of non-civilian aerial objects in the border zones.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Investors in **European heavy industry** should price in a permanent 20-30% increase in logistics costs for river-dependent businesses, shifting capital toward rail-capable sites.
- Logistics companies operating near **NATO dual-use hubs** (like Leipzig or Kaunas) must implement tier-one anti-sabotage security measures, as these are now active hybrid warfare zones.
- The **Lithuanian hospitality sector** should focus on domestic and regional "safe" tourism, as the heightened threat rhetoric may deter high-spending long-distance international gastro-tourists.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative and policy focus is currently centered on security hardening and

administrative streamlining of youth education and environmental regulation.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Kaliningrad Transit Restrictions:** A proposal to [limit the transit time](#) for Russian vehicles through Lithuania to a strict 3-hour window to prevent intelligence gathering.
- **Centralized Youth Activity Enrollment:** A new "one-window" [online system](#) for enrolling children in state-funded after-school activities to reduce administrative burden.
- **Lithuanian Gastronomy Strategy:** A 10-year policy framework to [subsidize gastronomic innovation](#) and tourism marketing.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Ministry of Defense Intelligence Briefing:** Minister Robertas Kaunas [announced intelligence](#) on Russian drone provocation plans.
- **German Interior Ministry Presser:** Minister Faeser addressed the [Leipzig drone incident](#) as a professional hybrid attack.
- **Vilnius Mayor's Statement:** Skelbia that the [waste crisis is "under control"](#) despite resident protests in New Vilnia.

KEY STORIES

- **Russian Drone Provocation Plan:** Intelligence suggests Russia plans to use [Ukrainian-marked drones](#) to hit Baltic and Polish infrastructure to incite NATO-Ukraine conflict.

- **Leipzig Airport Explosive Drone:** A drone with [800g of explosives](#) was found near Antonov bases in Germany; a cargo plane suffered a minor mid-air collision.
- **Kazimira Prunskienė Funeral:** The nation buried its [first Prime Minister](#) at Antakalnis Cemetery, celebrating her legacy of independence.
- **Lazdijai Border Conflict:** 20 migrants [attacked four Lithuanian border guards](#); some escaped back to Belarus; a 10-meter tunnel was discovered.
- **European Heatwave and Nuclear Failure:** Temperatures reached [43 degrees in Budapest](#); Danube-cooled nuclear plants are down to 10% capacity.
- **Rhine River Navigation Crisis:** Water levels in Germany hit an [all-time low of 23cm](#), crippling industrial cargo transport.
- **Ukraine "Safari" Attacks:** Russian drones are [hunting civilians](#) in Herson; buses in Zaporizhzhia are getting bulletproof glass.
- **US Michigan Primaries:** Leftist [Abdul El-Sayed](#) won the Democratic Senate primary, causing a reaction from Donald Trump in Las Vegas.
- **New Vilnia Waste Crisis:** Residents protest the [temporary dumping of domestic trash](#) near their homes and water sources.
- **Lithuanian Gastronomy Mecca Plan:** A new strategy aims to make Lithuania a [top food destination](#) in 10 years despite economic struggles.
- **FIFA Leadership Battle:** Infantino retains support from [Africa and Asia](#) despite European attempts to oust him over World Cup commercialization.
- **Kaliningrad Fortification:** Russia is using [drone nets and runway paintings](#) to protect the enclave from feared Ukrainian attacks.

- **Lyme Disease Warning:** Experts warn of [increasing tick activity](#) and Lyme disease symptoms following the warm weather.
- **Sri Lankan Wildlife Documentary:** A segment on [Sinharaja jungles](#) showing endemic snakes, lizards, and the battle for survival in nature.
- **Jajoi Kusama Exhibition Record:** A Japanese artist's show in Cologne drew [470,000 people](#), becoming a social media phenomenon.
- **Lithuanian New Theater for Disabled:** A profile of Svetlana and her theater where [actors with disabilities](#) perform professional plays.
- **Tomo Šerno Interview:** The Medininkai massacre survivor discusses [forgiveness vs. justice](#) and the "mental slavery" of the Russian system.
- **Venezuelan-Lithuanian Returnee:** Antonio Baronas tells his story of [fleeing Venezuelan collapse](#) to return to his parents' Lithuanian roots.
- **AI and Social Isolation:** A discussion on how [emotional AI](#) is replacing human relationships and the risks of a digital loneliness epidemic.
- **Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė Profile:** A retrospective on the artist whose work [reflected her childhood in exile](#) and the sickness of Soviet society.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching

trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominant themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

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