# Downing Street dismisses Russia-linked cocaine claims as disinformation to divide Europe



Downing Street has firmly rejected recent claims suggesting that cocaine was present during a train journey involving Sir Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. The allegations, which emerged after a video showed Macron removing a white object from a table, were dismissed as “fake news” by the British Prime Minister’s official spokesman. The spokesperson noted the lack of clarity regarding the origins of such misinformation but pointed to a pattern of similar narratives, particularly from Russian state sources, amidst growing desperation regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

The controversy ignited when Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova shared the aforementioned video, implying that the leaders had neglected to conceal drug paraphernalia prior to the arrival of journalists. In a swiftly issued clarification, the Elysee Palace described the object in question as merely a tissue, labelling the accusations as a deliberate attempt at misinformation. The French government warned that the spread of such disinformation served as a tactic aimed at undermining European unity.

Echoing these concerns, German officials and members of the CDU party expressed alarm over the systematic use of disinformation by adversaries to weaken democratic institutions and public trust. This incident reflects broader concerns regarding the manipulation of narratives in the context of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, as European leaders converge to show solidarity with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In the wake of these claims, Macron has been vocal about the true aggressor in this conflict. He stated emphatically that if there is any risk of precipitating World War III, it rests squarely with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This sentiment captures the heightened tensions surrounding the debate on support for Ukraine, particularly as European nations navigate the complexities of responding to Russian aggression while maintaining domestic stability.

Alongside discussions of misinformation, the objectives of unity and support for Ukraine have been at the forefront of European diplomatic efforts. Recently, Prime Minister Starmer convened a summit of European leaders in London to strategise on strengthening military assistance to Ukraine. This included a substantial commitment of £1.6 billion in export financing for air defence missiles, which underscores a unified commitment to both national and regional security in the face of escalated hostilities.

As disinformation campaigns continue to proliferate, France has ramped up its countermeasures. Initiatives such as Viginum aim to combat the spread of false narratives, particularly those linked to both Russian and far-right American entities. The proactive stance showcases an understanding that the battle for information is as crucial as the actual military confrontation influencing public perception and political dialogue within Europe.

In light of recent events, the resilience of European unity remains a focal point in the face of external challenges. The leaders’ swift denials and commitment to addressing disinformation reveal not just a reaction to isolated incidents, but a broader strategy aimed at preserving the integrity of democratic discourse and fostering solidarity in times of crisis.

Reference Map: 1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/no-10-hits-out-at-desperate-russia-after-claims-about-drugs-on-leaders-train/a1761146457.html)2. Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/france-accuses-enemies-spreading-fake-news-after-cocaine-bag-claims-2025-05-12/)3. Paragraph 3: [[3]](https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/12/francia-desmiente-rumores-sobre-consumo-de-cocaina-de-macron-y-otros-lideres-europeos-en-un-tren-hacia-kiev-cadena-ser/)4. Paragraph 4: [[4]](https://www.wsbradio.com/news/world/latest-most-european/Q7U4P6RZGBDWVLUKM3KLW7INC4/)5. Paragraph 5: [[5]](https://www.wsbtv.com/news/world/latest-britains/YPWVRVCJ2VDAFPV3NPSINNITFA/)6. Paragraph 6: [[6]](https://www.newsday.com/news/nation/russia-ukraine-war-zelenskyy-london-summit-s22841)7. Paragraph 7: [[7]](https://www.manisteenews.com/news/article/the-latest-britain-is-hosting-a-summit-of-20197437.php)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/no-10-hits-out-at-desperate-russia-after-claims-about-drugs-on-leaders-train/a1761146457.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/france-accuses-enemies-spreading-fake-news-after-cocaine-bag-claims-2025-05-12/> - The French government has denounced claims circulating on social media suggesting that President Emmanuel Macron and other European leaders used drugs during a train trip to Kyiv. A video showed Macron retrieving a crumpled white object from a table, which some speculated was a cocaine bag. Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova amplified the claim, prompting strong denials from French and German officials. The Elysee clarified the object was merely a tissue, accusing unnamed enemies of using disinformation to disrupt European unity. Germany’s CDU party echoed the concern, warning of deliberate efforts to weaken democracy. The meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy demonstrated European support for Ukraine amid Russia’s ongoing invasion. In response to growing misinformation, France has bolstered its efforts to identify and counter foreign influence operations, particularly those linked to Russian and American far-right entities.
3. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/12/francia-desmiente-rumores-sobre-consumo-de-cocaina-de-macron-y-otros-lideres-europeos-en-un-tren-hacia-kiev-cadena-ser/> - El Gobierno francés ha desmentido rotundamente los rumores difundidos en redes sociales que insinuaban que el presidente Emmanuel Macron, junto al canciller alemán Friedrich Merz y el primer ministro británico Keir Starmer, consumieron cocaína durante un viaje en tren hacia Kiev. El video que originó estas acusaciones muestra a Macron retirando un objeto blanco de la mesa, que algunos interpretaron erróneamente como una bolsa de droga. La oficina de la Presidencia aclaró que se trataba simplemente de un pañuelo y acusó a enemigos internos y externos de Francia de difundir noticias falsas con fines de manipulación. Figuras como la portavoz rusa Maria Zajárova compartieron el video con tono sarcástico, alimentando la controversia. El incidente ocurrió tras una visita oficial de varios líderes europeos a Ucrania para mostrar apoyo al presidente Volodímir Zelenski. En respuesta a este caso y a otras campañas informativas similares, Francia ha reforzado su lucha contra la desinformación a través del organismo Viginum y ha denunciado la colaboración de la extrema derecha estadounidense en la amplificación de la propaganda rusa.
4. <https://www.wsbradio.com/news/world/latest-most-european/Q7U4P6RZGBDWVLUKM3KLW7INC4/> - In response to the claims, French President Emmanuel Macron stated that if anyone is gambling with World War III, it is Russian President Vladimir Putin. He emphasized that the United States should continue to stand by its history and principles, expressing hope that the U.S. would remain committed to the defense of democracy. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier criticized U.S. President Donald Trump's behavior during the meeting with Zelenskyy, stating that diplomacy fails when negotiating partners are humiliated in front of the whole world. He expressed disbelief that there would be a need to protect Ukraine from the USA.
5. <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/world/latest-britains/YPWVRVCJ2VDAFPV3NPSINNITFA/> - British Prime Minister Keir Starmer convened a summit of European leaders in London to discuss strategies to halt Russia's war in Ukraine. The summit aimed to shore up support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy following a contentious meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump. Starmer announced plans to supply more arms to defend Ukraine, including a commitment of £1.6 billion ($2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defense missiles. The summit underscored Europe's responsibility in defending itself and its commitment to supporting Ukraine amid ongoing tensions with Russia.
6. <https://www.newsday.com/news/nation/russia-ukraine-war-zelenskyy-london-summit-s22841> - European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, have expressed strong support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy amid escalating tensions with Russia. Macron emphasized that if anyone is gambling with World War III, it is Russian President Vladimir Putin, not Zelenskyy. Steinmeier criticized U.S. President Donald Trump's behavior during a recent meeting with Zelenskyy, stating that diplomacy fails when negotiating partners are humiliated in front of the whole world. The European leaders' statements highlight a unified stance against Russian aggression and a commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty.
7. <https://www.manisteenews.com/news/article/the-latest-britain-is-hosting-a-summit-of-20197437.php> - British Prime Minister Keir Starmer convened a summit of European leaders in London to discuss strategies to halt Russia's war in Ukraine. The summit aimed to shore up support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy following a contentious meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump. Starmer announced plans to supply more arms to defend Ukraine, including a commitment of £1.6 billion ($2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defense missiles. The summit underscored Europe's responsibility in defending itself and its commitment to supporting Ukraine amid ongoing tensions with Russia.