# Former intelligence officer warns Russian GRU may be targeting UK substations



The recent surge of electrical substation fires across the UK has raised concerns that these incidents may be the work of Russian operatives, a suggestion made by Colonel Philip Ingram, a former officer in British military intelligence. Ingram posits that the attacks could represent a preliminary strategy by the Russian GRU, the country's military intelligence agency, to test the resilience of critical infrastructure as their geopolitical aims evolve.

These fires have notably occurred near essential sites such as hospitals, military installations, and busy transport hubs, heightening fears of a targeted campaign. Ingram highlighted that the modus operandi reflected in these events aligns with tactics historically used by the GRU. “This is something within Russian military intelligence's remit to identify and work out how to attack and potentially test those theories,” he cautioned.

A significant incident occurred in March when a fire devastated the North Hyde substation at Heathrow Airport, grounding flights for hours and cutting off power to thousands of homes. This incident underscored the vulnerability inherent in the UK's infrastructure and the chaos that ensued revealed how swiftly power failures could disrupt public life. The catastrophic nature of the situation prompted the initial deployment of counter-terrorism police, amid speculations of foul play. However, investigations yielded no conclusive evidence of sabotage, with authorities ultimately attributing the fire to an unspecified technical fault.

Yet, such assurances have not quelled anxieties within security circles. Security experts have identified parallels between the Heathrow incident and a broader trend of sabotage attributed to Russian actors across Europe. A report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies noted a troubling uptick in such incidents, suggesting a systematic effort to create instability in nations perceived as threats to Russian interests.

Highlighting the precariousness of Britain's critical infrastructure, the recent fires have included cases close to significant establishments, including the BAE Systems shipyard in Glasgow and the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. Ingram pointed out these locations as potential targets for sophisticated regional actors looking to undermine UK security. The implications are dire; if Russian agents are indeed involved, the operational capabilities and strategic competencies of such forces could pose a significant risk to national security.

The notion of Russian sabotage has been echoed in various official circles. MI5’s Director-General, Ken McCallum, noted the agency's ongoing mission to investigate a range of aggressive activities perpetrated by the GRU, stating there was a clear correlation between these adversarial acts and the UK's support for Ukraine. McCallum's remarks stress that the GRU's operations are becoming increasingly reckless and pervasive, encompassing arson and other methods of disruption.

Despite these fears, British government sources continue to assert that there is insufficient evidence to confirm foreign interference in the recent spate of fires. The official narrative suggests that technical malfunctions are likely the root cause. Nevertheless, Ingram insists that investigators must maintain an open mind toward the potential for covert operations, underscoring the possibility that overwhelming evidence of such acts could be deliberately concealed by those responsible.

Amidst this backdrop, the discourse surrounding critical national infrastructure has intensified. Commentators argue that improving resilience against potential disruptive activities is of utmost importance, especially considering the evolving nature of international threats. With multiple theorists and officials aligning around the idea of Russian involvement, the urgency for a thorough examination of the incidents—and the broader security framework—is apparent.

Ingram’s warnings serve as a grim reminder of the vulnerabilities faced by key infrastructure and the potential for state-sponsored sabotage to escalate in line with global tensions. As geopolitical dynamics shift, the UK finds itself at a crossroads—engaged in an information war as much as a physical one, where the battleground may well be its electrical substations.

**Reference Map:**1. Lead Article 2. Related Source 1 3. Related Source 2 4. Related Source 3 5. Related Source 4 6. Related Source 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14702675/mystery-electrical-substation-fire-putin-russia-spies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/heathrow-fire-was-russia-behind-the-chaos-experts-sound-the-alarm-11742589108636.html> - A massive fire at an electrical substation near London's Heathrow Airport led to the airport's closure and widespread travel disruptions. British counter-terrorism police are investigating the cause, with some experts suggesting the incident bears the 'hallmarks' of Russian sabotage. Security officials have raised concerns about potential Russian involvement, citing previous suspected acts of Russian sabotage in Europe. Authorities have not officially attributed the fire to sabotage, and investigations are ongoing to determine the cause and any external interference.
* <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/06/13/russia-sabotage-attacks-europe-espionage-hybrid-arson/> - Russia has reportedly intensified its 'gray-zone' or hybrid attacks in Europe, including arson, cyberattacks, and other covert operations. These activities are believed to be conducted by Russian military intelligence (GRU) through proxies to make attribution more challenging. The campaign aims to intimidate Western countries and impose higher costs for supporting Ukraine. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken acknowledged the intensification of Russia's hybrid attacks and emphasized the need for a collective response from NATO allies.
* <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/heathrow-mi5-russia-fire/> - Following the fire at an electrical substation near Heathrow Airport, security expert Professor Anthony Glees suggested that MI5 is likely investigating potential Russian involvement. He emphasized the severity of the incident as a hit on critical national infrastructure and noted that the suspicion of Russian involvement indicates the success of Russian subversive activities in the UK. While authorities have not confirmed any evidence of foul play, the investigation continues with an open mind.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayes_substation_fire> - The Hayes substation fire occurred on March 21, 2025, near Heathrow Airport, leading to the airport's closure and significant travel disruptions. The fire resulted in the cancellation of over 1,300 flights and affected approximately 290,000 passengers. Investigations into the cause of the fire are ongoing, with authorities keeping an open mind regarding potential sabotage. The incident highlighted vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and prompted discussions about the resilience of power supplies to major airports.
* <https://baltimorechronicle.com/obshchestvo/2024/12/12/in-nikolaev-a-man-set-fire-to-an-electrical-substation-on-orders-from-russian-special-services/> - In December 2024, a man in Nikolaev, Ukraine, was arrested for setting fire to an electrical substation on orders from Russian special services. The perpetrator purchased a flammable substance, filmed the act, and deleted the evidence. He faces charges under the Ukrainian Criminal Code for sabotage, which carries a penalty of 15 years to life imprisonment. The incident underscores concerns about Russian involvement in destabilizing Ukraine's critical infrastructure.
* <https://24hoursworlds.com/international/951195/> - Following the fire at an electrical substation near Heathrow Airport, security experts have raised concerns about potential Russian sabotage. The incident led to the closure of Heathrow Airport, causing significant travel disruptions and power outages. Experts suggest that such attacks could be part of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy against Western nations. Authorities are investigating the cause, keeping an open mind regarding potential foreign involvement, while emphasizing the need for enhanced resilience in critical infrastructure.