

Counter Terrorism Report 1008

China · Iran · Russia — recent incident table · compiled October 8, 2026 (9 incidents)

#	China	Iran	Russia
1	Zhang Yu — \$10M US bounty for state-directed hacking: Exchange exploitation, 12,700+ US entities hit, COVID research theft (Oct 2026)	Trump assassination plot — Israeli intel warned of Iranian SAM plot against Air Force One; Trump secretly switched planes via a catering container (Jul-Aug 2026, alleged)	Five Russian agents charged in US — ex-intel colonel, FSB officer son, Cuban/Venezuelan recruiters ran an assassination/sabotage recruitment network across Europe and the US; \$40K offered per assassination (Sep 2026)
2	Wang Yiyang Zhang — arrested at LAX boarding a Shanghai flight; accused of surveilling Taiwan's president's son in Seattle for Chinese intel (Oct 2026)	FlyDubai FZ1073 — copilot stabbed the captain and tried to crash an Israel-bound jet, 174 aboard; passengers stormed the cockpit; Trump alleges Iran link, vows retaliation (Sept 30, 2026)	Milrem Robotics arson, Estonia — formally attributed to Russian security services by KAPO (Aug 2026)
3	NVIDIA chip smuggling — chips funneled via Singapore/Malaysia, dodging export controls (2026; scale unverified — the broadcast's dollar figure is not credible)	Manchester Yom Kippur plot — 2 Iranian nationals charged; chlorine bomb plan allegedly directed from Iran (Sept 2026)	Summer sabotage wave — explosive drone at Leipzig airport, KNDS blast in Italy, warehouse fire in Bulgaria, Starlink ground-station arson in Poland (Aug-Sept 2026)
4	TP-Link lawsuits — 4 US states suing over hidden China ties and router flaws exploited by state hackers (Oct 2026)	RAF Fairford — 7 arrested over suspected IRGC drone plot; US pulled 12 B-1 bombers from the base (Sept-Oct 2026)	Serbia explosives arrests + Leipzig link — two men caught near Subotica with drone parts and explosives, tied to the Leipzig airport plot; Germany now hunting Russian weapons caches (Jun-Sep 2026, reported)
5	Australia — ASIO warned Chinese state hackers (Volt/Salt Typhoon) probed critical infrastructure including telecoms (Nov 2025)	Asif Merchant convicted — IRGC-trained Pakistani operative convicted in the US of murder-for-hire/terrorism over the 2024 Trump assassination plot (Mar 2026)	Romania — Russian citizen arrested photographing NATO bases and Ukrainian aircraft; accused of preparing sabotage coordinated from Russia (Sept 2026)
6	Philippines maritime pressure — record 241 militia vessels/day in the South China Sea (2025, AMTI); China Coast Guard rammed a Philippine fisheries ship off Palawan; illegal "research" near Reed Bank (2026)	Belgium attacks — Liège synagogue bombing + Antwerp arson blamed on a Tehran-directed campaign (Mar 2026)	Skyeton drone-maker plot — Latvian and Ukrainian suspects arrested in Slovakia and Germany; German outlets link logistics to a GRU colonel (Aug-Sept 2026)
7	Taiwan east-coast patrols — continuous China Coast Guard patrols east of Taiwan since June 2026 (~27,100 sq nm); Taiwan water-cannoned a Chinese fishing boat off Dongsha Island (Oct 2026)	Germany warned — Israel flagged IRGC threats against US bases on German soil (Oct 2026)	20M Telegram sabotage ads — GRU ran industrial-scale arson-for-hire recruitment across 20 countries (H1 2026)
8	Economic coercion playbook — trade restrictions against 27 countries 2010–2024 (ASPI): Australia (coal/wine/barley/lobster), Lithuania (Taiwan embassy), South Korea (THAAD); rare-earth dominance 60% mined / 90% processed	Houthi Red Sea campaign — maritime blockade declared July 20, 2026; 9+ vessels targeted, 6 killed (Aug); Saudi pipeline hit (Sept); two Saudi tankers struck, Brent crude past \$100, Trump vowed "major military punishment" on Iran (Oct 7–8)	Recruiting Ukrainian minors — kids as young as 11 groomed via Telegram/TikTok for sabotage and school attacks; 600+ crimes in a year (2026)
9	—	—	Cyber campaign on NATO/EU — EU attributed to FSB's 16th Centre across 9 states; NATO condemned (July 2026); GRU Sandworm wiper attacks on 30+ Polish energy sites (Dec 2025); Hungary farm-subsidy agency encrypted (Aug 2026)

Notes: China's column is espionage-flavoured, not kinetic. Attribution is contested on several items — Iran denies Fairford, Russia denies everything, the FlyDubai and Trump-plane Iran links are alleged, not confirmed. China items rest partly on a single NTD broadcast; treat as leads until checked against primaries. BILD's weapons-cache reporting is single-source.

Lesson 26 — Political Science Case Study: the feeling-out round

University Upgrade · in review · October 8, 2026

- **Three countries, one playbook.** In a single evening of news-checking, twenty-five recent incidents sorted themselves into three columns. Iran (hottest): an alleged plot to shoot down the US president's plane with a missile; a copilot tried to crash an Israel-bound jet with 174 people aboard; two Iranian nationals charged over a bomb plot against Manchester's Jewish community; seven arrested near a US airbase in England, and America pulled its bombers out; Iran-backed Houthis attacking Red Sea shipping, killing crews and sending oil past \$100. Russia: five Russian agents charged in the US with running an assassination-for-hire network across Europe and America; a summer of sabotage — a drone at a German airport, a blast at an Italian ammo plant, warehouse fires, arson at a satellite station; men caught in Serbia with explosives tied to the airport plot; a Russian arrested in Romania photographing NATO bases; Russian state hackers hitting power grids across nine European countries; plus teenagers recruited over Telegram to commit arson. China: no bombs at all — a \$10M bounty on a state hacker, a spy caught at LAX, smuggled computer chips, lawsuits over compromised routers — plus gray-zone pressure at sea: a record 241 militia boats a day, a Coast Guard ramming off Palawan, continuous patrols east of Taiwan; and trade bans punishing countries that cross Beijing's red lines.

- **Think of it like the first round of a boxing match.** Boxers don't throw haymakers in round one. They throw light jabs — testing range, watching how the other guy reacts when touched. That is what all twenty-five incidents are. Russia jabs warehouses to learn what NATO actually responds to. Iran probes airbases and airliners to find the retaliation line. China works the body — chips, secrets, routers, coastlines — where it barely feels like a punch. And here is the uncomfortable part: nobody throws feeling-out jabs for nothing. Round one exists because later rounds are coming.

- **The cheapest weapon isn't a bomb — it's someone else's protest.** Look at France: students marched over real grievances (overcrowded schools, missing teachers). Then a violent fringe — about 1% — attached itself: fires, 6,100 arrests, hundreds of injured police. You don't need to trick people into protesting. The protest starts itself. You just show up with matches. The scariest part: the 1% doesn't even know it's being used.

- **Nobody holds the matches themselves.** Across all three columns, the pattern is identical: recruited kids, hired criminals, students on visas, anonymous Telegram accounts. Every layer is a cutout, so no single incident can be pinned cleanly enough to force a war. Deniability isn't a side effect — it's the whole product.

- **Four tripwires to watch.** (1) A second Iran-linked attack on an airliner — the US president already promised retaliation "very hard." (2) Sabotage that kills soldiers rather than burning empty buildings — dead uniforms force political answers. (3) China's column turning violent for the first time — so far it never has. (4) The France template — protest plus violent fringe — appearing in another Western country.

- **What this doesn't prove.** Twenty-five news stories are not proof of a master plan. Several attributions are disputed (Iran denies the airbase plot; Russia denies everything). The China items come partly from a single TV broadcast and need checking against court records. And there is no verified evidence any foreign power is directing the French protests — the hijack pattern is real, the foreign hand there is not proven.

Method & Sources

Method: 25 incidents gathered October 8, 2026 via news-database searches, one lane per country (China: espionage/cyber/gray-zone; Iran: plots and proxy attacks; Russia: sabotage/cyber). Each item was checked against at least one news report; single-source items are flagged below. Court-record claims (indictments, convictions, bounties) should be verified against dockets before quotation. "Alleged" means claimed by officials or press, not established by investigators.

China

- Wanying Zhang case: US DOJ press release (justice.gov), Wikipedia case page, CBS News — Oct 2026.
- Zhang Yu bounty, chip smuggling, TP-Link suits: NTD broadcast — SINGLE SOURCE, unverified against primaries.
- Australia: ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess public warning — Nov 2025.
- Maritime: CSIS/AMTI (militia counts), BusinessWorld/PCG (Scarborough ramming, Sep 2026), IP Defense Forum, worldaffair.org.
- Economic coercion: Australian Strategic Policy Institute (27 countries, 2010–2024).

Iran

- Trump-plane plot: Wikipedia, CBS News, NYT — alleged, Jul–Aug 2026.
- Asif Merchant conviction: US federal court — Mar 2026.
- FlyDubai FZ1073: BBC, NYT, Fox — Sep 30, 2026; Iran link alleged by Trump, not confirmed.
- Manchester Yom Kippur plot: CNN, PA Media — Sep 2026.
- RAF Fairford: NYT, Reuters, NPR, WSJ — Sep–Oct 2026.
- Houthi Red Sea campaign: Human Rights Watch, AP, Africa Center for Strategic Studies — Jul–Oct 2026.
- Belgium: Belgian CUTA via RTBF — Mar 2026.

Russia

- Five agents charged: US DOJ indictment — Sep 16, 2026.
- FSB 16th Centre cyber campaign: EU Council statement, NATO North Atlantic Council — Jul 13, 2026; Poland MFA.
- Sandworm/Poland energy: TechTimes (Dec 2025); Hungary agency: TechTimes (Aug 2026).
- Milrem arson: Estonian KAPO, AP, Defense News — Aug/Sep 2026.
- Summer sabotage wave: AP, BNS, German/Italian/Bulgarian/Polish press — Aug–Sep 2026.
- Serbia arrests: RFE/RL, Serbian courts — Jun 2026; German weapons caches: BILD (single source).
- Romania arrest: Romanian SRI/Prosecutor's office — Sep 8, 2026.
- Skyeton plot: FAZ, nexuseuropa — Aug–Sep 2026.
- Telegram ads: Yle/TechTimes (Finland) — H1 2026.
- Ukrainian minors: SBU via press, DW News documentary — 2026.