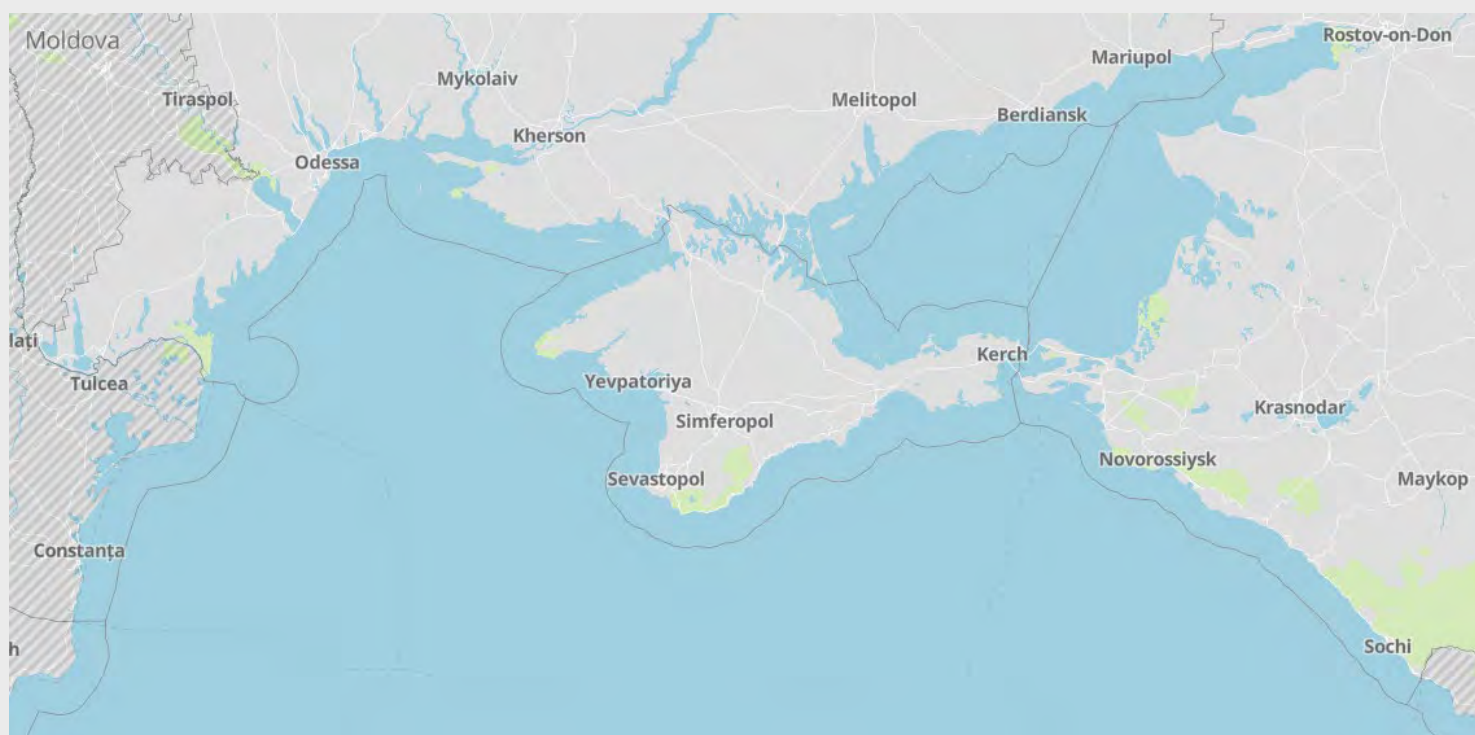


Northern Black Sea and Russia Ports Threat Assessment

Port operations and security overview

Date and time of latest intelligence included in this report: 26 October 2023 - 09:00 UTC



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Overview of current situation

Black Sea:

The past week has seen an intensification of military activity from both Ukrainian and Russian forces – including alleged efforts by Russian forces to mine or dump munitions in, or near, the ‘humanitarian corridor’. Specific details regarding this are unclear, and difficult to independently verify or denounce.

The general increase in intensity is likely due to attempts by both sides to position themselves before the winter weather arrives. It is therefore also likely that the current level of increased military operations will continue, at least in the near term. Related to this Ukrainian president Zelenskyy recently announced that Ukrainian forces would keep up the pressure on the Crimean peninsula.

Vessels have continued to transit the Ukrainian ‘humanitarian corridor’, however, as has been mentioned in previous weekly reports, the regional war risks have not diminished, this is attested by the recent increase military activity in area.

During the past week there have been various reports, some miss-misleading, regarding a potential new “grain”-corridor. The indicates that the possibilities for a more permanent corridor are being explored – although, this is currently assessed to be tied to the comment by Zelenskyy, mentioned above, where he also stressed that Ukraine did not yet have the full control of Crimea and the surrounding waters. Attaining this control, would no doubt provide more security for any future shipping corridor to Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

A chart of the announced corridor, as published in the Annex to the IMO Circular Letter No.4748, can be found in Annex 2 of this report.

Other recent announcements by Ukrainian authorities include that they are monitoring vessels going to occupied Ukrainian ports, in the Sea of Azov, these vessels would be seen as legitimate military targets. Though the announcement is significant, it seems to be a reiteration of the earlier Ukrainian announcement that all vessels transiting to Russian ports would be at risk.

During the past week it was reported that Bulgaria and Romania have begun demining operations off the Bulgarian coast. The operation is part of the tri-party coordination between Türkiye, Romania and Bulgaria. The earlier mentioned attempts by Russia to place munitions in the Ukrainian humanitarian corridor, is assessed as a likely attempt of deterrence. It has previous been reported that Russia could deploy more sea-mines near or in the

‘humanitarian’ corridor, to deter shipping. Though Russia is understood to have the capability, and though any actual cases are not known, this cannot be ruled out.

Similar to previous weeks, the past week continued to see the Russian military’s ongoing targeting of Ukrainian cities across the country, particular focus on Crimea, around Kherson. Past and more recent attacks on Ukrainian ports have affected the power supply, which are known to have halted operations. Given the constant unpredictability, similar future attacks cannot be ruled out. The threat from military operations, particularly in the NW area, but also the wider Black Sea area, is still considered severe. This includes the continued threat of reported sea-mines in the Black Sea and various military operations and engagements in the NW Black Sea which have become more common after the Russian withdrawal from the BSGI. This includes frequent reports of the movement of UKR naval drones and special forces, and Russian assets patrolling to counter these movements. Additional details about recent incidents can be found at the back of this report.

The Ukrainian military continues to launch operations targeting Russian forces in the south and east of Ukraine including in occupied Crimea – which further indicates a likely intension to increase their own control of the area.

It is still assessed that until firm guarantees that future Russian forced inspections of vessels trading not only in the NW Black Sea, but also of vessel transiting the Ukrainian Danube ports, will not occur, such incidents would be deemed likely. It should therefore be assumed that there remains an increased threat towards maritime trade near the conflict area. However, it seems uncertain that Russian Naval capabilities, at present, can uphold a blockade or strict inspection regime, especially with Ukrainian anti-ship capabilities in place throughout the region. Any overt rhetoric on threats in the area, real or not, are likely an attempt to influence threat perception and willingness to undertake voyages, in the wider Black Sea and make any trade north of 45-21 of lesser interest, or unsustainable for commercial operations.

A Russian effort, to justify military action or inspections, would likely be to determine if northbound vessels were carrying military hardware or supplies to support the Ukrainian war, this could also include harassment of vessels, as well as firing warning shots. Such incidents are most likely south of 45-21N. North of 45-21N, Russia may in the worst case, sink merchant vessels. Releasing mines, as mentioned earlier, if relying on the use of

submarines to do this covertly, thereby maintaining deniability and have the option to blame Ukrainian mines or similar, is also plausible. The use of submarines will likely also be influenced by the risk to surface vessels due to Ukrainian anti-ship capabilities.

Because of the continued high likelihood of collateral damage to vessels in Ukrainian Danube, the threat of military operations here is high. The Ukrainian Danube ports still face possible Russian drone attacks. Nightly attacks regularly occur, and the potential use of ballistic missiles adds to the threat.

Reports of drifting naval mines at sea, and mine disposals on or near Black Sea coasts continues. While a connection to the war is likely, the exact origin of individual mines is uncertain. There is also doubt about the potential number of mines deployed in the Black Sea, but known sightings and ongoing efforts of disposals, highlight that mines are a threat. Storms in the area often lead to new sightings as mines become untethered from anchors and begin to drift.

The current threat picture for the Black Sea remains strongly influenced by both Russian and Ukrainian efforts to assert control and affect shipping. Conflict related implications when operating in the Black Sea are therefore likely to continue – with continued increased naval presence and activity, congestion and delays when transiting the regional straits and rivers, congestion at other regional ports due to volume of diverted traffic, impact of sanctions on trade to and from Russia, and complications with crew changes.

Sea of Azov:

The Sea of Azov is still assessed to be limited in access for normal commercial maritime traffic.

The earlier mentioned announcement by the Ukrainian authorities stating that they are monitoring vessels going to occupied Ukrainian ports, in the Sea of Azov, these vessels would be seen as legitimate military targets – is assessed as a reiteration of the earlier Ukrainian announcement that all vessels transiting to Russian ports would be at risk.

The Ukrainian Sea of Azov ports (Mariupol and Berdyansk) are still controlled and operated by the Russian military and occupation authorities. While the Russians have previously announced the ports to be open and being rebuilt – with recent claims of increased traffic – the actual operational state is

unclear. Vessels given access into these ports are known to have transported stolen Ukrainian cargo, most notably steel and metal products, as well as grain. Naval movements into the ports are likely to occur. Incidents of long-range attacks and sabotage in both cities are known, but unverified.

Traffic is known to be halted on the Kirch Strait bridge, a coveted target by Ukrainian military, and similar situations are likely to occur again in the event of a future attacks or likelihood thereof. Russia has announced that vessels which have loaded anywhere outside of Russia, will not be permitted to pass through the Kerch Strait. Disruption and delays to transits of non-Russian-flagged vessels are known to occur. Direct targeting of Russian (proper) ports, port cities, or nearby areas is generally considered unlikely, although the potential targeting of Russian Black Sea ports is assessed to be more likely. Russian Black Sea ports are understood to be operating at ISPS level 2.

BSGI: Black Sea Grain Initiative

No further news regarding any future incarnation or variation of the previous BSGI, are known, although talks are understood to be ongoing. The previous BSGI remains suspended and is unlikely to be revived. Any attempt by the remaining parties to the BSGI (Ukraine, Turkey, the UN) to revive the BSGI without Russian approval is still assessed as unlikely to be successful. Any future variation or incarnation of the BSGI would ideally include some form of security guarantees or measures for the vessels involved.

The earlier described Ukrainian 'Humanitarian Corridor', as circulated by the IMO, should not be seen as direct replacement of the BSGI. The corridor is still understood as a temporary maritime route in the north-western part of the Black Sea, with a stated focus on evacuating ships stuck in the Ukrainian ports. Exporting additional Ukraine agricultural produce via the land-routes – such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania or expanding the current capacity of the Danube continues to be explored as well as any other possible means.

Information regarding past vessel movements and goods transported, as part of the BSGI, can be found on the UN dedicated website below¹.

<https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative/vessel-movements>

¹ Risk Intelligence is not responsible for third party content.

Ukraine:

Port information is located in the port table.

Ukrainian Danube ports are reported open and operating, although it is understood that an ongoing shortage of pilots and local weather conditions does cause operational disruption and delays. Future Russian attacks targeting the Ukrainian Danube ports are likely. Attacks targeting Ukrainian Danube port infrastructure has been occurring since the closing of the BSGI, with Russia significantly intensifying drone attacks against the Ukrainian logistics infrastructure near the river. Attacks at night are common, and anti-air defences in and near the ports often work through the night against Russian drone attacks. Recently, the possible use of ballistic missiles in this direction has been noted. Collateral damage to vessels in the ports is possible – either from strikes on the ports, or vessels may be hit by stray or disabled drones. The impact of reported attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea and Danube port infrastructure is likely to complicate operations to varying degrees.

While Russian long-range missile and drone attacks against critical infrastructure, a shift is likely as the weather gets colder. By then, Russia is likely to restart the bombing campaign against heating and power infrastructure in Ukraine, to put maximum pressure on Ukrainian society. Although, Ukrainian authorities claim to be better prepared, compared to last year, this will likely be a potential issue for future port operations, for example in the case of targeting of power and electricity infrastructure, that may cause power failures.

In case of a dramatic change on the ground, Russia may limit the strategic bombing and use the long-range precision weapons and drones against military targets closer to the front-line.

It is assessed that although grain exports play an important role in funding Ukraine's war effort – and will no doubt continue to do so – any future shipping corridor will likely also be important for importing building-materials for the future rebuilding of the country.

With the Ukrainian offensive ongoing, Ukrainian strikes targeting Russian-held infrastructure and logistics hubs have continued. This may also include strikes against port facilities in occupied areas, as well as maritime targets in occupied Crimea.

The main efforts of the Ukrainian offensive are still understood to be concentrating in the south. In case of a wider breakthrough in Kherson and/or Zaporizhzhia Oblasts towards Crimea and the Azov Sea, Russian priorities regarding operating the ports of Berdyansk and Mariupol may change.

Martial law is in effect throughout Ukraine and currently in place until 15 November 2023, with some local night-time curfews in place. All Ukrainian ports are operating at ISPS level 3 in accordance with the communication to the IMO by the Ukrainian authorities.

Russia:

Port information is located in the port table.

Russia recently introduced a temporary restriction on Ukrainian citizens, which may impact any vessels with Ukrainian crew, going to Russian ports. The Ukrainian effort to continue to attack Crimea and the Kerch Strait, is likely to have exerted a great deal of pressure against the Russian Navy in the NW Black Sea. Especially attacks on Sevastopol, the historic homeport of the Black Sea Fleet, seems to have had a significant effect, as the Russian navy are reported to have retreated from the port and moved its remaining vessels to Novorossiysk further east. This could give the Ukrainian military more freedom to operate in the NW Black Sea, although Russian aviation and other strike capabilities remain in the area.

The Ukrainian intent to strike at, and the availability of capabilities to reach, Russian targets highlight that the immediate threat towards Russian Black Sea ports has to be taken into account. The moving of the Russian Black Sea Navy may also mean, that Ukraine will begin to focus more strikes to the East of the Black Sea, and ports in this area.

While direct targeting of proper civilian vessels is still assessed as unlikely, collateral damage or mistaken targeting is possible, especially as Ukraine are willing to attack "civilian" cargo vessels operated by the Russian military – such vessels are often sanctioned due to activities related to the Syrian Civil War and the transport of military equipment.

It is uncertain to what degree countermeasures and security will impact operations in Russian ports. However, reports indicate that the Russian authorities have raised security concerns over the fear of UKR naval drones. An example is the port of Feodosia near Kerch, where there now is a ban on entering the waters closer than 1km of the port in small vessels and crafts. This adds to previous reports of gunfire in Feodosia and various reports of drone sightings, which are known to result in the closure of the Kerch Strait Bridge. The actual presence or sightings of drones are uncertain.

Overall, because of the threat to Russian ports, and the increased security, there is a chance that guards and troops will be overly nervous or paranoid about attacks and security incidents. The hyper-vigilant

state can lead security personnel to perceive benign actions or individuals as potential threats, thus increasing the likelihood of unjustified use of force – this extends to sailors and vessels.

There are also known reports of Russia sinking some old ferries or similar in the Kerch Strait, as an attempt to create a bulwark against the Ukrainian naval drones. While this most likely won't affect the regular shipping lane underneath the bridge, it highlights that Russia are stepping up security and are taking the threat of Ukrainian drones extremely seriously.

With the ongoing Ukrainian counter-offensive, there has also been an increase in strikes and sabotage against Russian infrastructure, logistics hubs and recruitment centers inside Russia. This has included oil terminals near ports. Such attacks are likely to continue for as long as Ukraine need to keep a high pressure on Russian forces and supply-lines – likely continuing over the Autumn of 2023. Reports continue to note the issues with Russian spoofing of AIS signals in the Black Sea.

Extra scrutiny against crew, and passengers from the West in Russian ports, has previously occurred. Extra focus is expected against Ukrainian crewmembers, who are required to be brought ashore and questioned by Russian authorities before berthing. Some crews on merchant vessels in the Black Sea, are known to have been questioned on attitude towards Russia and the invasion of Ukraine. Content on phones and electronic devices, as well as messages on social media and other text services may be investigated to establish anti-Russian sentiment.

Reports of activism against vessels transporting cargo to or from Russia are known. This is predominately when vessels with Russian cargo call European or western ports. Similarly, there have been previous incidents of vessels carrying oil and gas products from Russia being targeted by environmental/peace activists at sea or while underway as recently illustrated by the cruise ship calling at Batumi. Port workers and industrial action in the form of refusal to service the vessels once it lands in Western ports, is also likely. Hacktivists targeting companies trading with Russia cannot be ruled out.

Outlook:

Overall, the current threat picture is assessed to remain for the coming week, given a slight increase in military activity – with the caveat that unknown events may unfold to a degree that significantly changes the present circumstances, although this is not currently assessed as likely. Russian targeting of Ukrainian infrastructure, including port facilities,

is likely to continue to varying degrees – throughout the country. If the Russian are indeed attempting to disrupt the vessels transiting the Ukrainian 'humanitarian corridor', this is likely also an attempt to distract the Ukrainian military from their own operations in the NW Black Sea – which continues to indicate an increased focus on establishing area control. Russian efforts to counter the Ukrainian offensive operations are still likely to be stepped up, possibly by increased targeting of civilian infrastructure.

The volatility in relation to operating in the Black Sea is unlikely to change, as both Ukraine and Russia will attempt to assert dominance and disrupt the activities of the other side as much as possible.

Given the likely continued focus by the Russian military to target Ukrainian port facilities, no doubt to continue the pressure on Ukrainian abilities to export their goods – and if the disruption of port operations, due to the shelling, is not considered to be effective enough, additional intensity or other tactics, such as forced inspections or direct attacks on merchant vessels, may become more likely, as it seems the ultimate goal of the Russian efforts are to deny Ukraine the income from their exports. Any tacit agreement from the Russians on transits is unlikely unless outside pressure or negotiated separately.

The Ukrainian ground-offensive is likely to continue to include future areal and naval drone strikes against Russian logistics infrastructure and storage sites to disrupt Russian supply-lines and military operations in Southern Ukraine. Much of this can be focused on the Sea of Azov and Crimea, and future major attacks against maritime infrastructure to keep the pressure on Russian supply-lines the area, are likely.

Although the Russian authorities appear to rule out any future "official" mobilization of Russian citizens, other means are being utilized, such as the legislative changes, or other means in attempts to achieve the same conscription goals.

Future sanctions towards Russia may affect the overall security dynamics of the Black Sea. If further sanctions mount, Russia could still respond by restricting Russian ports for vessels affiliated with or connected to EU/NATO/Western countries or flags. In such a scenario, any effect on vessels in Russian ports is uncertain, although detention of vessels could be a possibility – threats of this have been reported. Russian authorities might do extensive checks and controls of western vessels as a form of harassment.

The war in Ukraine has proven it can take on additional dimensions – with the likely example of the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines

in the Baltic Sea, in late September 2022 – this means that additional hybrid-warfare means may be used not just in relation to Ukraine and the Black Sea, but also elsewhere in the world- especially where the international tensions between Russia and the West/NATO are prevalent. These may include, but are not limited to, harassment, espionage, cyberattacks, and sabotage of and against maritime assets and infrastructure. This has the potential to affect maritime security in a negative way.

Annex 1 – Illustration of reported mined areas

Annex 2 – Announced temporary corridor from UKR Black Sea ports

Annex 3 – Reported Kerch Strait inspection area

Annex 4 – Incidents

Ukraine and northern Black Sea ports

Refer to the following page for definitions and information on sanctions/commercial restrictions

Port	Current port situation	Current local situation	Operations	Security
Odessa	Regular cargo operations understood suspended for commercial operations, but operations related to the unilateral UKR corridor are known.	Russian strikes do occur against targets in the Odessa Oblast, including some direct targeting of Odessa city and port facilities. Further targeting and increased focus as part of military operations cannot be ruled out.		
Pivdenny	Regular cargo operations understood suspended for commercial operations, but operations related to the unilateral UKR corridor are known.	Located in the Odessa Oblast where Russian strikes have taken place, including in the nearby city of Yuzhny. Further targeting in the area and increased focus as part of military operations cannot be ruled out.		
Mykolaiv	Closed. Cargo operations suspended for commercial operations.	In control of Ukrainian forces, but strikes and shelling, by Russian forces, of targets in or near the city, has been reported.		
Mariupol	Disputed operational status.	Controlled by Russian forces and part of annexed territory. Actual operational status is disputed with Russian authorities reporting the port to be open, although this is with very limited traffic prioritized by the Russian state. Reports indicate rebuilding of the port facilities by Russian military and contractors.		
Chornomorsk	Regular cargo operations understood suspended for commercial operations, but operations related to the unilateral UKR corridor are known.	Russian strikes have occurred against targets in the Odessa Oblast. Further targeting in the area and increased focus as part of military operations cannot be ruled out.		
Ukraine Danube ports	Ports of Reni, Izmail, Reni and Ust-Dunaisk are reported operating and handling ship calls via the Danube, and the Sulina and Bystre Canals.	Russian strikes do occur against the port of Reni and Izmail. Previous incidents indicate a Russian priority of targeting the logistics infrastructure on or near the Danube, including port infrastructure. Collateral damage to vessels is possible. Local weather conditions and pilot shortages also impact maritime operations. ISPS Level 3 is in place, as communicated by the Ukrainian authorities. Delays and congestion have been reported in relation to port and canal operations.		

Port	Current port situation	Current local situation	Operations	Security
Kerch Strait	Open for navigation within but closed for unauthorised transit. Ports located within the Strait are reported to be operating. Inspection regime and additional security measures are in place.	Future UKR naval drone or missile strikes against the Kerch Strait Bridge are likely. Attacks are less likely to directly target commercial maritime traffic, although collateral damage cannot be ruled out, with Ukrainian authorities reiterating the threat towards vessels carrying military related equipment to Ukrainian Azov ports Ukrainian attacks against naval or state-affiliated vessels, and port infrastructure, using naval drones or cruise missiles, is possible. Russia has announced transit restriction of vessels which are not loaded in Russian ports. Scrutiny against crew is possible *. See Annex 3 for reported Kerch Strait inspection area.		
Russian Black Sea ports	Open with restrictions. Additional security measures are in place.	Ports operating at ISPS level 2, some operational delays possible. Collateral damage to vessels may occur in case of incidents. Scrutiny against crew is possible *. Ukrainian attacks against naval or state-affiliated vessels, and port infrastructure, using naval drones or cruise missiles, is possible.		
Russian Sea of Azov ports	Open with restrictions. Sea of Azov is currently closed to unauthorized navigation by the Russian authorities. Additional security measures are in place.	Ports operating at ISPS level 2, some operational delays possible. Collateral damage to vessels may occur in case of incidents. Scrutiny against crew is possible *. Ukrainian attacks against naval or state-affiliated vessels, and port infrastructure, using naval drones or cruise missiles, is possible.		
Temporary corridor from UKR Black Sea ports	Operational status is reported to be open – though influenced by operational circumstances in the NW Black Sea.	Operational, but transits are believed to be on a case-by-case basis. Sources indicate limited UKR escorts in the form of RHIBs. Any tacit agreement from Russia on current transits are unknown, and further Russian acceptance is unclear if the increased tempo of Ukrainian strikes on Russian assets in the Black Sea continues. Military activity in and near the corridor is possible.		
Constanta	Open.	Operating, with additional cargo diverted to Constanta due to closed Ukrainian ports. Congestion should be expected, and although this is being managed, it could lead to delays.		

* Constraints and demands related to vessels with Ukrainian crewmembers. Russian crew with previous military service may be questioned by authorities withheld as part of Russian mobilization efforts. ** Risk Intelligence is not responsible for third party content.

Operations and Security definitions

Operations:

Green – Operations in the area are ongoing normally with no significant issues.

Yellow – Some delays or disruptions in the area may be expected, which could be due to limitations to, for example, port operations and/or congestion in the area, or other difficulties with access or operating at the required ISPS level or complying with other procedures either at port or offshore.

Red – Operations have been significantly disrupted and ports or areas might be closed or only partially operating due to restrictions, blockades, lack of functioning infrastructure, personnel disruptions, and access concerns, or other issues preventing all or most operations.

Security:

Green – The area is secure and there are no direct or indirect security threats in the port vicinity or offshore area. Low threat to vessels/personnel.

Yellow – There are no direct security threats but there are possible indirect threats in the vicinity, particularly but not limited to conflict taking place in proximity either on land or offshore. Moderate threat to vessels/personnel.

Red – Direct threats are possible to the port or area and/or its immediate approaches, including collateral damage in the immediate area or direct attacks that could target infrastructure and vessels at berth/anchorages/underway. High threat to vessels/personnel.

Note on sanctions and commercial restrictions

Sanctions and commercial restrictions are being imposed on Russia in response to its invasion. These sanctions are evolving and will affect ongoing business operations in many complex legal ways. Sanctions are being applied to individual Russians, business entities, and to certain Russian export products (such as oil products). There are also restrictions on specific nationalities (such as US citizens) engaging in certain activities, restrictions on payments (in certain currencies and through certain institutions), and restrictions on Russia's import of particular dual-use items and technologies. Port entry bans for Russian vessels are being implemented (in the UK, for example).

The fine print of sanctions and restrictions might affect chartering arrangements in unexpected ways, depending on the connection to Russia. These issues, as well as insurance issues for operating in war risk areas, are not covered in this report and might need to be assessed separately to reduce the risk of exposure.

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Annex 1:

Reported mined areas



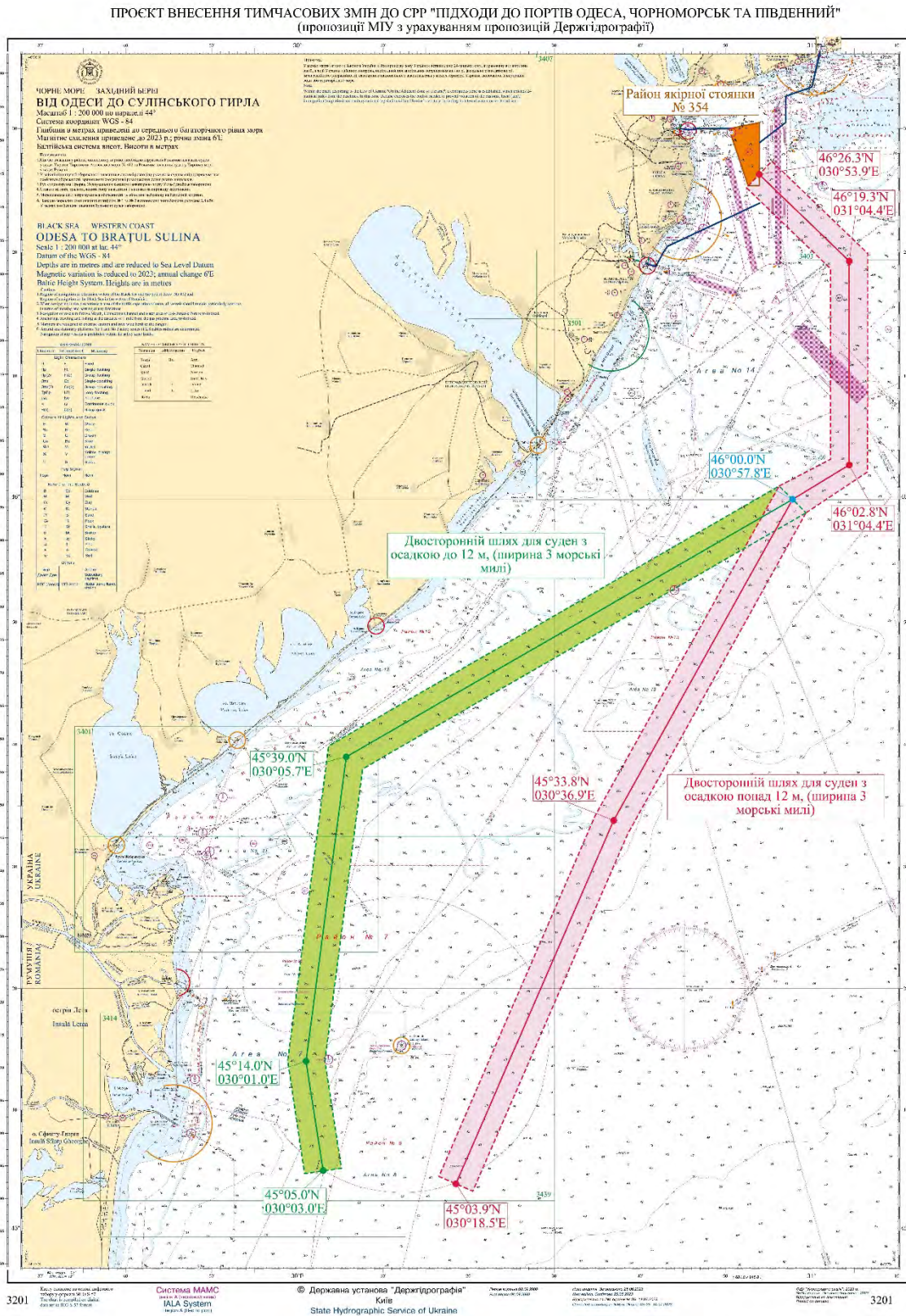
Risk Intelligence (Illustration for visual guidance only)

NAVAREA III: See above for visual guidance on mined areas according to the Spanish flag administration (NAVAREA III 0092).

Mined areas are most likely a combination of deeper sea mines and shallow water mines for anti-amphibious operations as well as on beaches. Mines in the sea are most likely cabled or anchored and under control.

Please also note that active NAVAREA III warnings include a warning of possible drifting mines (NAVAREA III 0122) for Northwest, West, and Southwest areas of the Black Sea.

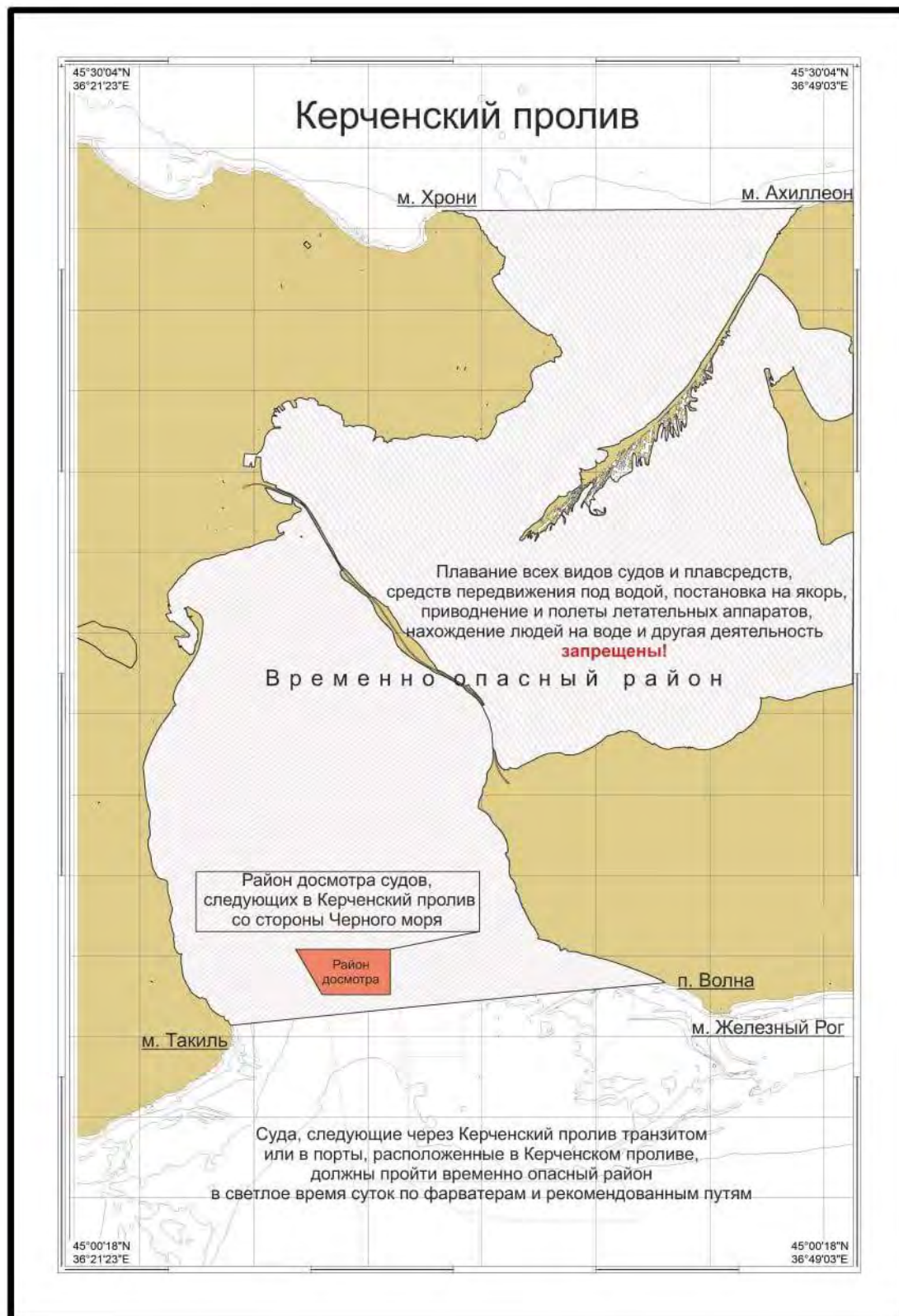
Annex 2:



The above chart shows the announced temporary routes for civilian vessels to and from Ukrainian Black Sea ports. The Ukrainian Navy emphasizes that war risks, including mines, remain. Further details can be found in the IMO Circular Letter No.4748 (Source: IMO Illustration for visual guidance only)

Annex 3:

Reported Kerch Strait inspection area, as announced by the Russian authorities 02 August 2023.



RiskIntelligence



#1 Russian forces reportedly averts attack on Sevastopol



24 October 2023

Anti-piracy/Naval operation

Region: Europe

Area: Black Sea

An attack with water-borne drones were reportedly averted by Russian forces at the port of Sevastopol on 24 October 2023

According to reports on social and other media, quoting Russian authorities, three drone craft were detected and destroyed by the Russian forces defending the port.

There are no reports of damages in the port.

IMO: N/R

Call Sign: N/R

Marker Position: 44° 35' 42" N 33° 24' 34" E