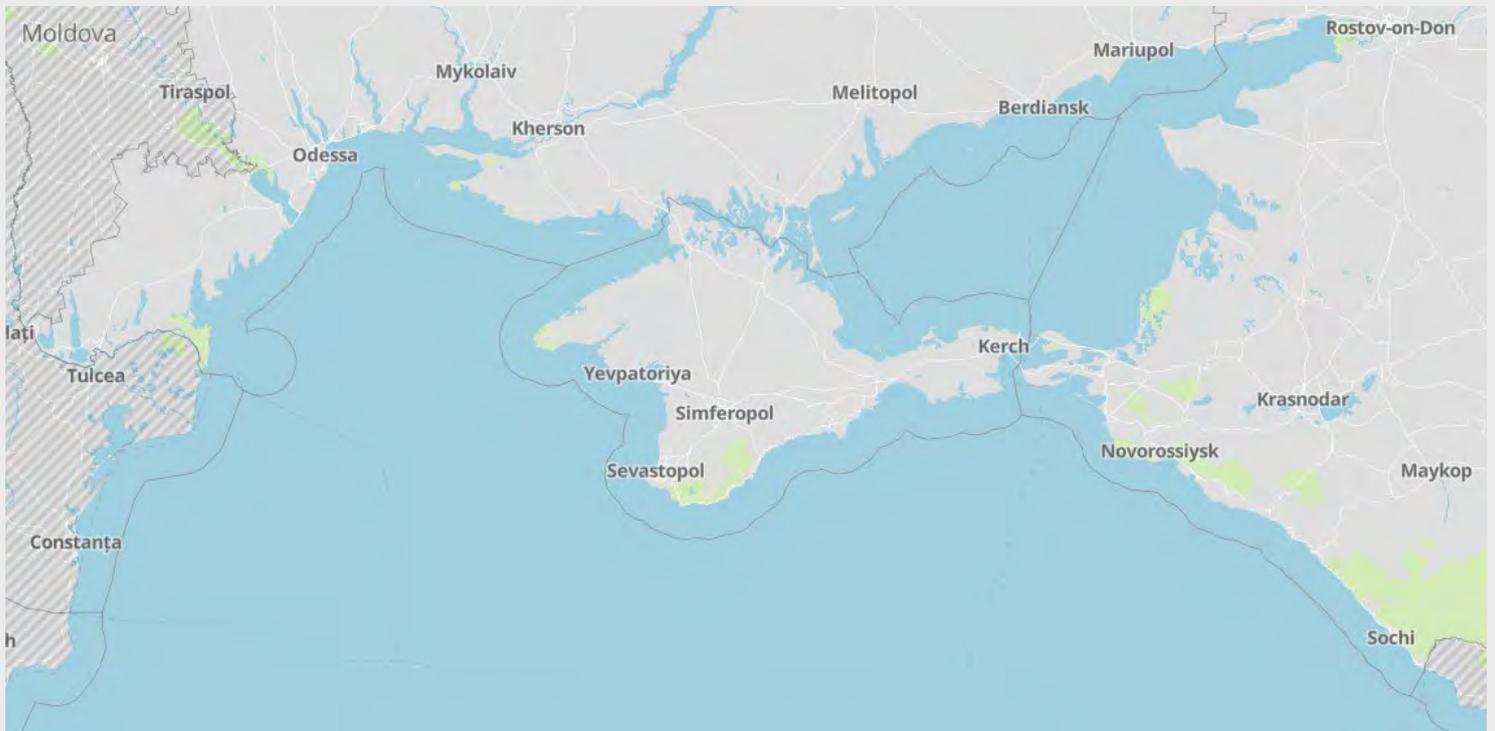


Northern Black Sea and Russia Ports Threat Assessment

Port operations and security overview

Date and time of latest intelligence included in this report: 21 March 2024 - 09:00 UTC



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Overview of current situation

Brief update:

Following last weekend's Russian presidential election, the re-elected president Putin stated that there were no planned changes to current ministries and leadership. Indicating that the current strategies and approach to, especially regarding Ukraine, there will be little to no change following the presidential election. Therefore, any political or military plans already in motion will likely continue as before – although an increase in military activity cannot be ruled out, as part of re-asserting the political leadership

The 15 March attack on Odessa city and the latest attacks on Russian oil refineries, do indicate a degree of tit-for-tat tactics by both sides. Attacks against various land-based and maritime targets are also assessed to continue, either as the result of long-time planning, or if either side sees a target of opportunity. These incidents are assessed to be in line with the current high-threat level of the Black Sea during the war, with military operations ongoing in the Black Sea. No developments occurred that changed the overall security situation for maritime operations. Further details can be found at the back of this report.

The 'Humanitarian Corridor' continues to operate, and there is no change to the present threat picture towards maritime operations using the corridor. However, certainty of military supplies to Ukraine, are likely to impact this. The operational status of the Ukrainian ports remains unchanged, with the three ports of Odessa, Chornomorsk and Pivdenny open for operations connected to the 'humanitarian corridor' but closed for other operations.

Martial law was extended in Ukraine until 13 May and some local restrictions are likely to impact individual transits.

The overall regional circumstances are expected to continue in the coming week, as there are no apparent or foreseeable changes to the current situation, neither militarily nor politically or diplomatically.

Ukrainian 'Humanitarian Corridor'

There are no changes to the threat picture for the corridor or the ports connected to the 'Humanitarian Corridor'.

Drone and cruise missile paths are known to cross the corridor and while direct targeting is unlikely, collateral damage from malfunctioning or downed drones and missiles cannot be ruled out.

Russian tactics related to the Black Sea are expected to be limited to ensuring the passage of their vessels and traffic to Russian ports and the Sea of Azov. Any attempts to disrupt any scheduled flow of vessels transiting to Ukrainian Black Sea ports, is still assessed as possible, potentially by – by harassment, GPS signal spoofing or the use of warning shots in extreme cases. Continued operations by Ukrainian forces are likely aimed at disrupting any Russian effort against the unilateral corridor.

The potential for disruptions and the threats from military operations are expected to remain until security guarantees are made. Such guarantees should address the threat of Russian actions towards vessels trading in the Ukrainian Black Sea and Danube ports, as well as threats against ports and port infrastructure. It should therefore be assumed that there remains an increased threat towards maritime trade in the NW Black Sea and near the conflict area, in particular.

Although attacks by Ukrainian forces against Russian Naval capabilities occur, and are expected to continue to occur, Russia still maintains a strong presence in the Black Sea. However, under current circumstances, it is unlikely that Russian Naval capabilities can uphold any blockade or strict inspection regime related to the NW Black Sea or the unilateral corridor, especially with Ukrainian anti-ship capabilities and the increasing assertion of control of their territorial waters. Any overt rhetoric of threats in the area, real or not, are still assessed as attempts to influence threat perception and willingness to undertake voyages into the corridor north of 45-21 in particular, as well as in the wider Black Sea. However, this is generally considered unlikely, especially due to likely international condemnation and the escalatory nature of such an act.

There are no further details regarding the tri-party mine-clearing memorandum of understanding, between Turkey, and Romania. Russia still has extensive capabilities to covertly release mines or other munitions into the unilateral corridor. The use of submarines, for such deployment, will likely also be influenced by the risk to surface vessels due to Ukrainian anti-ship capabilities.

The coordinated insurance mechanism between Ukraine and a syndicate of United Kingdom marine insurers is intended to reduce the war-risk premiums when transiting to the Ukrainian Black Sea ports of Odessa, Chornomorsk, Pivdenny, and Ukrainian Danube ports.

Black Sea:

There were no developments during the past week that changed the current threat picture in the Black Sea. Local weather conditions are known to have impacted some local operations in the Black Sea. Any future bad weather will continue to raise concerns of possible drifting mines, as such weather can dislodge mines from their moorings or disperse already drifting mines, over a greater area.

Ukrainian forces are likely to continue the pressure on the Crimean Peninsula and are expected to continue the focus of gaining more firm control of the maritime domain. This will likely continue to be a key priority for them, as this will provide more definite security circumstances for any future shipping corridor to Ukrainian Black Sea ports. Russian forces are likely to continue to focus on countering the Ukrainian efforts.

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

It is worth noting, regarding the previously reported attack on the MEKHANIK POGODIN, that although this was technically a civilian cargo vessel, it was being used by Russian forces, for observation and reconnaissance, which is why the Ukrainian forces saw the vessel as a legitimate target. The vessel was also stranded south of Kherson, and therefore not in commercial operation at the time. It therefore remains generally assessed as less likely, that Ukrainian forces would shift tactics and target normally operating cargo vessels, however, collateral damage near Russian ports and infrastructure is possible.

Attacks on Ukrainian ports and their associated cities are known to impact port power supply and other similar port facilities, which in turn has halted operations. Given the constant unpredictability, similar future disruption 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 –

indicating a likely intention to increase control of the area.

The Ukrainian air-raid alerts are reported throughout Ukraine almost daily. The continued high likelihood of collateral damage to vessels increases with the ongoing intensity of the Russian aerial bombardments of Ukraine.

The announced signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by Bulgaria, Turkey and Romania for combined efforts to undertake counter-mine activities, is a significant step towards dealing with the issue – as some figures claim that a possible 500 mines were deployed in the Black Sea. It is understood that the command of the Task Force (Mine Countermeasures Naval Group Black Sea – MCM Black Sea) will be on a six-month rotation and only involve capabilities from the three states. As noted earlier in this report, the local weather conditions raise concerns for drifting mines as storms in the area often lead to new sightings as mines become untethered from anchors and begin to drift. While a connection to the war is likely, the exact origins of individual mines are uncertain. There is also doubt about the potential number of mines deployed in the Black Sea, but the sightings and ongoing efforts of disposals, highlight that mines are a threat.

Conflict-related implications when operating in the Black Sea are 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 the volume of diverted traffic, the 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 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.

The Ukrainian authorities have previously stated that they are monitoring vessels going to occupied Ukrainian ports, in the Sea of Azov, and that these vessels are viewed as legitimate military targets.

Traffic is known to be halted on the Kerch Strait bridge due to potential security incidents, and the bridge remains a coveted target by the Ukrainian military – highlighted by the 26 December incident. Similar situations are likely to occur again in the event of 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

BSGI remains suspended. However, it is understood that negotiations are ongoing, attempting to find a future format. Given current political and military circumstances, a new format seems unlikely in the near term.

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>

Ukraine:

Port information is located in the port table.

Any issues with military supplies are likely to influence and impact future operations by the Ukrainian forces. Although a continued focus on the security of the Ukrainian Black Sea export corridor, is likely to continue to have priority. Ukrainian ports generally remain shut for normal operations, but Odessa, Pivdennyi (formerly Yuzhny) and Chornomorsk, are handling operations connected to the Ukrainian 'humanitarian corridor'. Any specific impact of reported attacks on the Ukrainian Black Sea and Danube port infrastructure, following individual incidents, is uncertain, though targeting is likely to continue to complicate operations to varying degrees.

Recent Russian drone and missile strikes against Ukrainian cities and port are likely to continue. While only limited reports of strikes against port and maritime infrastructure have been noted, it is uncertain if this is due to Ukraine being able to shoot down the drones targeting ports, or if Russia

are actively avoiding targeting of ports. Future Russian strikes against ports are possible.

Ukrainian Danube ports are reported to be 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 possible. Attacks have been the most common earlier, and anti-air defences in and near the ports usually work through the night in the case of Russian drone attacks. 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.

In case of a dramatic change on the ground, Russia may limit the strategic bombing and use 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.

Any future call by the Ukrainian government for additional mobilization of citizens to the armed forces is likely to exempt Ukrainian seafarers although the scale of such a mobilization is uncertain.

Martial law remains in place until 13 May 2024 – with some local night-time curfews in place. All Ukrainian ports are operating at ISPS level 3 following the communication to the IMO by the Ukrainian authorities.

Russia:

Port information is located in the port table.

Ukrainian efforts against Russian maritime assets have been focused on degrading Russian capabilities and limiting the room to maneuver in the Black Sea. Since the weather began to improve in the late Winter of 2024, the Ukrainian naval drone effort against the Russian navy has begun again. Naval drone attacks against vessels and aerial, missile or air strikes against Russian maritime targets, predominately at Crimea and near Kerch, are expected.

The Ukrainian effort to attack Crimea and the Kerch Strait in the Autumn 2023 to Winter 2024, is likely to have exerted a great deal of pressure against the

¹ Risk Intelligence is not responsible for third party content.

Russian Navy in the NW Black Sea. Especially attacks on Sevastopol, the historic homeport of the Black Sea Fleet, seem to have had a significant effect, as the Russian navy is reported to have retreated from the port and moved its remaining vessels to Novorossiysk further east. This will 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 must be taken into account. With the moving of the Russian Black Sea Navy, Ukraine is likely to focus more on strikes to the East of the Black Sea, and ports in this area.

While intended targeting of civilian vessels is still assessed as unlikely, collateral damage or mistaken targeting is possible, by both parties – including a Ukrainian willingness 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 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 is stepping up security and is taking the threat of Ukrainian drones extremely seriously.

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 their 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:

The attacks on Odessa in the past week underlines how the Black Sea remains a 'frontline' area as part of the war with Russia and the present outlook for the security situation in the Black Sea region is likely to overall remain unchanged – with the caveat that unknown events may unfold. Ukrainian focus, both politically, and in terms of securing further global political support, and funds to sustain its war efforts, but also militarily to attaining more control of security in the maritime domain, will likely continue to be key priorities.

As the regional weather conditions turn milder, an increase in naval operations is likely. Any significant changes to the present circumstances are not assessed as likely. Russian targeting of Ukrainian infrastructure, including port facilities, is likely to continue to varying degrees – throughout the country. Russia is likely to continue to attempt to disrupt or discourage vessels transiting the Ukrainian 'humanitarian corridor', although such attempts are also likely attempts to distract the Ukrainian military from their operations in the NW Black Sea – which continues to indicate an increased focus on establishing area control.

The volatility 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 cities and facilities, to keep 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.

Ukrainian strikes are likely to continue 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 in 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 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 – examples likely connected sabotage include the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipeline incidents in the Baltic Sea, in late September 2022 and the January 2024 incident at the Ust-Luga terminal, near St. Petersburg – this means that additional hybrid-warfare means may be used not just concerning 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 negatively.

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 the 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	Ukraine Danube ports are understood operating and handling ship calls via the Danube, and the Sulina and Bystre Canals.	<p>Incidents involving mines have occurred in the Black Sea near the canals. Russian strikes do occur against the ports 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.</p> <p>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.</p>		

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.	UKR naval drone or missile strikes against the Kerch Strait Bridge and nearby naval installations do occur. 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 (notably energy 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.	While the corridor itself is outside the regular “pre-war” conditions of the Black Sea, it is reported to be running without considerable issues. 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/anchorage/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



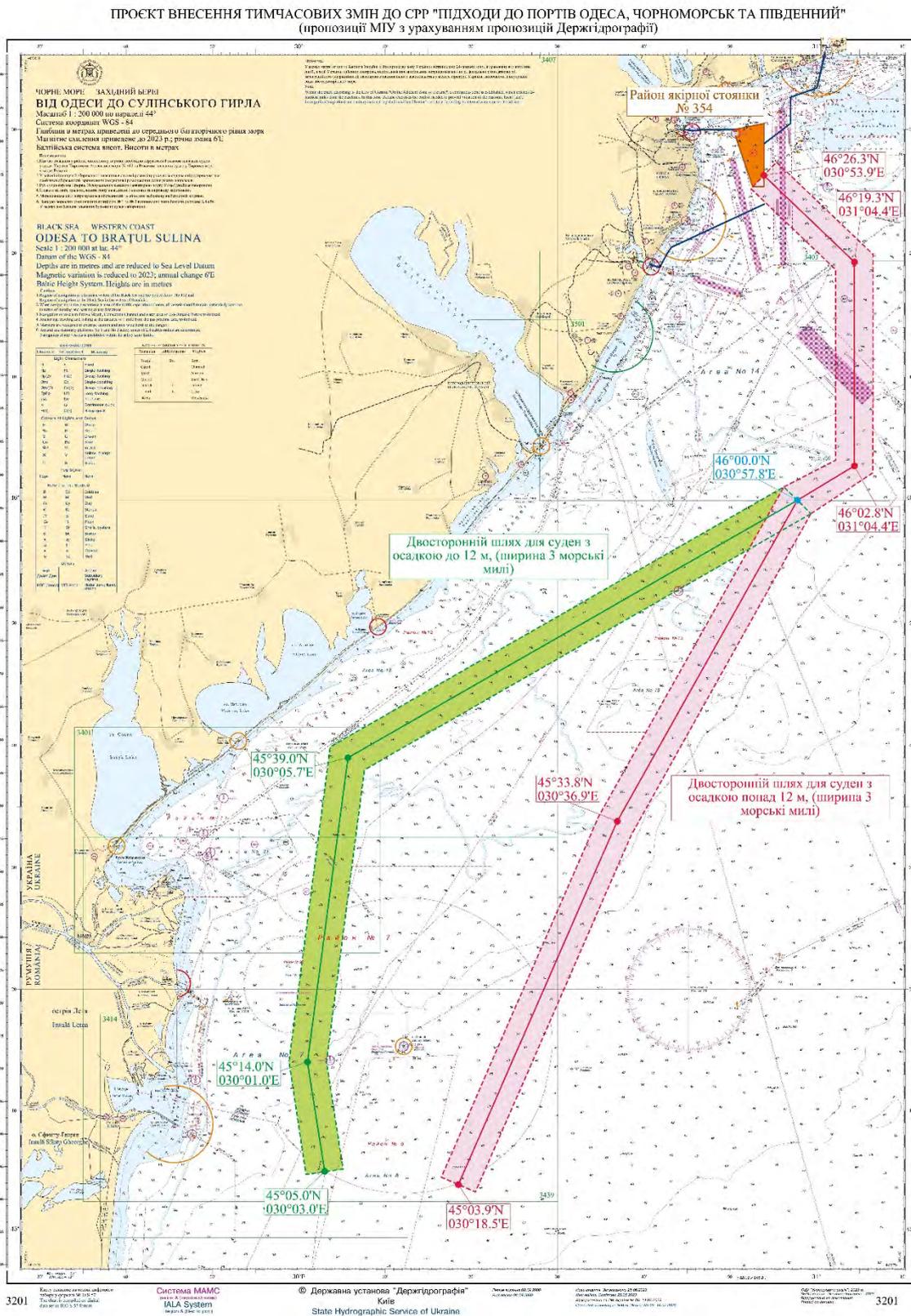
Risk Intelligence (Illustration for visual guidance only)

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.

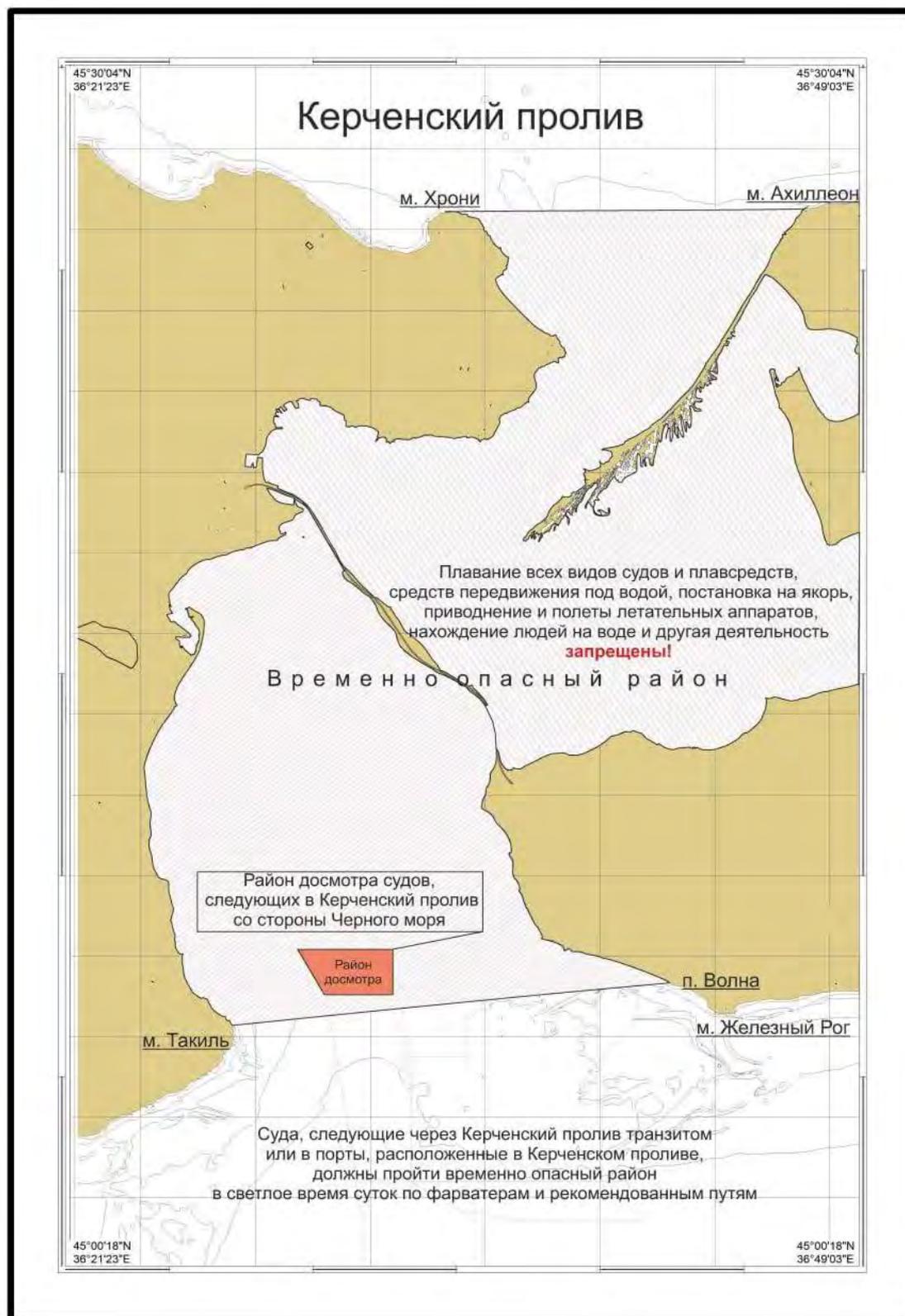
Annex 2:



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.



Missile strike on Odesa

March 15 2024



Region: Europe

Targets in the city of Odesa were struck by Russian missiles at about 11:00 LT (09:00 UTC) on 15 March 2024.

Reportedly Russian Iskander-type ballistic missiles were launched from the Russia-occupied Crimea region. The missiles hit infrastructure including a gas pipeline and residential buildings, causing a fire covering a total area of approximately 120 meters squared. The attack caused 20 fatalities and left 70 injured.