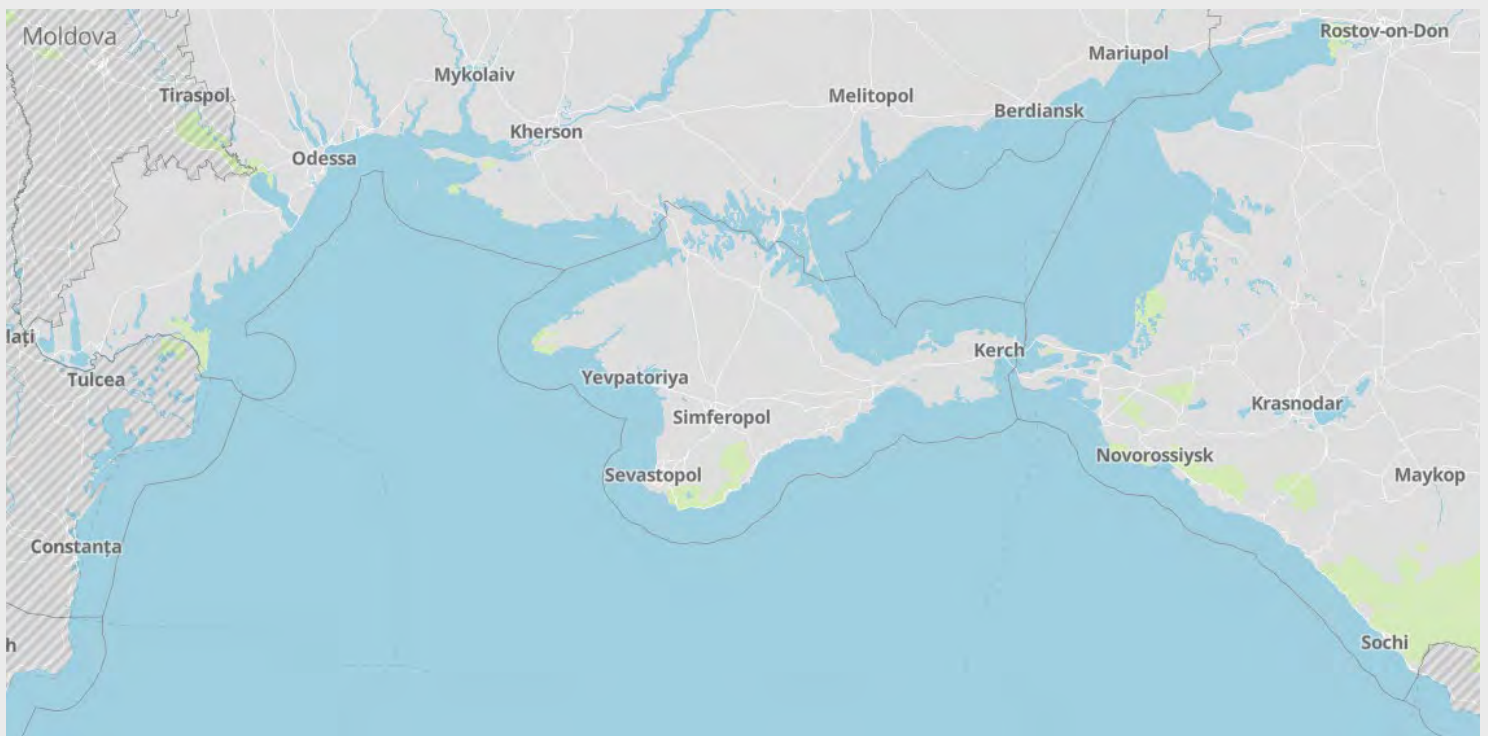# RiskIntelligence

Northern Black Sea and Russia Ports Threat Assessment
Port operations and security overview

Date and time of latest intelligence included in this report: 13 February 2025 - 09:00 UTC

Overview of current situation

Brief update:

Developments during the reporting period do not represent a change in the threat landscape of the Black Sea. The ports table details the operational and security conditions in the ports.

Attacks on Russian and Ukrainian infrastructure have continued, especially impacting Ukraine's energy infrastructure, leading to various scheduled and unscheduled blackouts, similar future should be expected. The recently reported attack towards the Ukrainian Danube area, which includes recent statements of damage to port or near port infrastructure at Reni, appear to have been part of a wider drone attack against to the southern Odesa region.

Russia's ability to sustain attacks is linked to Ukraine's air-defence capacities. Future similar attacks can disrupt maritime operations, including port operations.

During the past week there were several diplomatic developments including stated phone calls between the US and Russia and the US and Ukraine. Although nothing concrete has been shared publicly, there are initial indications that the price for stopping the current war, will cost Ukraine the most. The Munich Security Conference will take place 14 to 16 February 2025. It is likely that there will be further clarity of where the war is heading in the near-term if not for the rest of 2025. The timeline for a ceasefire in Ukraine is still uncertain, and varying intensities of attacks on port infrastructure are anticipated as part of strategic positioning. No recent vessel incidents have been reported, but there remains a threat of collateral as attacks towards Ukrainian port infrastructure continues. Targeted attacks on vessels by Russia are assessed as less likely, though not impossible.

There likely scenarios for vessel attacks are:

Scenario 1: Vessels can be targeted due to flawed intelligence from the Russian military, suggesting they carry military hardware.

Scenario 2: Attacks may be aimed at deterring vessels from using the Ukrainian transit corridor and disrupting maritime exports by creating uncertainty and danger.

Scenario 3: Russia could target vessels to increase pressure on Ukraine to influence future negotiations.

Regardless of Russian objectives, Ukrainian ports and their infrastructure remain likely targets. The risk of collateral damage to vessels in port and those transiting the corridor is significant due to Russia's apparent willingness to target cargo vessels and port infrastructure near civilian areas.

Ukrainian Black Sea Corridor:

Vessels continue navigating the corridor to Ukrainian Black Sea ports, during the past week. The threat level for vessels in transit is assessed as lower than the likelihood of collateral damage in port, given the continued focus of Russian attacks on Ukrainian port cities and port infrastructure and future incidents involving commercial vessels—whether from collateral damage, debris, missile misidentification, or potential direct targeting—cannot be ruled out.

The Ukrainian Black Sea corridor and ports operate under IMO Circular Letter 4748 and local guidance, though operational differences should be expected. While direct targeting of vessels at sea is not expected, collateral damage from malfunctioning drones and missiles and debris remains a possibility. Operational disruptions such as power outages and air raid alarms are likely until security improves. An elevated threat to maritime trade in the NW Black Sea and near the conflict area persists due to Russian actions against vessels and port infrastructure.

Black Sea:

Reported war-related developments do not change the threat perception for the Black Sea region, with the north-western area still an active war zone. The security situation varies within the Black Sea, with lower threats to maritime operations in the southern half.

Potential harassment, AIS/GPS signal jamming or spoofing, and the use of warning shots remain possible. Ukrainian forces are expected to continue pressuring Russian forces in the Black Sea, including Crimea, in order to achieve greater control over the maritime domain to secure future shipping corridors to Ukrainian ports. Russia, despite reduced naval capabilities in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, maintains a presence that can deploy mines or munitions into the Black Sea. Submarine deployment will be influenced by Ukrainian anti-ship capabilities. However, under current conditions, Russia is unlikely to enforce any blockade or inspection regime in the north-western Black Sea.

The threat of sea mines persists in the wider Black Sea, with ongoing Mine Countermeasure (MCM) operations conducted by Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Reports of Russian and Ukrainian military activity includes operations in the Black Sea, underlining the continued threats posed to shipping in the area. Conflict-related implications, such as varying degrees of naval presence, congestion at regional straits and ports, sanctions on trade to and from Russia, and complications with crew changes, have become more common since Russia's withdrawal from the UN-backed Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2023.

Sea of Azov:

The Sea of Azov is largely restricted for commercial traffic without Russian consent. Mariupol and Berdyansk ports, controlled by Russian forces, have unclear operational statuses. Reports indicate stolen Ukrainian cargo is being transported from these ports. Ukraine monitors vessels to occupied ports in the Sea of Azov and may consider them potential military targets. Russia has increased defences around the Crimea bridge due to Ukrainian strikes. Non-Russian-flagged vessels face disruptions in the Kerch Strait, and Russia may prohibit vessels loaded outside its territory from transiting. Attacks on Russian Black Sea ports operating at ISPS level 2 are probable.

Ukraine:

Power-outages and air-raid alarms continue throughout the country, as a result of Russian attacks, which can also disrupt port operations. Concerns regarding the operational future of the country's energy network, including sufficient supplies and making the network more resilient to aerial attacks, continue to be expressed. Given the constant unpredictability, future disruption should be expected.

The reported Ukrainian incursion into Russia continues and is generally considered part of a wider strategy to establish some Ukrainian momentum. Although it remains unclear what kind of impact this may have on the ongoing war, or it may indeed be used by Ukraine in future negotiations with Russia. It remains likely that Russia may use any pretext for future attacks on Black Sea maritime operations, if deemed useful to achieve their military or political objectives.

Martial law remains in place – 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.

There has been a reported increase in Ukrainian bomber jet activity since 23 January, specifically aircraft flying in specific attack patterns without launching missiles. These activities have led to multiple instances of air raid alerts in Crimea and closures of the Kerch Strait Bridge. This activity could indicate Ukrainian training or preparation for a larger strike in the near term – possibly against maritime- or high-profile targets in occupied areas or Russia.

Ukraine is likely to continue to attempt strikes on Russian military targets Novorossiysk Naval base, naval vessels, as well as targeting energy infrastructure and port facilities related to energy exports. Ukraine is unlikely to directly target civilian infrastructure or vessel traffic, but collateral damage in for form of missile debris or similar is possible.

Overall, a Ukrainian attack against Russian maritime targets, predominately in Crimea, near Kerch and in the Eastern Black Sea remain a likely scenario.

Videos of naval and aerial drone attacks in Russian ports also highlights a general lack of advanced counter measures. Russian anti-air is often fired at near horizontal angles. Therefore, a lot of anti-air fire is going directly into civilian and port areas, across from wherever Russian Naval vessels are positioned. This is likely to lead to damage to port facilities and vessels and may potentially also wound or kill sailors or port workers.

When using other Russian ports than those in the Black Sea, for example Arctic or Baltic Sea ports, it is possible that Russian authorities will try to recruit or coerce crews on visiting vessels with non-Russian flag or crew, to conduct sabotage of undersea cables by releasing the anchor and dragging it across cables or pipelines. Such cases of recruitment have not been confirmed, but it is possible given the ongoing Russian effort to conduct sabotage of undersea cables in the Baltic Sea, and the requirement for plausible deniability.

Conflict outlook:

The outcome of the upcoming Munich Security Conference 14-16 February 2025 will likely provide some insights into what the near-term approach of the US will be and where this will leave Ukraine and the European continent in relation to the Russian war in Ukraine. Several countries have proposed hosting future talks, although no dates and locations are reported confirmed. Developments along the frontline do not change the threat assessment in the northwestern Black Sea. Ukraine and Russia are likely to continue their positioning ahead of any future negotiations, with both capable of continuing the conflict at present levels without significant escalation.
Ukraine is likely to continue targeting Russian infrastructure using missiles, naval drones, and aerial drones, focusing on Crimea, the Eastern Black Sea, and the Sea of Azov. Russia continue to have the capability to disrupt vessels in the Ukrainian Black Sea corridor and to target port infrastructure in attempts to divert and disrupt Ukrainian military efforts.

New sanctions on Russia could alter Black Sea security dynamics, with potential restrictions on EU, NATO, or Western-affiliated vessels accessing Russian ports. Detention and harassment of such vessels by Russian authorities are possible.
The conflict has shown potential for broader hybrid warfare, with Western intelligence warning of increased Russian activities in Europe. Ukraine may also target Russian infrastructure beyond the Black Sea. Examples include "parcel bombs" at DHL sites and incidents involving Nord Stream pipelines, suggesting hybrid warfare extending beyond Ukraine and the Black Sea to areas with high tensions between Russia and the West or NATO.

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	The port is understood operational in accordance with the IMO Circular Letter 4748, and local guidance.	Russian strikes do occur against targets in the Odesa Oblast, including some direct targeting of Odesa city and port facilities. The overall security situation remains highly unpredictable and local operational differences and issues should be expected. Disruptions to operations may occur due to power outages or air raid alarms.	🟥	🟥
Pivdenny	The port is understood operational in accordance with the IMO Circular Letter 4748, and local guidance.	Russian strikes have occurred against targets in and near Pivdenny, including targeting of the port. Future targeting in the area as part of military operations cannot be ruled out. The overall security situation remains highly unpredictable and local operational differences and issues should be expected. Disruptions to operations may occur due to power outages or air raid alarms.	🟥	🟥
Mykolaiv	Closed. Cargo operations suspended for commercial operations.	In control of Ukrainian forces. Russian strikes against military targets and critical-infrastructure targets in or near the city do occur.	🟥	🟥
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	The port is understood operational in accordance with the IMO Circular Letter 4748, and local guidance.	Russian strikes have occurred against targets in the Odessa Oblast. Future attacks targeting Chornomorsk port cannot be ruled out. The overall security situation remains highly unpredictable and local operational differences and issues should be expected. Disruptions to operations may occur due to power outages or air raid alarms.	🟥	🟥
Ukraine Danube ports	Ukraine Danube ports are operating and handling ship calls via the Danube, and the Sulina and Bystre Canals.	Incidents involving mines have previously occurred in the Black Sea near the canals. Russian strikes against the ports in the Izmail region, do occur. Local weather conditions, water levels, 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 but only for authorized 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 stations and critical infrastructure are expected. Attacks are not expected to directly target commercial maritime traffic, but collateral damage cannot be ruled out. Russian defensive fire against drones may hit commercial traffic. 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. Ukrainian attacks against naval or state-affiliated vessels, and port infrastructure, using naval drones, aerial drones, or cruise missiles, is possible. Collateral damage from drones may occur in case of incidents, and Russian defensive fire against drones may hit commercial traffic. Scrutiny against crew 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. Ukrainian attacks against naval or state-affiliated vessels, and port infrastructure, using naval drones, aerial drones or cruise missiles, is possible. Collateral damage from drones may occur in case of incidents, and Russian defensive fire against drones may hit commercial traffic. Scrutiny against crew is possible *.	🟨	🟥
Temporary corridor from UKR Black Sea ports	Operational status is reported to be open, in accordance with IMO Circular Letter 4748 – though likely influenced by local operational circumstances in the NW Black Sea.	The corridor is reported to be running without considerable issues, although disruption following attacks are to be expected. 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, collateral damage to vessels 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.

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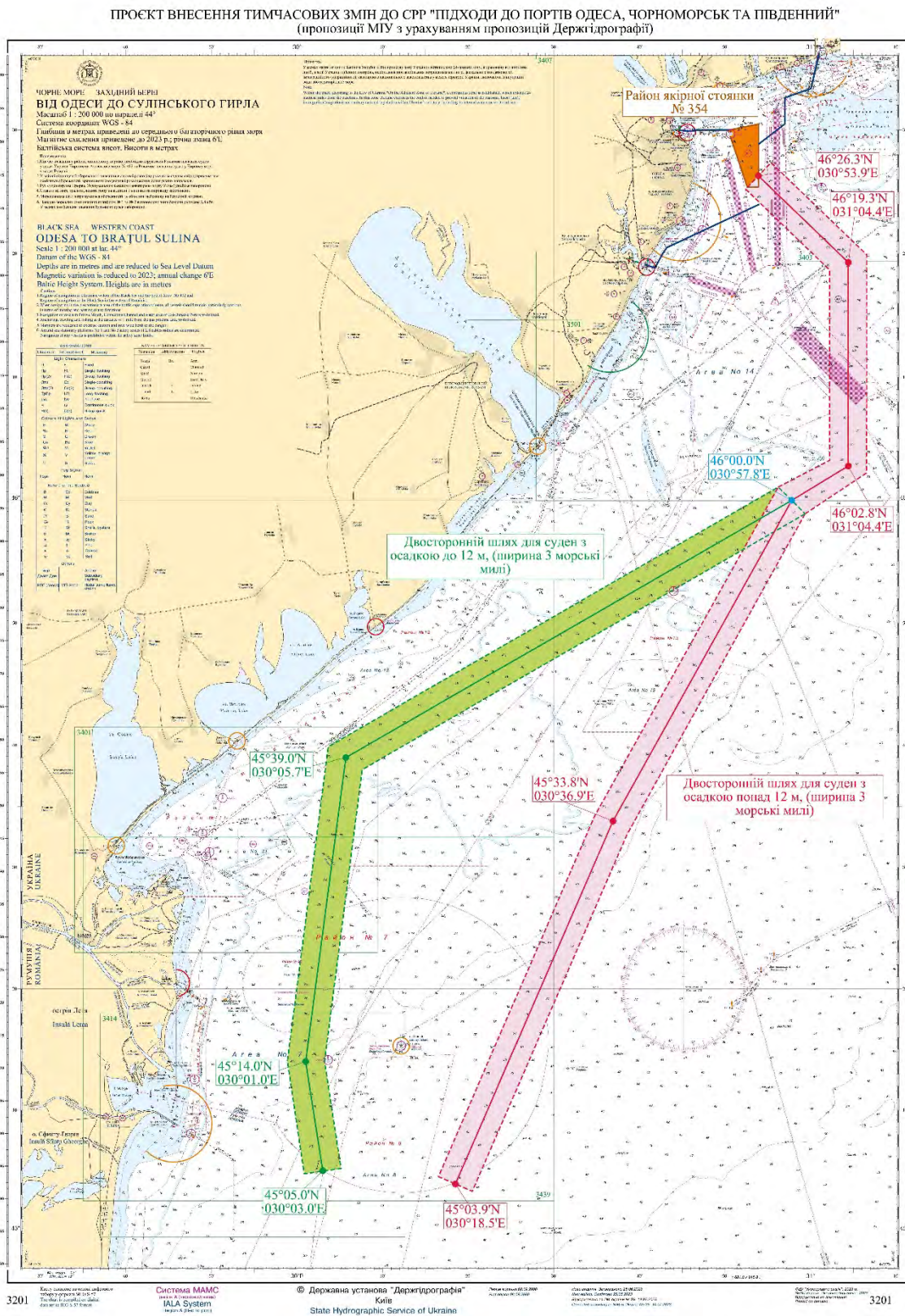
The above chart shows the announced temporary routes for civilian vessels to and from Ukrainian Black Sea ports. The Ukrainian Navy emphasizes that war risks, including mines, remain. Further details can be found in the IMO Circular Letter No.4748 *(Source: IMO Illustration for visual guidance only)*

Annex 3:

Reported Kerch Strait inspection area, as announced by the Russian authorities 02 August 2023.
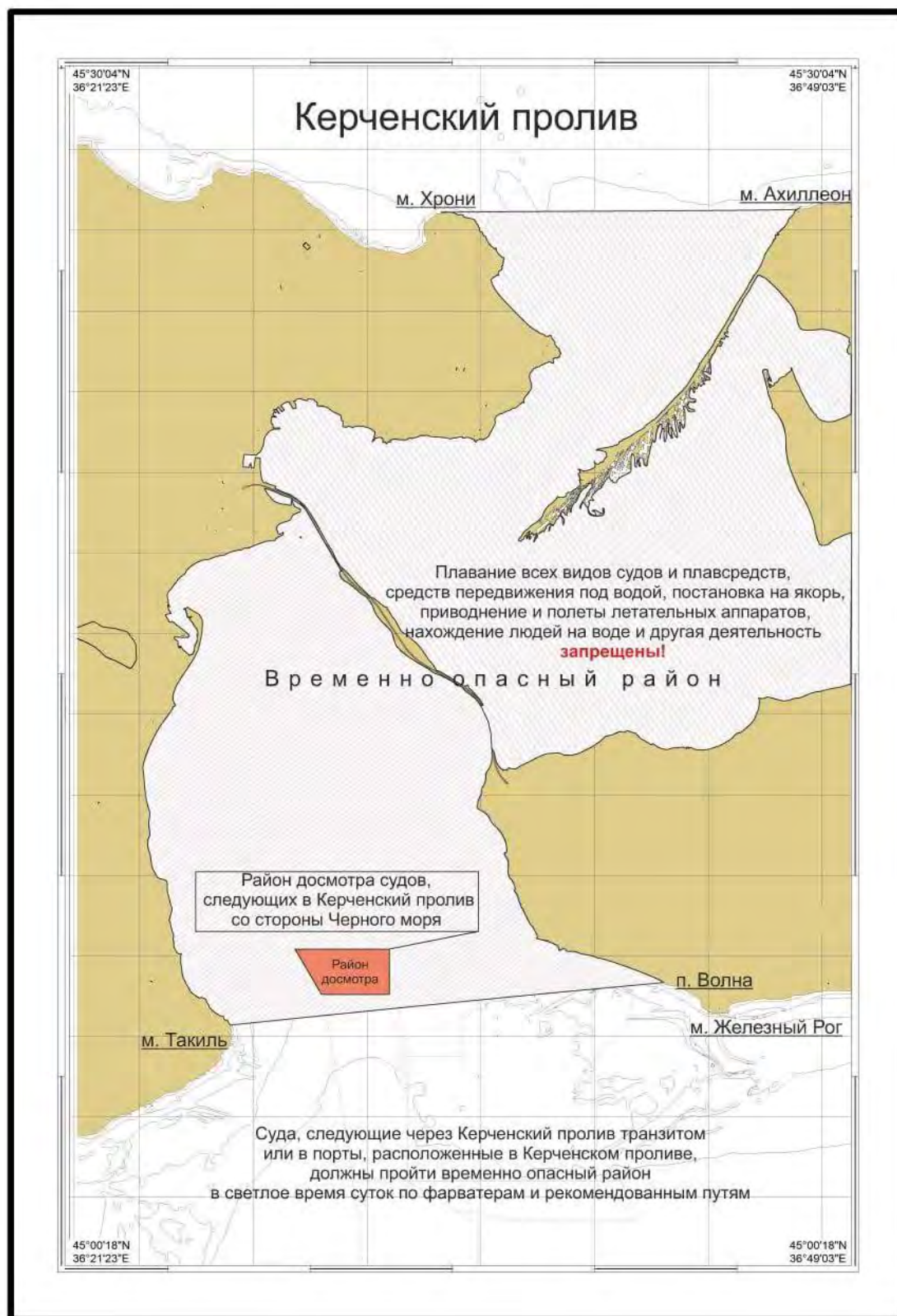
Port facilities possibly hit
February 12 2025

Region: Europe

The port of Reni, Ukraine has reportedly been targeted by a drone strike at an unknown time, around 23:00 LT on 12 February 2025.

Local reports, including on social media, have reported that up to five Russian Shahed type drones targeted the area, with at least one hitting. There are reports of some infrastructure damage but few casualties.