

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE REPORT | ISSUE NO. 49 (04 DECEMBER 2025)

Northern Black Sea and Russia (Ports and Terminals)

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About the report

This report provides an overview of the current maritime security situation in the northern part of the Black Sea, particularly in the vicinity of specific ports and terminals. It is primarily aimed at assessing the threat of security incidents affecting operations of merchant ships operating in this area.

Comprehensive descriptions for individual incidents as well as statistics about attacks against merchant ships are available on the Risk Intelligence System.

Time of latest intelligence included in this report:
04 December 2025, 08:00 UTC.

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Overview of current situation

Summary

- The general threat picture for the Black Sea remains unchanged, but can change
- Russia re-issues threat to commercial shipping to Ukraine
- Unconfirmed damage to port of Pivdenny
- Three vessel attacks in the Black Sea

Brief update

Ukraine confirms two attacks towards Russian “shadow fleet” vessels in the Black Sea. Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure continued during the past week.

The developments during the past week can both be placed into two separate and one single category; the two separate being peace talks and recent incidents, and the third the current Black Sea threat picture.

The activity leading up to the peace talks between the US and Russia, were significant in terms of the attention given to the proposal, which the US delegation brought with them to Russia. However, it is unclear what the final version consisted of as there were at least three different versions reported: the initial 28-point version, a second 19-point version, and a third 20-point version. Regardless of the actual version, the negotiations between the US and Russia concluded with no actual outcome. This was not surprising given Russia still believes it can obtain what it wants militarily and politically by sticking to its maximalist objectives.

Regarding the three vessels attacked in the Black Sea, Ukraine has claimed the two, the crude oil tankers the KAIROS and the VIRAT both Gambia flagged. Although, they were both Gambia flagged this is unlikely the reason for the targeting, more likely is the fact that they are both crude oil tankers and listed, by the Ukrainians as part of Russia’s “shadow fleet”. Ukraine therefore sees them as legitimate in its efforts to hinder Russia’s ability to keep exporting its crude oil. Ukraine later claimed they had nothing to do with the attack on the third vessel, the Russian flagged chemical tanker MIDVOLGA-2. No doubt Ukraine was keen to prove it has the capability to target the crude oil tankers in the wider Black Sea, ahead of the US talks with Russia, to prove it has some “cards” to play. The attack on the CPC oil terminal should also be seen in this light. Hence Ukraine stating following the attack that they were not

attacking Azerbaijan or any third parties, but Russia's ability to export (the terminal is also known to export blended Russian oil).

Where does this then leave the threat picture for the wider Black Sea? In short, the four scenarios listed below remain the most likely – though they are not listed in order of likelihood. However, Russia's president Putin threatened, following the vessel attacks, to sever Ukraine's access to the Black Sea, without stating how and that it would take measures against tankers of countries helping Ukraine. Since the start of the war, Russia threatened that it would view all vessels transiting to Ukraine as helping Ukraine's war effort and therefore legitimate targets – a threat that is not known to have been withdrawn in the interim – therefore, recent threat by Putin is likely a reiteration of the original threat, in an attempt to deter vessels from transiting to Ukraine. That said, as the previous incidents involving vessels in October 2024 proved, it is possible that Russia may retaliate with direct targeting of vessels in Ukrainian ports or during transit to Ukrainian ports, or Ukrainian affiliated vessels, to prove it can, but less likely to target vessels, during transit north towards Ukraine, outside of Ukrainian waters.

The current scenarios for vessel attacks are (order does not represent likelihood):

Scenario 1: The threat of collateral damage to vessels in both Ukrainian and Russian ports, remains the most likely, due to Russia's apparent disregard of damaging cargo vessels when targeting port infrastructure near civilian areas. However, collateral damage towards vessels transiting the Ukrainian Black Sea corridor, can also not be ruled out.

Scenario 2: Vessels can be targeted due to flawed intelligence from the Russian military, suggesting they carry military hardware.

Scenario 3: Russian attacks may be aimed at deterring vessels from using the Ukrainian transit corridor and disrupting maritime exports by creating uncertainty and danger.

Scenario 4: 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, as part of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Black Sea Corridor

Vessel traffic using the Ukrainian Black Sea corridor during the past week is unclear. The threat to vessels in transit maybe be higher at present, following the recent Ukrainian attacks on Russian "shadow fleet" vessels, but the threat is still assessed lower compared to the

threat of collateral damage to vessels in port, due to ongoing Russian attacks on Ukrainian port cities and infrastructure.

Strikes impacting vessels underway remain assessed as less likely to occur, as this would require direct targeting. Previous incidents involving vessels, indicate that the likelihood of collateral damage while in Ukrainian ports remain greater, but 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.

Operational disruptions such as power outages and air raid alarms remain likely, until security improves. An elevated threat to maritime trade in the NW Black Sea and near the conflict area persists due to likely Russian actions against vessels and port infrastructure.

Black Sea

Russian and Ukrainian military activity in the Black Sea, continue to pose a threat to shipping in the area as the Black Sea remains an active war zone. Future incidents should be expected throughout the Black Sea.

The recent incidents do, to some degree, widen the overall threat picture for operations in the Black Sea, although the security situation still varies. Ukrainian forces are unlikely to target non-“shadow fleet” vessels, including those transiting to Russian Black Sea ports. Russia is likely to retaliate in response to the recent Ukrainian attacks on Russia’s “shadow fleet” vessels. However, the retaliation is most likely to target Ukrainian drone production facilities and port infrastructure. But future attacks on commercial vessels on the basis of supporting the Ukrainian war effort, transporting weapons etc. cannot be ruled out. Potential harassment, AIS/GPS signal jamming or spoofing, and the use of warning shots also remain possible. Ukrainian forces are expected to continue pressuring Russian forces in the Black Sea, including in and near Crimea, in order to achieve greater control over the maritime domain to secure the shipping in the area.

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 usage of naval drones, both on surface and submerged is likely to continue to increase by both sides, the deployment, as part of military operations, for the foreseeable future.

Mine Countermeasure (MCM) operations conducted by Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Ukraine, are ongoing to address the threat of sea

mines that persists in the wider Black Sea. War-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 can face disruption 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

Port information is located in the port table.

The direct targeting of vessels remains possible, although collateral damage is the most likely threat to materialise. This is similar for all of Ukrainian ports.

Power-outages and air-raid alarms continue throughout the country, which can also disrupt port operations. Russian attacks on Ukrainian power infrastructure is likely intended to cause as much damage before winter as possible. Therefore, concerns regarding the operational future of the country's energy network, including sufficient supplies and making the network more resilient to aerial attacks remain. Given the constant unpredictability, future disruption should be expected.

Until any form of a ceasefire is agreed and enforced, Russia is likely to 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. 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 forces continue military activity in the Black Sea, with numerous Russian reports of engagements with unmanned naval drones and special forces in the NW Black Sea. There are also reports of USVs reaching as far as Novorossiysk - as well as reports of attacks across Crimea.

Recent Ukrainian targeting of cargo vessels will likely be limited in the future to a target-profile fitting that of so-called “shadow-fleet” vessels, i.e. vessels that are directly controlled by Moscow or have an affiliation to Russia via ownership or operator. Vessels otherwise engaged in trading Russian energy products, even in line with sanctions and price cap, are not likely targets, but are likely to be “named and shamed” via Ukrainian government and media channels.

The introduction of long-range Ukrainian produced missiles, “flamingos”, may lead to strikes against Russian ports in the Black Sea, including against military assets and energy infrastructure. The same is likely if Ukraine is provided with other long-range weapon systems or assistance with targeting inside Russia.

Previous videos of naval and aerial drone attacks in Russian ports also highlight a general lack of advanced counter measures. Russian anti-air is often fired at near horizontal angles. 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 Russian ports other 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 espionage or reconnaissance on their behalf, or even 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 hybrid effort in the Baltic Sea, and the requirement for plausible deniability.

There have been a number of incidents of vessels being hit by explosions, likely due to limpet mines, after these vessels have called Russian ports, or during Russian port calls. While the circumstances are unclear, it is a possibility that Ukrainian special forces and intelligence units are part of a wider campaign of mining vessels calling Russian ports.

Conflict outlook

Although it has been suspected that the Ukrainian’s had the capability, the recent vessel attacks on the KAIROS and VIRAT, prove they can and are willing to undertake such attacks – and future similar attacks, cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the timing and proving of this capability must also be considered and no doubt plays an import part in the recent incidents – as does the specific vessels impacted. And though Russian retaliation should be expected, a reported attack on the port of Pivdenny, between 02-03 December, may be part of such a retaliation – although the extent of the damage or impact is unclear.

Diplomatic engagement continues with a Ukrainian delegation visiting the US on 04 December, to establish the outcome of the latest US-Russia meeting. There are no indications that there are any imminent changes to current positions both Ukraine and Russia – militarily and politically – although Ukraine has signalled more openness towards the various peace proposals, where Russia has retained its commitment and focus on its maximalist objectives. Under current circumstances the present situation is therefore unlikely to change significantly, although there will likely continue to be events which will influence future developments.

During the past week there were also reports of various mine-demolition operations, underlining the ongoing threat in region.

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 – List of commercial vessel incidents

Annex 5 – Incidents

Ukraine and northern Black Sea ports

Port	Current port situation	Current local situation	Operations	Security
Odesa	The port is understood operational in accordance with the IMO Circular Letter 4748, and local guidance.	Russian strikes do occur against critical infrastructure in the Odesa Oblast, including some direct targeting of Odesa city and port. Future attacks targeting Odesa 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.		
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 in the past, 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 critical infrastructure 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 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.		

* 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.

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 remain possible. 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.

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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 - Illustration of reported mined areas



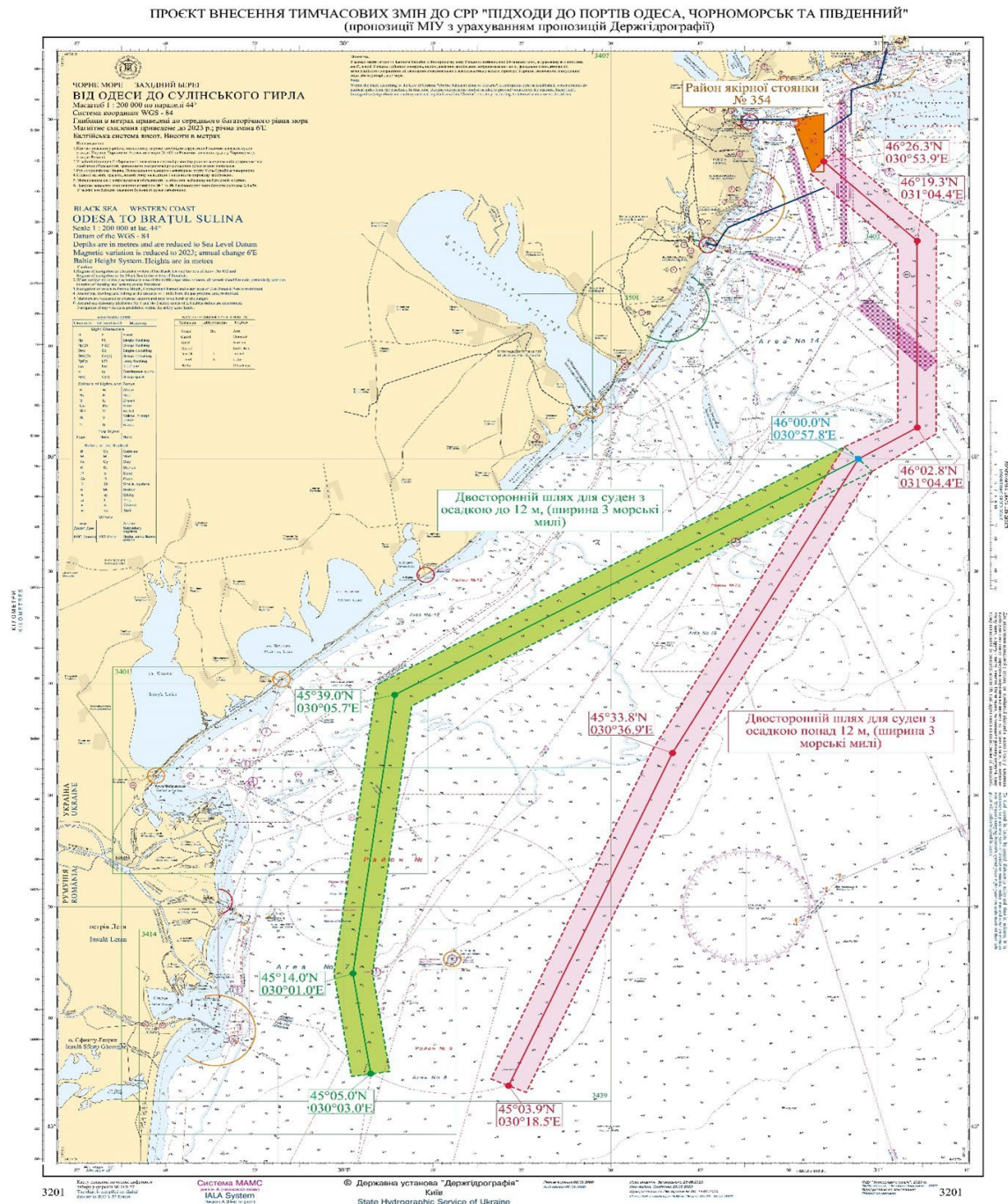
Image 1 - Risk Intelligence (Illustration for visual guidance only)

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.

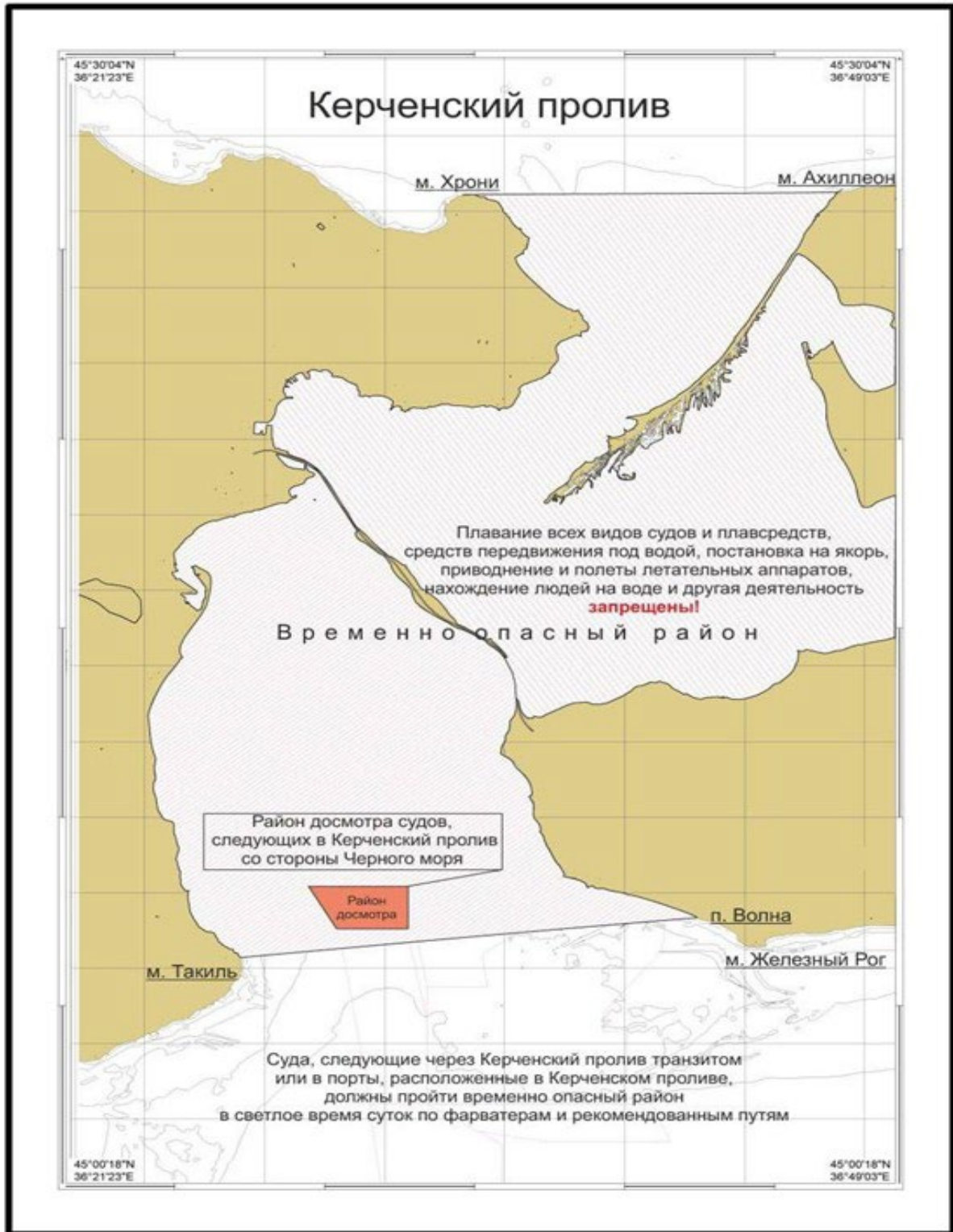
Please also note that active NAVAREA III warnings include a warning of possible drifting mines (NAVAREA III 0122) for Northwest, West, and Southwest areas of the Black Sea.

Annex 2 - Announced temporary corridor from UKR Black Sea ports



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



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

Annex 4 – List of commercial vessel incidents

Date	Name of ship	Type	Flag
02 DEC 2025	MIDVOLGA-2	Chemical Tanker	Russia
28 NOV 2025	KAIROS	Crude Oil	Gambia
28 NOV 2025	VIRAT	Crude Oil	Gambia
17 NOV 2025	ORINDA	Tanker	Turkey
14 NOV 2025	ARIAN	Tanker	Sierra Leon
31 AUG 2025	NS PRIDE	Bulk carrier	Belize
11 MAR 2025	MJ PINAR	Bulk carrier	Barbados
01 MAR 2025	SUPER SARKAS	Bulk carrier	Siera Leone
01 MAR 2025	MSC LEVANTE F	Container ship	Panama
14 OCT 2024	NS MOON	Civilian vessel	Belize

Annex 5 – Incidents

Crude oil tanker KAIROS reports explosion

November 28 2025

Region: Europe

The Gambia-flagged crude oil tanker KAIROS was struck by a naval drone 28 nautical miles off the Turkish coast at an unknown time on 28 November 2025.

The report originated from nearby vessels claiming that KAIROS was on fire and drifting. The KAIROS has been included on various sanctions lists issued by Western governments. Another sanctioned vessel was also targeted in a drone attack at around the same time in the same area. The KAIROS was en route from Egypt to Russia. The Ukrainian military subsequently published a video with footage from the naval drones used in the attack.

The 149,989 DWT vessel is managed by Alafia Trading Ltd., People's Republic of China.

Crude oil tanker VIRAT reports explosion

November 28 2025

Region: Europe

The Gambia-flagged crude oil tanker VIRAT was struck by a naval drone in the Black Sea at an unknown time on 28 November 2025.

The incident occurred in position 42:38N 033:10E.

Vessels in the vicinity reported that the VIRAT experienced an explosion and was emitting black smoke. The VIRAT has been included on various sanctions lists issued by Western governments. Another sanctioned vessel was also targeted in a drone attack at around the same time in the same area. The Ukrainian military subsequently published a video with footage from the naval drones used in the attack.

The 115,643 DWT vessel is managed by East Honest Tankers, Hong Kong, China.

CPC terminal hit in drone strike

November 29 2025

Region: Europe

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) terminal in Novorossiysk, Russian Federation, was reportedly struck at 04:06 LT (01:06 UTC) on 29 November 2025.

Reports indicate that the terminal was hit by "naval drones" which damaged one berth and caused the halting of operations. In a press statement, the terminal operators stated that the SPM-2 single point mooring was significantly damaged and further operation is not possible.

The CPC pipeline is a key export route for Kazakhstan's crude oil to global markets, with most volumes shipped to Europe and Asia. Russia also supplies smaller volumes to the CPC system.

Chemical tanker MIDVOLGA-2 reports attack

December 2 2025

Region: Europe

The Russia-flagged chemical tanker MIDVOLGA-2 reported an attack at an unknown position 80 NM from the Turkish coast in the Black Sea at an unknown time on 02 December 2025.

According to various reports on social and other media the tanker was underway from Russia to Georgia with a cargo of sunflower-oil when it was hit by an an attack, likely by a aerial drone. According to some reports the vessel is still manoeuvrable, two of the 13 man crew were injured and the vessel is proceeding to Sinop in Turkey. Images circulated on social media shows damage to the superstructure and what looks like debris from a drone. A subsequent comment from a social media account associated with the Ukrainian foreign office spokesperson, denied any involvement in the incident.

The 6,573 DWT vessel has Middle Volga Shipping, Russia, as technical managers.

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Pivdennyi port area targeted in military operation

December 2 2025

Region: Europe

The port of Pivdennyi, Ukraine, and the nearby area was targeted during a Russian military operation in the evening hours of 02 December 2025.

The incident took place at: 46:37.04N 031:00.98E.

Reports indicate that Russian forces employed drones, missiles, and bombs against what they claim were drone boat production facilities supporting Ukrainian military operations. According to Russian sources, the targeted site allegedly manufactures drones. Although unconfirmed, a single Russian source reported multiple strikes on military facilities in Pavlograd, Dnepropetrovsk, Vasilkovka, Krivoy Rog, and Sumy. It is further suspected that infrastructure on the southern edge of the port facility was targeted. No vessels were reportedly damaged in the operation.

Romania reports destroying USV

December 3 2025

Region: Europe

Abandoned USV neutralised by Romanian forces 36 NMs east of Constanta at 13:00 LT (11:00 UTC) on 03 December 2025.

Romanian Naval Forces' divers carried out a mission to neutralise an object in the Black Sea, at the request of the Coast Guard.

Following the analysis of the drifting object, the divers identified it as a "Sea Baby" type unmanned surface vehicle (USV). It was then destroyed in a controlled detonation.

Romania is a part of the Black Sea Mine Countermeasures Task Force MCM BS TG, together with the naval forces of Bulgaria and Turkey.



Knowing Risk

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