



War in Ukraine – impact on maritime situation

Despite ongoing peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, the security situation in the Black Sea remains unstable. All port calls in the region should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, consulting best management practices for guidance on threats and mitigating measures.

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Black sea maritime security update

The shipping association's Maritime Industry Security Threat Overview ([MISTO](#)), last updated on 26 November 2025, emphasises that both Ukraine and Russia have the capability and opportunity to strike ships and port facilities within the Black Sea region. Regarding intent, Russia has declared that all merchant ships heading for Ukrainian Black Sea ports are considered legitimate military targets, while Ukraine has made the same claim for merchant ships bound for Russian Black Sea ports. Although direct attacks on merchant ships operating in the Black Sea have so far been limited, both sides have increasingly used drones to target ports, energy infrastructure, and in recent weeks, ships underway. This raises concerns about a possible shift in the threat to commercial shipping and an elevated risk of collateral or unintended damage.

According to the [Romanian Military Ministry of National Defence](#), a stray mine posing a hazard to navigation was detected and neutralised by the Romanian Naval Forces as on 3 December 2025, approximately 36 nautical miles east of Constanța. The Ministry further reports that over the past four years, around 150 sea mines have been neutralised in the Black Sea, including seven by Romanian Naval Forces.

Drifting mines, along with drones used by both sides to strike ships and shore infrastructure, underscores the ongoing threat to maritime operations in the Black Sea into 2026.

Key considerations before approaching the Black Sea

Ships in transit

- According to the NATO Shipping Center ([NSC](#)), the threat of collateral damage or direct hits on civilian shipping within the war risk area ([NAVAREA III warning 0124/2022](#)) in the northern part of the Black Sea, west of Crimea, remains high.
- Following a series of drone strikes against ships and port infrastructure in the Black Sea in late 2025, the NSC issued a formal [advisory](#) warning that “these attacks pose serious risks to the safety of navigation, life at sea, and the marine environment in the region”. Masters and operators are advised to consult Best Management Practices – Maritime Security ([BMP-MS](#)) for guidance and to promptly report any suspicious activity or security incidents to the NSC.
- The NSC further reports that drifting mines continue to be detected and neutralized by coastal authorities in the southwestern Black Sea.
- Masters navigating in the western Black Sea must ensure crews are fully briefed on the potential mine threat. Ships should avoid floating objects, keep the forward area of the ship clear of crew where practicable, and maintain effective visual lookouts at all times. Any sightings of mine-like objects should be reported to coastal authorities, and ships should remain well clear of the hazard.
- Masters are reminded to monitor local authorities’ broadcasts for the latest navigational warnings, review all relevant [NAVAREA III](#) warnings in force, and consult local agents for the most up-to-date operational information.
- Operators and masters should maintain contact with their flag administrations to receive the most recent instructions available.
- Some coastal states may issue recommended track for ships to follow when arriving or departing from ports. Masters should verify such routing guidance with local agents or port authorities and comply when instructed to do so by the relevant authorities.
- AIS should be on at all times. However, note that the NSC assesses the threat of GPS jamming, AIS spoofing, communications jamming, electronic interference and cyber-attacks in the region as high.

Port situation

- The [United Nations \(UN\) Black Sea Grain Initiative \(BSGI\)](#) was terminated in July 2023. Refer to the [UN press release of 17 July 2023](#) for details of the current situation.
- Since the termination of the BSGI, Ukraine has established and operates a “temporary humanitarian corridor” to its ports in the northwest Black Sea. See [IMO Circular Letter 4748](#) for details. However, Russia has not indicated its support for this initiative, and has provided no security guarantees, meaning the risks of using the corridor may be higher compared to the BSGI.
- Some Ukrainian Danube ports are reported to be open and operational, but ships and crews may be vulnerable to collateral damage from drone strikes against port infrastructures. It is also worth noting that the Ukrainian government has advised the IMO that all its ports are at ISPS Security Level 3.
- Russian Black Sea ports are generally reported as operational, however, occasional drone strikes may lead to temporary terminal closures and an increase in ISPS Security Levels.
- Ukrainian seafarers may not be granted shore leave in Russian ports, but Russian authorities have announced that that Ukrainian seafarers can enter Russian ports onboard ships for the purpose of work onboard that ship. However, ships manned by Ukrainian crew have occasionally faced additional scrutiny by Russian authorities and possible interrogation by Russian authorities when calling at Russian ports.
- Commercial operations within the EEZs of Turkey, Georgia, Bulgaria and Romania continue, however ISPS Security Level at ports in the region may be raised. Ships trading to Romanian Danube ports may also be vulnerable to collateral damage from strikes against port infrastructures on the Ukrainian side of the border.

Maritime security advice

The situation in the Black Sea remains volatile and subject to rapid change. All ships operating in this region should stay informed and exercise caution. We recommend:

- Conducting a thorough risk assessment and evaluate appropriate security measures
- Reviewing current NSC, NAVAREA III and other coastal broadcast warnings
- Updating relevant security and contingency plans, including the crisis communication plans
- Consulting the latest versions of the shipping association’s MISTO and BMP-MS for guidance.
- Ensuring seafarers are fully aware of the security threat in their area of trade.
- Following designated safe transit corridors and maintaining a heightened state of awareness during transit, including vigilant lookouts for mines.

Ships should also stay updated on guidance provided by their flag administration regarding the conflict and applicable ISPS Code security levels. If such guidance is not received, pursue clarification with the administration. Contact details for maritime authorities by country can be found on the IMO Global Integrated Shipping Information System ([GISIS](#)).

The NSC recommends ships to ensure AIS is transmitting at all times when operating in the Black Sea, consistent with provisions of SOLAS and their flag administration, and monitor VHF Channel 16. However, pursuant to [IMO guidelines](#) , “ *if the master believes that the continual operation of AIS might compromise the safety or security of his/her ship or where security incidents are imminent, the AIS may be switched off. The date, location and time the AIS is switched off should be recorded in the ship's logbook together with the reason for doing so and the master should restart the AIS as soon as the source of danger has disappeared*”.

In the event of an incident or suspicious activity, ships should notify their flag administration, area authorities, and the [NSC](#) . Any ships challenged by military vessels should comply fully with their instructions.

It is also worth noting that [ATP-02.1 Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping \(NCAGS\)](#) , a NATO document on the interaction between naval forces and merchant ships, may be relevant. While NATO is not a party to the conflict, this document contains valuable information about the many factors to consider when navigating in areas of armed conflict or war.

Ukraine and Russian waters added to JWC listed areas

As a result of the war in Ukraine, all ports in Russia and *certain sea areas in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov* was included in the Joint War Committee's (JWC) list of Hull War, Piracy, Terrorism and Related Perils Listed Areas in April 2022. Owners are advised to contact their war risk insurers when calling any port within these regions. The latest version of the JWLA, along with all JWC bulletins and circulars, are available at the [JWC website](#)

The [Warlike Operations Area Committee](#) (WOAC), comprising the UK Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus International, and the RMT union, has declared all Ukrainian, Russian and International Waters north of 44°North in the Black Sea as a ‘warlike operations area’.

We will update the above sections as new information becomes available. In the meantime, we strongly recommend that ship operators and masters trading to ports in the Black Sea make frequent checks with local sources, such as ship agents and Gard correspondents, to ensure they have access to the most current and reliable security information at all times. An overview of Gard's correspondents is available [here](#) .

Additional resources are also available via our hot topic page “ [War in Ukraine](#) ”, which provides an overview of Gard’s relevant loss prevention material and links to some useful external websites and guidelines to help ship operators, masters, and crews to stay alert and prepared for operations in the Black Sea region.

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