NEW STRATEGY CENTER

NATO Deterrence in the Black Sea, Russia and the "Boiling Frog" Strategy



RADM (ret.) Liviu Coman
George Scutaru

NATO Deterrence in the Black Sea, Russia and the “Boiling Frog” Strategy

RADM (ret.) Liviu Coman
George Scutaru

2026

Authors: **RADM (ret.) Liviu COMAN,** Senior associate expert, New Strategy Center, former Commander of the Romanian Maritime Component Command
George SCUTARU, CEO, New Strategy Center, former national security advisor to the President of Romania

© New Strategy Center

Cover: Photos from the Romanian Ministry of Interior, The Department for Emergency Situations, and AI-regenerated

About New Strategy Center

New Strategy Center is a Romanian think tank specializing in foreign, defence and security policy, a non-partisan, non-governmental organisation. New Strategy Center operates at three main levels: providing analytical inputs and expert advice to decisionmakers; holding regular debates, both inhouse and public, on subjects of topical interest; expanding external outreach through partnerships with similar institutions or organisations all over the world, joint policy papers and international conferences. The Black Sea and the Balkans are priority areas of interest for New Strategy Center.

Disclaimer: This text contains the personal opinions and perspective of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the New Strategy Center.

Introduction

Attacks on commercial vessels in the Black Sea, including in Romania's territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zones of Romania and Bulgaria, are not isolated incidents whose consequences are limited to the state in whose maritime area they occur. The geography of an attack reveals little about the geographical reach of its impact. Through commercial shipping routes, the nature of the cargoes carried, and the destinations of the vessels, these attacks directly affect Romania's economic, port, and energy interests. In a region where offshore infrastructure is becoming increasingly important for European energy security, the protection of maritime navigation and critical infrastructure can no longer be addressed exclusively at the national level. A stronger Allied involvement is needed, through a mechanism tailored to the legal and strategic particularities of the Black Sea.

By attacking commercial vessels in the Black Sea, Russia seeks to economically strangle Ukraine and disrupt its grain exports, a major source of budget revenue. Russia continues to escalate, emboldened by NATO's passivity, Romania's and Bulgaria's evident shortfalls in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and in their ability to counter aerial and naval drones, as well as by the increasingly visible limitations of the concept of "Regional Ownership" that shapes Türkiye's policy in the Black Sea. Russia is attacking commercial vessels not only in the Exclusive Economic Zones of Romania and Bulgaria but has also begun targeting ships within Romania's territorial waters, which form part of the sovereign territory of a NATO member state. The North Atlantic Alliance declares that it is determined to defend "every inch" of NATO territory, yet it continues to hesitate and search for solutions when it comes to defending every nautical mile of NATO waters. Left unchecked, Russia is gradually raising the temperature, escalating step by step. How much longer will NATO remain on the sidelines, allowing itself to play the role of the proverbial frog in boiling water, and how close are we to the boiling point?

Another sign of Moscow's escalating actions on multiple fronts is that Russia has begun striking vessels bound for Romanian or Moldovan ports, as well as ships departing from Romania. Russia's naval blockade against Ukraine is gradually extending its impact to other countries, directly undermining Romania's economic interests. Global connectivity and food security are also affected when Russia attacks grain-carrying vessels, as wheat from the Black Sea region plays an important role in maintaining social stability in several countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

1. The Western Black Sea Under Fire: Why Attacks on Vessels in Bulgaria's EEZ or Off the Romanian Coast Actually Affect Romania's Interests

The Exclusive Economic Zone and territorial waters are not interchangeable concepts. Within its EEZ, Romania exercises sovereign rights and functional jurisdiction over certain activities and resources, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In its territorial waters, the state's sovereignty extends to the sea, the seabed, the subsoil, and the airspace above, subject to the right of innocent passage.

Therefore, an attack occurring in territorial waters raises a different set of concerns compared to an attack in the EEZ: it directly affects an area under Romania's sovereignty and may call into question the protection of

maritime navigation, maritime control, port security, and the ability of national institutions to respond effectively.

1.1. Attacks on Commercial Vessels in Bulgaria's EEZ – Attacks Outside Romania's Jurisdiction, but with Consequences for Romanian Interests

Since October 2026, the western Black Sea has come under direct attack, witnessing a series of strikes against commercial vessels involving both aerial and maritime drones. The frequency of these incidents, the variety of means employed, and their consequences for commercial shipping indicate an expansion of security risks beyond the traditional areas of military confrontation.

According to data compiled by Deutsche Welle Bulgaria and subsequent reports, seven commercial vessels were attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ, which effectively serves as an access corridor to Romania's maritime and Danube ports, between October and November 2026. Five vessels were sunk (ALFA WATAN, HS DIGNITY, CONTSHIP JET, BETUL 8, and GAS HUSKY), and the incidents resulted in 21 seafarers being reported missing.[1]

1.1.1. Chronology of Attacks in Bulgaria's EEZ

6 October – ALFA WATAN[2]

The Togo-flagged cargo vessel was struck by a drone approximately 70 nautical miles east of Byala and subsequently sank. According to the Bulgarian report provided, all ten crew members were declared missing. Other subsequent reports indicated that 12 seafarers were missing.[3]

6 October – ABLE

The Palau-flagged cargo vessel was struck during the same wave of attacks. It was carrying approximately 6,000 tonnes of barley from Romania to Türkiye. The fire that broke out on board injured two seafarers, but all 18 crew members were rescued, and the vessel did not sink.

This incident is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that commercial shipping departing from Romanian ports or terminals can be exposed to attacks even at considerable distances from Romania's coastline.

13 October – CHELSEA 3

The Malta-flagged cargo vessel, owned by a Ukrainian company, was struck by three aerial drones approximately 17–18 nautical miles east of Byala. All 15 crew members were evacuated, and the damaged vessel was towed to Burgas.
The vessel was sailing in ballast from Giresun, Türkiye, and was bound for Giurgiulești, the Republic of Moldova's only port on the Danube.

13 October – HS DIGNITY

The Guinea-Bissau-flagged cargo vessel was struck in the Krapets–Shabla area and subsequently sank. According to the report provided, five seafarers were rescued, while 11 remained missing.

The vessel had departed from the port of Mostaganem, Algeria, on 5 October 2026 and was scheduled to dock at the port of Brăila, Romania.

28 October – CONTSHIP JET

The Liberia-flagged container ship was struck by three maritime drones approximately 17–21 nautical miles off the Bulgarian coast, near Krapets, in the Cape Kaliakra–Shabla area.
The vessel was carrying 421 containers on the Haifa–Constanța, Romania route. It subsequently sank, while all 18 crew members were rescued.[4]

This is one of the clearest examples of a direct impact on Romania's interests: although

the attack occurred in Bulgaria's EEZ, the vessel was bound for the Port of Constanța.

16 November – BETUL 8

The Somalia-flagged cargo vessel, carrying approximately 3,000 tonnes of wheat from Romania to Egypt, was struck by two maritime drones approximately 40 nautical miles southeast of Cape Kaliakra.[5] The vessel capsized and sank. All 12 crew members were rescued.

This case highlights another dimension of Romania's vulnerability: the attack did not target a vessel heading towards a Romanian port, but rather one transporting cargo originating from Romania. Consequently, the potential impact extends to Romania's export flows.

17 November – GAS HUSKY

The Liberia-flagged LPG tanker was struck near Byala, approximately 50 nautical miles east of the coast. It was carrying around 3,400 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) on the Alexandria, Egypt–Midia, Romania route.

All 19 crew members, Filipino nationals, abandoned the vessel and were rescued with the assistance of a Bulgarian military helicopter. They were subsequently brought ashore at the Chaika Air Base in Varna.

The vessel sank approximately 14.5 nautical miles from the location where the cargo ship BETUL 8 had capsized the previous day.[6]

Vessel	Date of attack	Last port of call	Next port of call	Cargo	Vessel (flag)
ALFA WATAN	06.10.2026	Istanbul	**Sulina**	Unconfirmed, probably wheat	Togo; Istanbul; Turkish shipowner
ABLE	06.10.2026	**Sulina**	Turkish port – southbound	~6,000 t barley	Palau; Turkish shipowner
CHELSEA 3	13.10.2026	**Türkiye**	**Giurgiulesti via Sulina**	General cargo / grain carrier	Malta; Ukrainian owner
HS DIGNITY	13.10.2026	**Braila**	**Izmir**	Undeclared	Guinea-Bissau; Turkish shipowner
CONTSHIP JET	28.10.2026	**Haifa / Ashdod**	**Constanța**[7]	421 containers (lithium batteries, acids, flammable liquids)	Liberia; Greek management; chartered by Israeli company ZIM
BETUL 8[8]	16.11.2026	**Tulcea**	Egyptian port – unidentified	~3,000 t wheat	Somalia
GAS HUSKY	17.11.2026	Alexandria	**Midia**	~3,400 t LPG	Liberia; manager[9] Stealth Maritime

1.1.2. Summary Table of Vessels Attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ

Any mapping of the vessels' routes reveals the same pattern: all seven vessels were connected to the Romanian port system or the Sulina–Danube shipping corridor. ALFA WATAN was heading towards Sulina. ABLE was struck near the exit of the Sulina Canal. CHELSEA 3 was bound for the Republic of Moldova, whose only maritime port, Giurgiulești, is currently owned by the Port of Constanța and is accessed via the Sulina Canal. The vessel sunk off Krapets had departed from the Danube port of Brăila (according to VesselFinder). CONTSHIP JET was heading towards Constanța, BETUL 8 had departed from Tulcea, and GAS HUSKY, carrying LPG, was bound for Midia.

The attacks occurred along maritime routes serving Romania's coastline, and the resulting losses, cargo, vessels, crews, and increased insurance premiums, place additional pressure on the logistics chains of Romanian ports, regardless of the attacker's intentions.
An important detail for assessing the level of risk is that BETUL 8 had not called at a Ukrainian port since 8 July, while CONTSHIP JET was neither arriving from nor heading to Ukraine. The risk is no longer associated with a single shipping route, but rather with the presence of any vessel along the maritime access routes to Romanian ports.

1.1.3. Why Attacks in Bulgaria's EEZ Directly Affect Romania

Of the seven vessels examined, six had an explicit commercial connection to Romania, while one was linked to the Republic of Moldova but relied on navigation through the Sulina Canal. These cases are sufficient to demonstrate that the consequences of such attacks extend beyond the geographical limits of Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone.

The case of GAS HUSKY is particularly significant. This was not simply a vessel transiting the Black Sea, but a shipment of energy products destined for a Romanian terminal. The attack therefore disrupted a logistics flow directly associated with Romania's energy security.

The connection to the Port of Constanța is equally clear in the case of CONTSHIP JET. A container ship carrying hundreds of containers bound for Romania was attacked and sunk before reaching its destination. Although the incident occurred in Bulgaria's EEZ, its economic and logistical consequences were also felt by Romania.

Consequently, the assessment of a maritime incident must go beyond its geographical location. At least five criteria are necessary to determine whether a particular attack directly affects Romania's economy: the location of the attack, the vessel's itinerary (next port of call), the nature of its cargo, its commercial destination, and the infrastructure it serves. The EEZ in which an attack occurs is not necessarily the geographical area in which its strategic consequences are felt.

1.2. Attacks on Commercial Vessels in Romania's Territorial Waters and EEZ: The Threat Moves Closer to National Infrastructure

While attacks in Bulgaria's EEZ demonstrate the cross-border consequences for Romania's economic interests, incidents occurring in Romania's EEZ and, more importantly, within its territorial waters point to an additional concern: the increasing proximity of the threat to Romania's coastline, the Port of Constanța, the Sulina Canal, and offshore energy infrastructure.

In the Romanian maritime sector, these attacks have crossed a red line from diplomatic, legal, economic, and political perspectives

alike. Until mid-October 2026, the strikes had occurred in the EEZ, outside Romania's territorial sea. On 14 October, the tanker YARA J was struck by aerial drones while at anchor in territorial waters, approximately 8–10 nautical miles southeast of Sulina. Romanian President Nicușor Dan confirmed that aerial drones had been involved in the attack.[10] On 13–14 November, four additional vessels were struck near the mouth of the Danube, in the anchorage and waiting area for commercial vessels entering the Sulina Canal, three of them within or immediately adjacent to Romania's territorial waters. Romanian Prime Minister Luca Niculescu described the strikes as flagrant violations of international law[11], while the Romanian Air Force scrambled F-16 fighter jets on two occasions.[12]

Between 5 October and 17 November 2026[13], attacks against commercial vessels were reported across an extensive maritime area, stretching from south of the Danube Delta to the waters off the Bulgarian coast. An analysis published by Defence Blog identified a total of 15 commercial vessels[14] struck in the vicinity of Romania and Bulgaria. This figure includes both vessels attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ and incidents occurring in the Romanian maritime sector.

However, particular attention must be paid to territorial waters, given their fundamentally different legal status. The territorial sea forms part of the territory of the coastal state (UNCLOS, Article 2).[15] Accordingly, an armed strike within Romania's territorial waters is not merely a maritime security incident, but a violation of Romania's sovereignty and territorial integrity, regardless of the flag flown by the vessel targeted. Within the EEZ, by contrast, the coastal state exercises sovereign rights over resources and certain installations, rather than territorial sovereignty.

Another significant aspect is that most of the vessels struck in Romania's territorial waters were either waiting at anchor or manoeuvring to enter the Sulina Canal, while three of the five vessels attacked within or near territorial waters (Evia Petrol V, Marsol, and Ali Najafov) were ultimately bound for the Port of Giurgiulești. In effect, the anchorage area near Sulina has become a high-risk zone, despite being located within Romanian territory and serving Ukrainian exports, Moldovan imports, and Romania's river-sea shipping traffic.

From a legal and operational perspective, the location of an incident is essential, but it does not, on its own, determine the appropriate response. Exclusive Economic Zones, territorial waters, and port areas are governed by different legal regimes. Similarly, detecting a drone, identifying it as a threat, and authorising its neutralisation are distinct stages. NATO's Article 5 is not automatically triggered by every incident. Any assessment must take into account the nature and severity of the attack, attribution, its consequences, the applicable legal framework, and the Alliance's political decisions.[16]

1.2.1. Chronology of Incidents in the Romanian Maritime Sector

5 October – ROYAD MAMMADOV

The St. Kitts and Nevis-flagged cargo vessel was struck approximately 30 nautical miles south of the Sfântu Gheorghe Lighthouse. The incident occurred near the Pescăruș offshore platform, within Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone. Some sources place the vessel approximately 30–33.5 nautical miles from Sfântu Gheorghe, a discrepancy that may result from the use of different geographical reference points or the vessel's drift over time. The vessel

was attacked by drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy[17] stated that two Russian drones had been used, although their exact type (UAV or USV) could not be confirmed. The vessel caught fire and subsequently sank, according to MarineTraffic data[18], approximately in the same area. Two crew members were killed, while other seafarers were rescued. This was the first major incident in the wave of attacks under examination and an early indication of the growing threat to Romania's coastline.

14 October – YARA J

The Comoros-flagged chemical/oil tanker caught fire in the Sulina anchorage area, but the fire was extinguished by the crew. No casualties were reported. The attack occurred approximately 8–10 nautical miles southeast of Sulina, within Romanian territorial waters. The vessel was struck by an aerial drone (UAV). Neither the drone model nor the exact number of drones involved has been publicly confirmed. The vessel did not sink, and the crew was brought to safety.[19]

15 October – WINE TRADER

The San Marino-flagged chemical tanker caught fire in the Romanian maritime sector. Rescue operations were reported, along with missing seafarers. This incident requires separate documentation based on the official report concerning the crew and the vessel's position. The vessel was struck approximately 13 nautical miles southeast of the Sulina Canal, one nautical mile outside Romanian territorial waters, within the contiguous zone.[20] A drone attack was reported, although the drone type (UAV/USV), model, and number of drones involved have not been officially confirmed. The vessel sustained damage and caught fire following the attack but did not sink. As for the crew, seven seafarers were reported missing and five were rescued.[21]

23 October – KHORVY

The Comoros-flagged cargo vessel was attacked and sank approximately 13 nautical miles off Constanța, within Romania's contiguous zone. The vessel was attacked by drones, although their type (aerial or maritime), model, and exact number have not been confirmed.

The vessel capsized and subsequently sank. One crew member was killed, three were reported missing, and nine were rescued.

The incident prompted a significant political reaction in Romania, with Russia being held responsible for the escalating risks to maritime security.[22]

13 November – LARISSA 1

The Palau-flagged cargo vessel was struck approximately 6–8 nautical miles off Sfântu Gheorghe. Sources indicate the use of an aerial drone (UAV), although the drone model and the number of drones involved have not been confirmed.

The impact caused damage to one of the vessel's cargo cranes. The vessel was not reported to have sunk, and no casualties were reported.[23]

14 November – EVIA PETROL V

The attack occurred approximately 4 nautical miles east-southeast of Sulina, within Romanian territorial waters.

The vessel was struck by an aerial drone. Reports confirm a drone strike but do not specify the model or the total number of drones involved. The impact caused a fire on board, which was extinguished by the crew. The vessel did not sink, and no casualties were reported.[24]

14 November – MARSOL

The St. Kitts and Nevis-flagged bulk carrier was struck at approximately 21:40, around 5 nautical miles southeast of the Sulina Canal, within Romanian territorial waters.

According to reports concerning the incident, the attack was carried out using an aerial drone, although the model and exact number of drones involved have not been publicly confirmed. The strike caused a fire, which was extinguished by the crew. Damage was reported to the vessel's crane and cargo hold area. The vessel did not sink, and no casualties were reported.[25]

14 November – ALI NAJAFOV

The attack occurred near the mouth of the Danube, approximately 3 nautical miles off Sulina.[26] The vessel was struck by an aerial drone at 23:45, although neither the drone model nor the exact number of drones involved has been confirmed. The vessel did not sink, and no casualties were reported among its 14 crew members.

The incidents near Sulina are particularly significant because they involved commercial vessels operating in the immediate vicinity of a strategic access point for Danube navigation and regional maritime traffic.

Vessel	Date of attack	Last port of call	Next port of call	Cargo	Flag
ROYAD MAMMADOV	05.10.2026	Izmail, mid-Sept. / via Sulina	Ravenna (ETA 12 Oct.)	Corn	St. Kitts & Nevis; Turkish operator
YARA J	14.10.2026	Türkiye (press reports)	Sulina	Empty	Comoros
WINE TRADER	15.10.2026	Istanbul	Giurgiulesti (to load sunflower oil)	Empty (per San Marino authority)	San Marino
SEA DESTINY Attack location unclear – in Romanian TTW, according to NATO	15.10.2026 No damage or casualties	Eren, Türkiye	Constanța	-	Marshall Islands
KHORVY	23.10.2026	Ereğli, Türkiye	Sulina	Ferrous metals	Comoros
LARISSA 1	13.11.2026	-	Sulina, then Ukraine	Undeclared	Palau
EVIA PETROL V	14.11.2026	Ambarli, Türkiye	Giurgiulesti	Scheduled to load 6,500 t sunflower oil	Greece
MARSOL	14.11.2026	Constanța	Giurgiulesti	Solid bulk – unspecified	St. Kitts & Nevis
ALI NAJAFOV	14–15.11.2026	Ambarli, Türkiye	Giurgiulesti	Petroleum products	St. Kitts & Nevis

1.1.2. Summary Table of Vessels Attacked in Romania's Sector[27]

Any mapping of the shipping routes reveals the same pattern: all seven vessels were connected to the Romanian port system or the Sulina–Danube corridor. Alfa Watan was heading towards Sulina. Able was struck near the exit of the Sulina Canal. Chelsea 3 was bound for the Republic of Moldova, whose only seaport, Giurgiulești, is currently owned by the Port of Constanța and is accessed via Sulina. The vessel sunk off Krapets had departed from the Danube port of Brăila (according to VesselFinder). Contship Jet was heading towards Constanța, Betul 8 had departed from Tulcea, and Gas Husky, carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), was bound for Midia. The attacks occurred along Romania's coastal shipping routes, and the resulting losses, cargo, vessels, crews, and increased insurance premiums, place additional pressure

on the logistics chains serving Romanian ports, regardless of the attacker's intentions.
An important detail for the risk assessment is that Betul 8 had not called at a Ukrainian port since 8 July, while Contship Jet was neither arriving from nor heading to Ukraine. The risk is no longer associated with a single shipping route, but rather with the presence of any vessel along the maritime access routes to Romanian ports.

1.2.3. Incidents in Territorial Waters – A Qualitative Shift in the Security Environment

One aspect requires particular attention: attacks occurring within Romania's territorial waters, especially those in the Sulina area, which is of particular strategic importance. Sulina is not merely a maritime transit area, but a gateway to the Danube, port infrastructure, and the commercial corridors connecting Central and Eastern Europe to the Black Sea.

Attacks in this area must also be assessed in terms of their impact on freedom of navigation. Repeated threats near the entrance to the Sulina Canal can lead to delays, additional costs, changes in shipping routes (via the Port of Constanța, the Danube–Black Sea Canal, and the Danube routes serving Romanian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan ports), and an increase in the perceived risk among shipowners, crews, and insurers.

An incident within territorial waters is not simply another point on the map. It may signal that the threat is moving closer to Romania's national maritime domain, narrowing the distance between the conflict and Romania's critical infrastructure. The threat is therefore no longer merely in Romania's vicinity; it directly affects the sovereignty of the Romanian state.

1.2.4. Self-Defence and Attribution of Attacks – A Complex Legal and Strategic Challenge

The right of self-defence cannot be examined separately from the issue of attribution. In the case of attacks occurring within the Exclusive Economic Zones of Romania and Bulgaria, these two issues are interdependent but legally distinct, and this distinction significantly limits the response options available to the state. Attacks against commercial vessels in the EEZ highlight the complexities of applying international law in the contemporary maritime environment, particularly regarding the right of self-defence and the attribution of responsibility for an attack. Although such incidents directly affect maritime security, economic activity, and the interests of the coastal state, incidents occurring within an EEZ cannot automatically be equated with attacks against national territory.

The fundamental challenge lies in identifying the perpetrator and establishing the legal relationship between the attacker, the affected state, and the nature of the attack. Identifying an actor, determining the origin of a drone, or establishing a potential strategic beneficiary of an operation does not automatically amount to the legal attribution of responsibility to a state. In the absence of sufficient evidence, any coercive response risks exceeding the limits established by international law, particularly the requirements of necessity and proportionality associated with self-defence.

At the same time, this uncertainty must not lead to passivity. Coastal states have both the right and the responsibility to protect their legitimate interests, investigate incidents, strengthen maritime surveillance, cooperate through intelligence sharing, and adopt preventive and defensive measures consistent with international law.

Consultations within NATO, including under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, may constitute an appropriate instrument when the security of an Allied state is threatened, without automatically triggering the collective defence mechanism provided for under Article 5.

Ultimately, attacks occurring within the EEZs of Romania and Bulgaria demonstrate that, in the current Black Sea security environment, the challenge is not merely the ability to respond to an attack, but also the ability to establish, in a timely manner and on the basis of credible evidence, who carried it out, under what circumstances, and against which legally protected interests it was directed.

In this context, attribution, surveillance, cooperation, and response capabilities must form inseparable components of a regional maritime security architecture. An attack does not automatically constitute an "armed attack" within the meaning of Article 51 of the UN Charter.[28] The probable identification of an attacker does not amount to legal attribution, while suspicion, the origin of a drone, the method employed, or the strategic advantage gained are not, in themselves, sufficient.

However, the absence of definitive attribution does not preclude defensive, preventive, protective, investigative, or consultative measures.

In the Black Sea, the strategic challenge is not merely detecting attacks and maintaining the capability to respond, but transforming intelligence into credible attribution, attribution into legitimate decision-making, and decisions into proportionate action. In an environment where attacks may have cross-border consequences while responsibility remains difficult to establish, attribution capabilities themselves become an essential component of deterrence.[29]

Thus, in the absence of a NATO operation, individual states may find themselves managing incidents independently, each relying on its own procedures, legal interpretations, standards of attribution, and decision-making thresholds. This may result in delays, hesitation, inconsistent responses, and, in certain circumstances, the risk of uncontrolled escalation.

The legal and operational challenges associated with attributing attacks and exercising the right of self-defence provide a further argument in favour of a dedicated NATO maritime security operation in the western Black Sea.

Such a mechanism would make it possible to establish, before incidents occur, a mandate, a common operational framework, and Rules of Engagement (ROE) defining the authorities, procedures, and conditions under which Allied forces may conduct surveillance, warning, interception, and defensive operations.

The objective would not be to circumvent the difficulties of attribution or arbitrarily expand the right to use force, but rather to reduce legal and operational uncertainty, avoid improvisation during a crisis, and ensure a coordinated, lawful, and proportionate response.

In an environment where attacks may be carried out by autonomous systems, whose origins are difficult to establish and whose effects extend across national boundaries, a permanent Allied framework could transform detection and attribution capabilities into an effective mechanism for deterrence and the protection of maritime navigation and critical maritime infrastructure.

2. The Need for NATO Involvement in the Black Sea – The Role of MARCOM and JFC Naples. From Baltic Sentry to Neptune Sentry[30]

As demonstrated by the developments outlined above, NATO must move beyond responding to individual maritime incidents and establish a permanent Allied mechanism for prevention, attribution, deterrence, and the defence of maritime security in the western Black Sea.

NATO must therefore rapidly undertake a strategic paradigm shift from "NATO must be present" to "NATO must establish a framework that enables legitimate, coherent, and credible action when a threat emerges."

2.1. A Regional Challenge Beyond National Response Capabilities: Protecting Trade, Energy, and Critical Infrastructure

The succession of attacks against commercial vessels demonstrates that Black Sea maritime security can no longer be addressed exclusively through national responsibilities.

The vessels targeted sail under different flags, are owned by companies from several countries, have multinational crews, and follow routes crossing maritime areas under the jurisdiction of different coastal states. Their cargoes are diverse, including grain, petroleum products, liquefied gas, and containers destined for regional and international markets.

Under these circumstances, an attack against a vessel is not merely a maritime incident. It can simultaneously affect the economic interests of several states, endanger citizens of different nationalities, and have consequences for regional or European logistics and energy infrastructure.

The challenge therefore has both an Allied and a European dimension. NATO and the European Union must contribute, both financially and through appropriate platforms and capabilities, to developing a common maritime picture, strengthening early-warning, facilitating intelligence sharing, coordinating surveillance, and enhancing deterrence capabilities.

Such involvement does not automatically imply that NATO should assume the responsibilities of coastal states, nor does it mean that every attack against a commercial vessel should be treated as a collective defence case under Article 5. It does, however, require the use of Allied planning, command and control, coordination, and surveillance capabilities to reduce regional vulnerabilities.

Attacks against commercial vessels, the use of unmanned surface and aerial systems, the presence of drifting naval mines, threats to shipping routes, and the proximity of critical energy infrastructure demonstrate that Black Sea maritime security can no longer be treated exclusively as a matter of national surveillance or the protection of commercial shipping.

A NATO approach is therefore required to ensure:

- Regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA);
- Persistent surveillance of maritime routes and high-risk areas;
- Intelligence sharing and early-warning;
- Operational coordination and interoperability;
- Protection of critical maritime and energy infrastructure;
- Deterrence of attacks against commercial shipping.

2.2. The Role of MARCOM

Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM), headquartered in Northwood, is NATO's principal maritime command, providing the expertise, planning, and coordination required for the maritime dimension of Allied operations and activities.

Its role within NATO's maritime architecture is essential for integrating maritime situational awareness, operational planning, coordinating Allied maritime activities, assessing threats, and developing a Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP), which is particularly important when threats target civilian vessels.[31]

In the Black Sea context, MARCOM's contribution should focus on:

- Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA);
- Integrating information provided by coastal states and NATO structures;
- Developing a common operational picture of commercial shipping and maritime threats;
- Coordinating approved Allied maritime activities;
- Establishing common reporting and early-warning procedures;
- Integrating threats posed by aerial, surface, and underwater unmanned systems into maritime operational planning.

MARCOM should not be regarded as a structure intended to replace national authorities in protecting maritime navigation. Its added value lies in its ability to integrate national efforts into an Allied framework and transform fragmented information into a common maritime picture.
This is particularly relevant given that the Romanian Naval Component Command operates within a framework of subordination and cooperation with MARCOM.

2.3. The Role of JFC Naples

Joint Force Command Naples (JFC Naples) is NATO's operational command responsible for the southern flank, including the Black Sea. Together with the Romanian Naval Forces and US Naval Forces Europe (US NAVEUR), it organised the Black Sea Maritime Forum in Bucharest in 2022 and coordinates Neptune Strike activities, which included operations over the Black Sea for the first time in 2025.

JFC Naples plays a significant role through its operational responsibilities and its position within NATO's command structure. Its involvement must be considered in the context of operational command responsibilities and the coordination of NATO's approach to the southern flank, depending on the plans, authorities, and command structures activated.
For Romania, dialogue with JFC Naples is particularly important in the context of strengthening NATO's defence posture on the eastern flank and coordinating enhanced vigilance activities.

In April 2026, meetings between the leadership of JFC Naples and officials from Romania's Ministry of National Defence explicitly addressed the strengthening of NATO's defence posture, particularly in the Black Sea region, as well as Romania's contributions to NATO's enhanced vigilance activities.[32]

The North Atlantic Council's decision of 20 October resulted in the deployment of maritime patrol aircraft, radar systems, explosive ordnance disposal teams, intelligence personnel, and unmanned systems to the region. France temporarily redeployed an Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft to Romania, while on 16 November, a US RC-135U reconnaissance aircraft operated over the Black Sea alongside a NATO E-3A airborne early-warning and control aircraft.

The main limitation of these capabilities lies in their rotational and temporary nature. They do not constitute a permanent mission, while Romania and Bulgaria continue to request additional maritime patrol aircraft and counter-drone capabilities.

However, the institutional distinction must be maintained: MARCOM provides maritime expertise and coordinates the maritime component, while JFC Naples exercises

operational command responsibilities within a broader framework. Any potential Allied mission or activity in the Black Sea must be established through NATO mechanisms, with clearly defined authorities, responsibilities, and an appropriate chain of command.

Attacks against commercial vessels, the use of unmanned surface and aerial systems, threats to shipping routes, and the proximity of critical energy infrastructure demonstrate that Black Sea maritime security can no longer be treated exclusively as a matter of national surveillance or the protection of commercial shipping.

Considering the contribution NATO should make to security in the western Black Sea, a MARCOM-led approach is needed to ensure:

- Regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA);
- Protection of critical maritime and energy infrastructure;
- Persistent surveillance of maritime routes and high-risk areas;
- Intelligence sharing and early-warning;
- Operational coordination and interoperability;
- Deterrence of attacks against commercial shipping.

2.4. The Black Sea and the Baltic Sea – From Baltic Sentry to Neptune Sentry

On 14 January 2025, NATO launched Operation Baltic Sentry, aimed at strengthening the protection of critical infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. The initiative involved an enhanced maritime military presence, warships, maritime patrol aircraft, unmanned maritime systems, and the integration of national surveillance systems.

Baltic Sentry provides a relevant precedent for how NATO can increase its operational focus on a maritime region where critical infrastructure, lines of communication, energy transportation, and freedom of navigation are exposed to hybrid threats.[33]

The relevance of this initiative to the Black Sea does not lie in mechanically replicating the Baltic model. The two regions have distinct geographical, legal, and strategic characteristics.

In the Baltic Sea, the primary focus has been on protecting underwater infrastructure and preventing acts of sabotage against cables and pipelines.

In the Black Sea, the threat environment is considerably more complex: attacks against commercial vessels, aerial and surface drones, threats to offshore energy infrastructure, and vulnerabilities affecting maritime access routes, all against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war.

Nevertheless, there is one fundamental similarity: critical infrastructure and freedom of navigation cannot be effectively protected through isolated national actions.

Baltic Sentry	Neptune Sentry – Proposed Concept
Strengthening NATO vigilance in the Baltic Sea	Strengthening NATO vigilance in the Black Sea
Protection of critical maritime infrastructure	Protection of critical energy and maritime infrastructure
Surveillance and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)	Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), surveillance and early warning
Coordinated NATO activities	Activities adapted to the legal and strategic framework of the Black Sea
Prevention and deterrence of hybrid threats	Deterrence of attacks against vessels, critical infrastructure and energy transportation routes

In the Baltic Sea, NATO responded to incidents involving submarine cables by launching Baltic Sentry. For the eastern flank, covering the land and air domains, NATO launched Eastern Sentry (September 2025)[34], while in the Arctic, it launched Arctic Sentry (February 2026).[35] The Black Sea, by contrast, remains covered only by enhanced surveillance activities and the Mine Countermeasures Black Sea Task Group (MCM Black Sea TG), established by Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria in 2024.[36]

Criterion	Baltic Sentry	Neptune Sentry – Proposed
Trigger	Incidents involving undersea cables and pipelines	Drones targeting commercial vessels; drones near Neptun Deep
Main threat	Hybrid sabotage of underwater infrastructure	Kinetic strikes (aerial and maritime drones), mines, attacks on offshore energy installations
Legal framework	Almost entirely Allied sea	Montreux Convention: limits on non-littoral warships (30,000 tonnes in aggregate, 21 days); Türkiye controls the Straits
Format	NATO multi-domain activity with rotational forces	Proposed: dedicated mission; joint command of littoral Allies
Status	Operational	Not adopted; proposal not included in the Sofia joint declaration (28 October)

Baltic Sentry has been effective because the threat was hybrid in nature and the geographical environment was favourable. In the Black Sea, however, the threat is kinetic, simultaneously targeting commercial shipping, energy and critical infrastructure, while the legal framework restricts the presence of non-littoral Allied forces. Precisely for this reason, MARCOM (providing a Recognized Maritime Picture and tracking commercial shipping positions through the NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) and its White Shipping Picture) and JFC Naples (operational command) should provide the command structure, while the naval forces of the littoral Allies should ensure a strengthened operational response.

In this context, Romania should promote within NATO the development of a maritime security concept such as Neptune Sentry. National and European critical infrastructure, as well as commercial shipping, cannot be effectively protected if surveillance, deterrence and response activities remain fragmented among individual states and are addressed exclusively through national responsibilities.

A Neptune Sentry-type concept could integrate five main lines of effort:

1. Maritime Domain Awareness: A common, continuously updated operational picture of commercial shipping, support vessels and high-risk areas.
2. Persistent Surveillance: Continuous monitoring of port access routes, anchorage and waiting areas, commercial shipping lanes and offshore infrastructure.
3. Counter-UAS and Counter-USV: Coordinated capabilities for detecting, identifying, tracking and neutralising unmanned aerial and surface systems, in accordance with international law and the authority of the relevant national institutions.
4. Protection of Critical Maritime Infrastructure: Cooperation among naval forces, port authorities, energy operators, and security and intelligence agencies.
5. Allied Coordination: Integration of national efforts through NATO mechanisms, with the involvement of MARCOM and, depending on the approved command arrangements, JFC Naples.

Such a concept should not be limited to a military patrol operation. It should become an integrated mechanism for protecting the entire maritime and energy ecosystem.

While Baltic Sentry addresses a strategic vulnerability in the Baltic Sea, Neptune Sentry should address the specific vulnerabilities of the Black Sea: attacks against commercial shipping, the protection of offshore energy infrastructure, and the defence of maritime access routes.

2.5. Neptun Deep and Sakarya – The Energy Dimension of Black Sea Security

The strategic importance of the Black Sea is further amplified by the development of offshore natural gas production. The region is acquiring additional strategic significance through major offshore gas projects, particularly Neptun Deep in Romania and Sakarya in Türkiye.

These projects are helping to redefine the role of the Black Sea, transforming it from an area primarily associated with maritime transit, military competition and geopolitical confrontation into an increasingly important energy production region, with significant implications for regional energy security and energy autonomy.

For Romania, the Neptun Deep project, developed by OMV Petrom and Romgaz, represents a major opportunity to strengthen energy security and reduce dependence on imported natural gas.

In the Romanian sector of the Black Sea, Neptun Deep is one of the country's most significant energy investments. The project has estimated recoverable resources of approximately 100 billion cubic metres of natural gas, with projected annual production of around 8 billion cubic metres.

First gas production is expected in the first half of 2027, while the production plateau is anticipated to be reached by the end of the third quarter of 2027.[37]

Neptun Deep would therefore approximately double Romania's natural gas production and make the country the largest natural gas producer in the European Union. Romania's strategic importance would increase considerably, with Romanian gas from the Black Sea expected to play a major role in regional energy security. Neptun Deep could ensure the Republic of Moldova's energy

independence and play an important role in supplying countries that have already expressed interest in Romanian gas, including Slovakia[38], Hungary[39] and Germany.[40]

In the Turkish sector, the Sakarya gas field and the development of the Osman Gazi floating production platform represent another major element in the transformation of the Black Sea into an important energy production region.

According to Türkiye's Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, natural gas production has reached 7.23 billion cubic metres[41], with Sakarya contributing to the country's objective of reducing its dependence on foreign energy supplies, particularly those originating from Russia.

The parallel is clear: both NATO littoral states are entering 2027 with offshore gas production that reduces their dependence on Russian gas, and both projects are located in the same sea where commercial vessels are being attacked.

The risks are not merely theoretical. In August, Romanian Navy divers destroyed two Gerbera drones in the EEZ near Neptun Deep, while on 26 August, a naval drone was detected just a few hundred metres from the project, prompting the scrambling of F-16 fighter jets.[42]

The ROYAD MAMMADOV sank near OMV Petrom's Pescăruș offshore platform, while Romania's Chief of Defence Staff publicly warned in 2026 that Neptun Deep might not be covered by NATO security guarantees.[43]

In this context, threats to maritime navigation, offshore infrastructure, production platforms, support vessels, pipelines, cables and logistics routes must also be regarded as threats to strategic energy interests.

These projects contribute to increasing regional natural gas production and reducing dependence on external supplies, including Russian gas. However, an important distinction must be made: they do not automatically eliminate energy dependence on Russia but strengthen domestic production capabilities and diversify energy supply sources.

From a strategic perspective, Neptun Deep and Sakarya are transforming the Black Sea into an area of far greater energy importance than in the past.

Protection measures must therefore cover not only offshore production platforms but also:

- Offshore support vessels;
- Production facilities and subsea equipment;
- Gas transportation pipelines;
- Communication cables and control systems;
- Receiving terminals and coastal infrastructure;
- Maritime routes used for supply and maintenance operations.

Damage to or disruption of such a system could generate economic and energy-related consequences far exceeding the value of the equipment directly affected.

The more important the Black Sea becomes for the energy independence of its littoral states and Europe as a whole, the greater the priority maritime security in the region must receive in NATO's defence planning.

2.6. EU Involvement: Black Sea Maritime Security Hub – Activating Analytical Capabilities Before 2027

The Black Sea Maritime Security Hub concept[44], developed as part of the EU's strategic approach to the Black Sea region, with Varna and Constanța as its main centres, offers an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation. The Hub is designed as a non-military network for information sharing, analysis, risk assessment, Maritime Situational

Awareness, and coordination on maritime security issues. It should not be confused with a military command or a structure intended to replace national authorities.[45]

This Hub will provide an opportunity to integrate the expertise of Türkiye and Ukraine and to bring countries such as France, Germany, and Italy, as well as non-EU states such as the United Kingdom and Norway, closer to the Black Sea through the involvement of their experts. These countries have considerable experience in protecting critical offshore infrastructure.

In the current security environment, waiting until the Hub becomes fully operational, as planned for 2027, should not prevent the immediate launch of analytical activities.

Romania and Bulgaria could propose the early activation of a maritime hybrid threat assessment component through a network bringing together experts, research institutions, universities, maritime authorities, and European and NATO structures.

2.7. What Romania Is Doing to Strengthen Its Own Defence in the Black Sea: Between Ambition, Implementation, and Industrial Constraints

2.7.1. Romania Refuses to Be Intimidated by Russia

1. Neutralisation of Aerial Drones Near Neptun Deep – 11 August 2026

On 11 August 2026, two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), identified by the Romanian Ministry of National Defence as GERBERA-type drones, were discovered drifting in Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone, approximately 90 nautical miles off the coast of Constanța, in the vicinity of the Neptun Deep perimeter. The drones were reported by the crew of a civilian vessel operating in the area. A Coast Guard vessel carrying a specialised Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from the Romanian Naval Forces intervened.[46]

The two UAVs, which may have been carrying explosive payloads, were neutralised through controlled detonations, while a drone fragment presenting no explosive hazard was recovered.

The Ministry of National Defence stated that the Ukrainian side had confirmed that the drones did not belong to its forces.[47]

2. Intervention Against a Maritime Drone Near Neptun Alpha – 20 August 2026

On 20 August 2026, a small unmanned surface vehicle (USV) drifting in Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone was reported by a commercial vessel near the Neptun Alpha platform, approximately 80 nautical miles east of Constanța.

Two Romanian Air Force F-16 fighter jets were scrambled. One of the aircraft engaged the target and fired its onboard cannon, striking the drone.

Subsequently, an EOD team from the Romanian Naval Forces intervened to inspect and fully neutralise the device.

According to information published by the Romanian Ministry of National Defence[48] and reports by AGERPRES[49], the drone was carrying an explosive payload.

This case is particularly relevant because it demonstrates cooperation between maritime surveillance, combat aviation, the Coast Guard, and EOD specialists, as well as the decision to protect personnel and critical offshore energy infrastructure.

3. Interception and Destruction of Two Aerial Drones in Romanian Airspace – 17 October 2026

On the evening of 17 October 2026, radar systems operated by the Romanian Ministry of National Defence detected a group of aerial targets approximately 120 kilometres east of Snake Island, moving southwest.

Two Romanian Air Force F-16 fighter jets conducting an Air Policing mission, which had taken off from the 86th Air Base at Borcea, were directed to engage the targets.

The first drone entered Romanian national airspace at 17:59 and was destroyed at 18:01, while the second entered at 18:01 and was destroyed at 18:05.

The Ministry of National Defence identified the targets as GERAN-family attack drones equipped with jet propulsion. Both drones were neutralised over Romanian territorial waters in the Sulina area.

2.7.2. Progress in Developing Naval Capabilities

In recent years, the Romanian Naval Forces have initiated and continued a process of modernisation and capability enhancement, in a security environment where threats in the Black Sea require both the revitalisation of existing naval platforms and the introduction of new combat systems.

The modernisation programme includes upgrading Type 22 frigates and missile-carrying vessels, developing coastal defence capabilities through mobile anti-ship missile launch systems, acquiring mine countermeasure capabilities, amphibious vehicles for the Marine Infantry, unmanned systems, and new surveillance and combat assets. In parallel, efforts have been initiated to strengthen coastal strike and defence capabilities, including the procurement programme for mobile anti-ship missile launch systems and projects aimed at modernising existing naval platforms to improve their mobility, survivability, and operational effectiveness.

These programmes represent a significant shift in direction, from maintaining naval platforms with limited capabilities towards developing a force capable of operating in a contested maritime environment, contributing to deterrence, and protecting Romania's maritime interests and critical infrastructure.[50]

A concrete milestone in this process was the commissioning of the "Rear Admiral August Roman" (261) corvette into the Romanian Naval Forces on 20 June 2026. The HISAR-class vessel was acquired from Türkiye.

The platform provides modern surveillance, reconnaissance, patrol, surface warfare, air defence, and anti-submarine warfare capabilities. In its initial configuration, it is equipped with a 76 mm naval gun, 12.7 mm machine guns, radar, sonar, electro-optical sensors, and electronic warfare systems.

The modernisation process is expected to continue through the integration of additional systems, including vertical launch systems for surface-to-air missiles, a 35 mm Close-In Weapon System (CIWS), anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and infrared search and tracking systems.

Furthermore, the SAFE programme envisages the integration of Naval Strike Missiles (NSM), which would significantly enhance the vessel's strike capabilities.

At the same time, expanding cooperation with the Turkish naval industry creates opportunities for acquiring a second corvette, developing unmanned naval platforms, and facilitating technology transfer. These developments, together with the modernisation of existing platforms and the development of

coastal defence systems, indicate a gradual reorientation of the Romanian Naval Forces towards integrated capabilities, with an emphasis on coastal defence, maritime domain control, the protection of critical infrastructure, and strengthening deterrence in the Black Sea.[51]

An important clarification is required regarding missile systems. Recent information indicates that the coastal-based Naval Strike Missile (NSM) system and the first missiles have begun arriving in Romania, according to public statements by the leadership of the Romanian Naval Forces.

Meanwhile, the SAFE programme also includes seven NSM launch systems and 48 missiles intended for surface combat vessels. This must be distinguished from the integration of NSM missiles aboard the "Rear Admiral August Roman" corvette, which constitutes a separate integration programme.[52]

2.7.3. Delays in Procurement and the Operationalisation of Capabilities

Nevertheless, the modernisation of the Romanian Naval Forces continues to be affected by delays, slow procurement procedures, and gaps between contract signing, equipment delivery, and the achievement of full operational capability.

The delayed arrival of Naval Strike Missile (NSM) systems and missiles is a relevant example. Although the first equipment arrived in Romania in August 2026, its integration onto naval platforms still requires additional technical and procedural stages.

These delays may have a knock-on effect on the modernisation of Romania's missile boats and the integration of combat capabilities aboard the "Rear Admiral August Roman" corvette, particularly regarding the schedule for installing and operationalising weapons systems.

In the case of the corvette, commissioning does not equate to achieving full operational capability, as the vessel still requires the subsequent integration of air defence systems, close-in defence systems, anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and NSM missiles.[53]

Romania's ability to modernise its Naval Forces depends directly on the predictability of procurement programmes, contractual stability, and the capacity of its domestic defence industry to support the timely delivery of planned platforms and capabilities.[54]

Ultimately, Romania's challenge is not merely the shortage of naval capabilities and platforms able to counter aerial and surface drone attacks, but also the slow pace at which decision-making, procurement, delivery, integration, and operationalisation translate defence acquisition programmes into effective military power.

3. Regional Ownership: The Case for Greater Responsibility by Black Sea Littoral States

3.1. Russia's Major Escalation Exposes the Limitations of the "Regional Ownership" Concept

Türkiye maintains that Black Sea security is primarily the responsibility of the littoral states and that the framework established by the 1936 Montreux Convention is essential to regional stability. Carnegie Europe describes this principle as a preference for Türkiye, together with Bulgaria and Romania, to take the lead in ensuring Black Sea security, effectively discouraging a broader NATO naval presence in the region.[55]

At the end of October, in Sofia, the defence ministers of Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria condemned attacks against commercial vessels in the Black Sea and agreed to strengthen

trilateral coordination and early-warning mechanisms. The Turkish defence minister also referred to the possibility of pursuing legal action. Romania's proposal to establish a NATO command was not included in the agreed decisions.[56]

Türkiye has traditionally maintained that Black Sea security should be ensured primarily by the littoral states. The concept of Regional Ownership is based on the premise that countries with direct geographical, economic, and security interests in the region should assume primary responsibility for its stability.

This approach has legitimate arguments in its favour. Littoral states are familiar with the region's particular characteristics, possess port and energy infrastructure, bear responsibilities for maritime navigation, and maintain military and security capabilities adapted to the regional environment.

The problem arises when Regional Ownership becomes an argument for limiting NATO involvement without the littoral states providing sufficient regional surveillance, deterrence, and protection capabilities in return.

The events of October and November 2026 demonstrate the limitations of such an approach. Seven commercial vessels attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ and a succession of incidents in the Romanian maritime sector show that regional responsibility cannot be defined solely by geographical proximity to the Black Sea. Regional responsibility must be demonstrated through capabilities, procedures, and operational results.

3.2. The Montreux Convention – The Legal Framework Must Not Be Confused with Regional Ownership

A central element of Türkiye's position is the implementation of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which regulates passage through the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits.

In the context of the Russia–Ukraine war, Türkiye has applied the provisions of Article 19, which restrict the passage of warships belonging to belligerent states, subject to the exceptions provided for under the Convention, including the return of vessels to their permanent bases.

However, an important legal distinction must be made: Article 19 does not impose a general prohibition on the entry of all warships into the Black Sea. The applicable regime depends on the state's status in the conflict, the specific circumstances, and the conditions established by the Convention.[57]

Warships belonging to non-littoral states are also subject to the tonnage, notification, and duration-of-stay restrictions set out in Articles 14-18.

Therefore, the Montreux Convention and the concept of Regional Ownership must be examined separately:

- Montreux constitutes an international legal instrument;
- Regional Ownership constitutes a political and strategic approach;
- The implementation of the Convention does not relieve littoral states of their responsibility for maritime security and freedom of navigation;
- Restrictions on the presence of non-littoral naval forces cannot substitute for the operational contribution of littoral states.

3.3. If Security Is a Regional Responsibility, Who Is Responsible for Defending the Region?

There can be no security in the Black Sea without Türkiye. The concept of Regional Ownership should translate into the ability to protect commercial shipping, critical infrastructure, and the economic interests of littoral states, rather than merely limiting the presence of other actors in the Black Sea.

If Ankara maintains that Black Sea security should remain the responsibility of the littoral states, then that responsibility must also be demonstrated through direct participation in protecting maritime routes, commercial vessels, and critical infrastructure exposed to attacks. Given the repeated strikes against commercial shipping, Türkiye should make a significantly greater contribution to security in the northwestern Black Sea.

One concrete proposal Romania could put forward would be to encourage a Turkish naval presence in the Sulina area and its anchorage and waiting areas, which would be extremely beneficial for freedom of navigation and maritime security in the western Black Sea.

In this context, Romania could promote a regional dialogue focused on concrete contributions by littoral states to maritime security. A proposal with significant strategic and political value would be to request a Turkish naval contribution near Sulina and in the anchorage and waiting areas, as part of coordinated activities to monitor, protect, and defend maritime traffic against aerial and surface drone threats.

This should not be presented simply as a request for the permanent deployment of Turkish warships in Romanian or Bulgarian waters, but rather as a concrete proposal for regional cooperation, consistent with international law, applicable agreements, and coordination with Romanian authorities.

The central argument is straightforward: if ownership is regional, defence must also be regional.

More specifically, Türkiye could deploy naval units equipped with air defence and surface defence capabilities to counter-drone threats in the anchorage and waiting areas near Sulina.

From a legal perspective, Turkish warships, as vessels belonging to a Black Sea littoral state, are not subject to the restrictions imposed by the Montreux Convention on non-littoral naval forces should Türkiye decide to deploy additional naval capabilities in the Black Sea. Their entry into Romanian territorial waters would require Romania's consent, either through a bilateral agreement or within a NATO framework, which Bucharest could provide.

The Turkish Navy is the most powerful of the three NATO littoral navies, has operational experience through MCM Black Sea, and participated alongside Romania and Bulgaria in the rescue operation involving the crew of BETUL 8.

Türkiye also has a direct interest in strengthening maritime security in the region. At least four of the vessels attacked had Turkish shipowners or operators (ALFA WATAN, ABLE, AZOV CONCORD, and ROYAD MAMMADOV), several had departed from Turkish ports (Ambarlı, Ereğli, and Istanbul), and eight Turkish seafarers were aboard BETUL 8.

The Sakarya gas field and the Osman Gazi floating production platform are located in the same sea.

A Türkiye that actively protects commercial shipping and energy infrastructure in the waters of the littoral states would strengthen, rather than weaken, its position as the region's principal maritime security provider.

3.4. Sulina and Its Anchorage and Sheltered Waiting Areas – A Practical Test of Regional Ownership

One proposal worth examining within the Romanian–Turkish dialogue would be the participation of Turkish naval vessels and capabilities in coordinated surveillance and protection activities near Sulina and in the designated anchorage and waiting areas, including those used for shelter during adverse weather conditions.

Such a contribution could include:

- Surveillance of commercial maritime traffic;
- Detection, tracking, and neutralisation of unmanned surface vehicles;
- Participation in counter-UAS air defence activities;
- Protection of commercial vessels awaiting access to ports and the Sulina Canal;
- Intelligence sharing and early-warning;
- Joint exercises focused on the defence of commercial shipping.

The deployment of Turkish naval vessels in Romanian territorial waters would require an invitation and consent from Romania, together with a clearly defined mandate, Rules of Engagement (ROE), and coordination arrangements with national authorities.

Alternatively, such a contribution could be organised in mutually agreed maritime areas, in accordance with the applicable legal framework.

This proposal should not be interpreted as a request for Türkiye to assume Romania's responsibilities. On the contrary, it would provide a means of translating the concept of Regional Ownership into a concrete operational contribution for the benefit of regional maritime security.

This approach does not challenge Türkiye's role or the importance of the Montreux Convention. Rather, it calls for consistency between the declared strategic position and the actual contribution to regional security.

3.5. A New Romanian–Turkish Cooperation Initiative

3.5.1. A New Turkish Naval Base in Rize[58]

On 15 November 2026, Yılmaz Katmer, the AKP provincial chairman in Rize, stated that the Turkish Naval Forces could establish a new naval base on the Black Sea coast, in Rize.

The proposed project would cover approximately 25 hectares near the port and include berthing facilities for fast attack craft and logistics vessels, a shipyard for submarines and unmanned underwater vehicles, as well as facilities for training approximately 5,000 military personnel.

Investments are expected towards the end of 2027–2028.[59]

The base would be located in the eastern Black Sea, more than 100 kilometres from the Georgian border, in the broader vicinity of the area where Russia reached an agreement with the Abkhaz authorities in 2023[60] to establish a permanent naval base at Ochamchire.[61] From a strategic perspective, this development could be interpreted as an effort to balance Russia's naval presence in the eastern and southeastern Black Sea. Unfortunately for the states in the western Black Sea, the project, as currently announced, does not establish a direct operational link with their maritime security requirements.[62]

For Romania, the significance is strategic rather than tactical: Türkiye is developing its naval capabilities in the east, while the maritime security gap affecting commercial shipping is concentrated in the northwest.

If Regional Ownership is to mean genuine regional responsibility, these two geographical areas must be connected.

3.5.2. The Rize–Constanța Axis

The timeline offers an opportunity for negotiations: first gas production from Neptun Deep in the first half of 2027, the anticipated completion of the Rize naval base by the end of 2028, and Romania's proposed 2028 target for establishing a joint command involving NATO's Black Sea littoral Allies.

Romania could propose a three-part cooperation package to Türkiye:

1. Joint development and testing of unmanned maritime, underwater, and counter-drone systems, with production in Rize and testing in Romanian waters. Romania would provide testing facilities, a real-world operational environment, and experience gained from the incidents near Sulina, while Türkiye would contribute its industrial capabilities.

2. Reciprocal naval presence: a rotational Turkish naval element operating in the Sulina–Midia–Constanța–Mangalia area, with Romania's consent, alongside Romanian liaison officers assigned to Türkiye's Northern Sea Area Command (Kuzey Deniz Saha Komutanlığı).[63] The political legitimacy of such an arrangement would derive from cooperation among littoral states rather than an extraregional NATO naval presence, making it consistent with Türkiye's preferred approach.

3. Expanding the scope of MCM Black Sea beyond mine countermeasures to include the protection of critical infrastructure and commercial shipping, building on the direction already agreed by the three countries' defence ministers in Sofia in October.

The argument supporting these three elements, from Ankara's perspective, could be the following: developing a naval base in the east without ensuring adequate coverage in the west would leave the vulnerability of Türkiye's major commercial shipping routes to the Danube unresolved. Vessels departing from Ambarlı, Ereğli, or Istanbul are being attacked near Sulina.

The security of the Bosporus–Sulina maritime corridor is therefore a direct Turkish political and economic interest.

The proposed naval base in Rize demonstrates Türkiye's intention to invest in Black Sea maritime security, while Sulina represents one of the areas where such security capabilities are urgently needed.

Romania could transform this geographical asymmetry into a concrete cooperation proposal: industrial capabilities and strategic coordination from Ankara, complemented by testing facilities, ports, operational expertise, and infrastructure in the northwestern Black Sea provided by Bucharest, under the political framework of a concept Türkiye already supports.

If Regional Ownership is to have genuine strategic meaning, Rize and Constanța should become two pillars of the same regional maritime security architecture.

4. Maritime Security and Food Security: Ukrainian Grain, Romanian Ports, and the Economic Impact

4.1. Ukrainian Grain – An Essential Resource for Food Security

Attacks against commercial vessels transporting grain in the Black Sea must be assessed beyond their military, economic, and maritime security dimensions. Their implications are equally humanitarian and global, as the region represents a vital hub for agricultural exports to markets that depend on imports to meet their food requirements.

Ukraine is one of the world's leading producers and exporters of grain, particularly wheat, maize, and related products. Disruptions to Ukrainian maritime shipping routes affect not only Ukraine's economy but also the international food supply system.

These trade flows are particularly important for countries in North Africa and the Middle East, where wheat is a staple food and dependence on imports is high. Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Morocco[64] are important markets for Ukrainian wheat exports. This role is especially significant given competition among major exporters and the vulnerability of these markets to shocks affecting prices, availability, and transportation.

The humanitarian dimension of this challenge was demonstrated during the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a mechanism that enabled the temporary resumption of agricultural exports from Ukrainian ports.[65]

During the initiative's operation, nearly 33 million tonnes of grain and other food products were exported, including supplies destined for Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and Djibouti.

The World Food Programme (WFP) benefited from this maritime corridor to deliver food supplies to countries affected by food insecurity. These figures illustrate how maritime security in the Black Sea can directly affect the ability of states and humanitarian organisations to provide food to vulnerable populations.[66]

In Türkiye's case, the importance of grain from the Black Sea basin must be considered both in terms of domestic supply and the country's role in processing, transiting, and redistributing agricultural products.

Türkiye is a major player in the region's grain trade, and disruptions to maritime traffic can affect imports, prices, the food-processing industry, and transportation flows to other markets.

Threats to commercial navigation can therefore generate consequences that extend well beyond the geographical areas where attacks occur.[67]

Attacks against commercial vessels, drone threats, the risk of ships being sunk, rising insurance costs, and uncertainty regarding the safety of maritime routes may lead operators to avoid certain areas, reduce the number of voyages, or resort to more expensive alternative routes.

The cumulative impact may include higher grain prices, disruptions to supply contracts, and increased vulnerability among importing countries. For populations where wheat is a fundamental component of the daily diet, disruptions to trade can become a matter of social stability and national security.

Protecting commercial shipping in the Black Sea is therefore also a contribution to international food security and the prevention of humanitarian crises.[68]

A reduction in grain flows, or increased volatility in their volumes, affects the revenues of port

operators, transshipment terminals, inland waterway and maritime transport companies, railway operators, storage facilities, logistics service providers, shipping agencies, and other related businesses.

Investments in cargo handling, storage, and transportation capacity, as well as the mobilisation of human and technical resources, depend on predictable traffic volumes and the continuity of commercial flows.

Maritime insecurity can also have indirect consequences for the competitiveness of Romanian ports, the pace of investment, economic revenues, and Romania's position within regional transport networks.

In a scenario involving intensified attacks and declining confidence among operators in the safety of maritime navigation, these effects could become more severe, affecting agricultural exports, Ukrainian transit trade, Danube transportation, and the strategic role of Constanța in connecting the Black Sea with Central and Southeastern Europe.

Black Sea security is not only about protecting vessels, ports, and energy infrastructure. It is also about safeguarding a food supply system on which millions of people depend.

When freedom and safety of navigation are compromised, the consequences do not stop at the region's maritime boundaries. They spread through economic activity, food security, and social stability, turning a maritime attack into a challenge with global implications.

5. Conclusions: Romania Is Affected Even When Attacks Occur Outside Its Maritime Areas

Attacks against commercial vessels in the Black Sea demonstrate that maritime security can no longer be assessed exclusively on the basis of the geographical boundaries of national maritime zones.

A vessel attacked in Bulgaria's Exclusive Economic Zone may be carrying cargo originating from Romania, heading towards the Port of Constanța, or transporting energy products destined for the Port of Midia. In all these cases, the consequences of the attack extend beyond the geographical area in which it occurred. The geography of the attack is not the geography of its impact. All seven vessels attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ were operating along access routes to Romanian ports or the Sulina maritime corridor.

The cases of ABLE, CONTSHIP JET, BETUL 8, and GAS HUSKY clearly demonstrate this reality. In the cases of ABLE and BETUL 8, Romania was the point of origin of the affected commercial flows. In the case of CONTSHIP JET, the Port of Constanța was the vessel's destination. In the case of GAS HUSKY, the Port of Midia was the destination of a shipment carrying approximately 3,400 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).[69]

Romania is therefore affected across several dimensions.

5.1. Impact on Economic and Port Interests

Attacks against commercial vessels have increased the perceived risks associated with navigation in the western Black Sea.

Approximately 14-17 vessels have been struck off the coasts of Romania and Bulgaria since the beginning of October, depending on the methodology used, with more than 30 seafarers

killed or reported missing, rising war-risk insurance premiums, and wheat prices in Romanian and Bulgarian ports reaching multi-year highs.

The Republic of Moldova, whose only maritime outlet is Giurgiulești, is affected through the Sulina corridor, while Ukrainian exports, now being routed through the Danube, have transformed Sulina into a strategic hub that must be defended at all costs.

Consequently, Sulina, the Port of Constanța, and the Port of Midia cannot be considered outside the risk area simply because attacks occur south of Romania's maritime boundary. The economic consequences are not limited to the loss of a vessel and its cargo. They may also include:

- Higher war-risk insurance premiums;
- The introduction of additional maritime freight surcharges;
- Reduced willingness among shipowners to operate in the region;
- Delays and changes to commercial shipping routes;
- Increased logistics costs;
- Reduced competitiveness of regional ports.

An analysis published by Svobodna Tochka[70] highlights the impact of the attacks on Bulgarian imports, exports, and the maritime industry, including higher insurance costs and the loss of contracts in the ship repair sector.

These effects cannot automatically be assumed to apply to Romania, but the underlying economic mechanisms are relevant to the entire Black Sea maritime ecosystem.

5.2. Impact on Energy Security

Neptun Deep is a strategic project for Romania, while the development of the Sakarya gas field demonstrates the growing importance of the Black Sea for the energy security of littoral states.

In the coming years, the region will become increasingly significant for the production, transportation, and distribution of natural gas. Maritime security must therefore encompass the protection of offshore infrastructure, support vessels, pipelines, and the logistics routes necessary for the operation of energy projects.

A threat to commercial navigation can become a threat to energy security when it disrupts transportation, supply operations, maintenance activities, or access to offshore infrastructure.

5.3. The Need for an Integrated National and Allied Approach

Romania must develop an approach that integrates the activities of the Romanian Naval Forces with those of maritime authorities, security institutions, and critical infrastructure operators.

At the same time, cooperation with Bulgaria and Türkiye must be strengthened, alongside efforts to secure more substantial NATO involvement.

MARCOM and JFC Naples can contribute to integrating the maritime dimension into a broader Allied framework, while a concept such as Neptune Sentry could provide an instrument for strengthening surveillance, early-warning, and critical infrastructure protection.

Romania must also call upon the littoral states to make tangible contributions to regional security. The concept of Regional Ownership, which guides Türkiye's policy in the Black Sea, must translate into operational responsibility, rather than merely limiting the presence of

other actors.

The economic dimension must be assessed as a chain of interconnected effects, rather than simply in terms of the value of a lost vessel or its cargo. These effects include higher war-risk insurance premiums, additional surcharges, greater reluctance among shipowners to operate in the region, reduced vessel availability, delays and rerouting, increased financing costs, and growing pressure on port competitiveness.

Reported developments in Bulgaria concerning insurance costs, difficulties faced by exporters, and declining orders at certain shipyards should serve as a regional warning.

5.4. Strategic Conclusion

The Black Sea must be regarded as an interconnected maritime space in which threats do not respect the legal and administrative boundaries of littoral states.
Attacks against commercial vessels demonstrate that an operation carried out in Bulgaria's EEZ can directly affect Romania's economic interests, while an incident near Sulina can have consequences for Danube navigation, port operations, and energy infrastructure.

In this context, Romania must not wait for a threat to enter its territorial waters or directly strike an offshore platform before recognising a maritime incident as a matter of national or European security.

A transition is required from a reactive approach, based on managing individual incidents, towards a preventive, integrated, regional, European, and Allied framework that brings together maritime security, critical infrastructure protection, energy security, and military deterrence. Attacks may occur in Bulgarian waters, Romania's EEZ, or near other Black Sea littoral states. However, when they affect Romanian vessels, cargoes, ports, energy infrastructure, and commercial shipping routes, they become a direct national security concern, regardless of the geographical coordinates of the incident.

The conclusion must return to the fundamental principle: Romania cannot assess maritime threats solely on the basis of where they occur.
Attacks against vessels in Bulgaria's EEZ, particularly when targeting ships operating along routes to Romanian ports, can affect:

- Port interests – The Port of Midia and, through the broader regional risk environment, the entire Constanța port ecosystem;
- Energy interests – The transportation of petroleum products and natural gas, offshore logistics, Neptun Deep, and associated infrastructure;
- Economic security – Insurance costs, rerouting, delays, reduced commercial activity, and increased perceived risks;
- Maritime security – Greater vulnerability of commercial shipping routes and anchorage and waiting areas;
- National security interests – The increasing proximity of threats to critical infrastructure and the Romanian coastline.

Romania must move beyond a reactive approach focused on assessing each incident individually and adopt an integrated framework that evaluates threats according to vessel destinations, the nature of their cargo, the economic interests affected, the infrastructure they serve, and the potential for escalation.
The fact that a vessel is attacked in Bulgaria's EEZ does not mean that the incident is exclusively a Bulgarian concern.

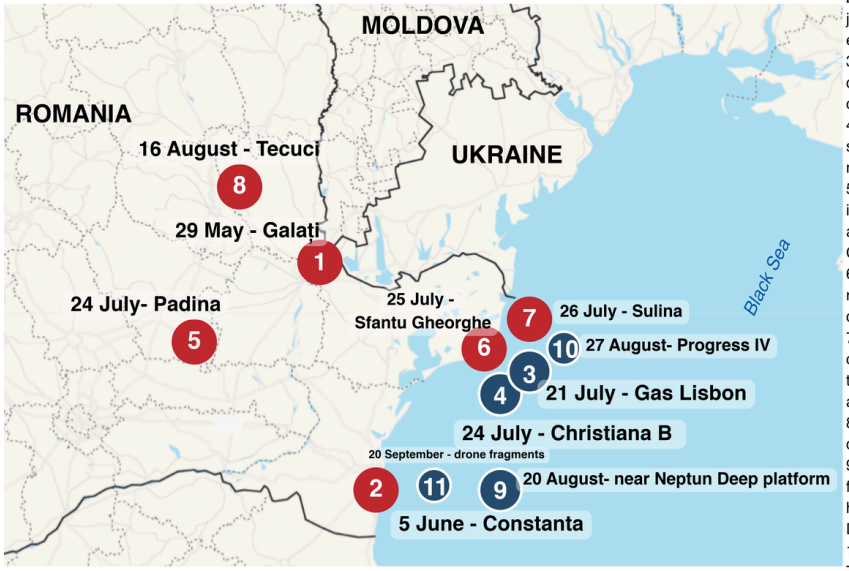
If the vessel is heading towards Midia, carrying cargo destined for the Romanian economy, supporting Romania's energy infrastructure, or if the incident affects navigation towards Constanța, the consequences of the attack become part of Romania's national security challenge.

In this context, Black Sea security cannot be separated from energy security, the protection of critical infrastructure, and the economic interests of NATO's littoral states.

Romania must advocate stronger European and Allied involvement in the Black Sea, adapted to the region's specific legal and geographical characteristics, and promote a model of regional cooperation in which the responsibility of littoral states is translated into genuine operational contributions.

Appendices

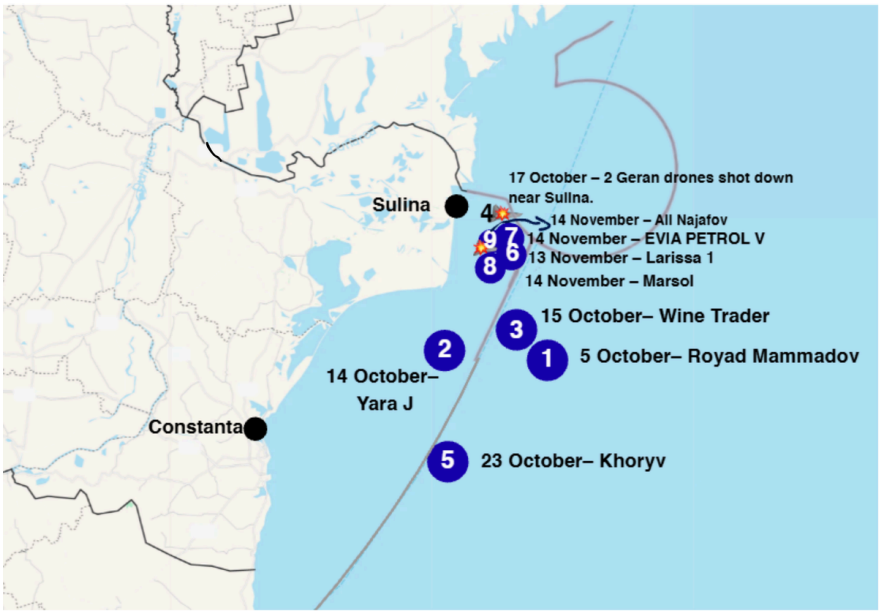
INCIDENTS BETWEEN MAY-SEPTEMBER



Source: New Strategy Center, Snazzy maps

1. Galați (May 29) - A drone carrying a military payload crashed at night into an apartment building in the city center, destroying one apartment and injuring two people.
2. Constanța (June 5) - An Ukrainian naval drone, lost due to signal jamming, self-destructed in the Port of Constanța. The area was evacuated as a precaution, with no casualties reported.
3. Gas Lisbon (July 21) - The Liberian-flagged LPG tanker was damaged by a drone or explosion 20 nautical miles offshore. The crew was urgently evacuated, and three sailors were injured.
4. Christiana B (July 24) - The cargo ship reported damage southeast of Sfântu Gheorghe, likely following an impact with a naval drone or a sea mine, and was directed to port for repairs.
5. Padina (July 24) - In a first-time event, a Romanian F-16 jet intercepted and shot down a Geran-2 drone illegally entering airspace, with debris landing in an unpopulated area of Buzău County.
6. Sfântu Gheorghe (July 25) - Another drone was detected on radar and shot down early in the morning by an F-16 fighter jet, its debris falling west of the town in the Delta.
7. Sulina (July 26) - A new Geran-2 drone targeted over three consecutive days was successfully intercepted and shot down by the Romanian Air Force over territorial waters in the Sulina-Chilia area.
8. Tecuci (16 August) - A Spanish F18 jet shot down a Russian drone that had entered Romanian airspace
9. Near Neptun Deep platform (20 August) - A Romanian F-16 fighter aircraft engaged with its onboard cannon a naval drone that had been detected very close to the main platform of the Neptun Deep project
10. 15 nautical miles offshore from Sfântu Gheorghe (27 August) - The vessel Progress IV caught fire and sank in the Black Sea.
11. 20 September - Drone fragments were found in three different locations in the Black Sea, within Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone

INCIDENTS IN OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

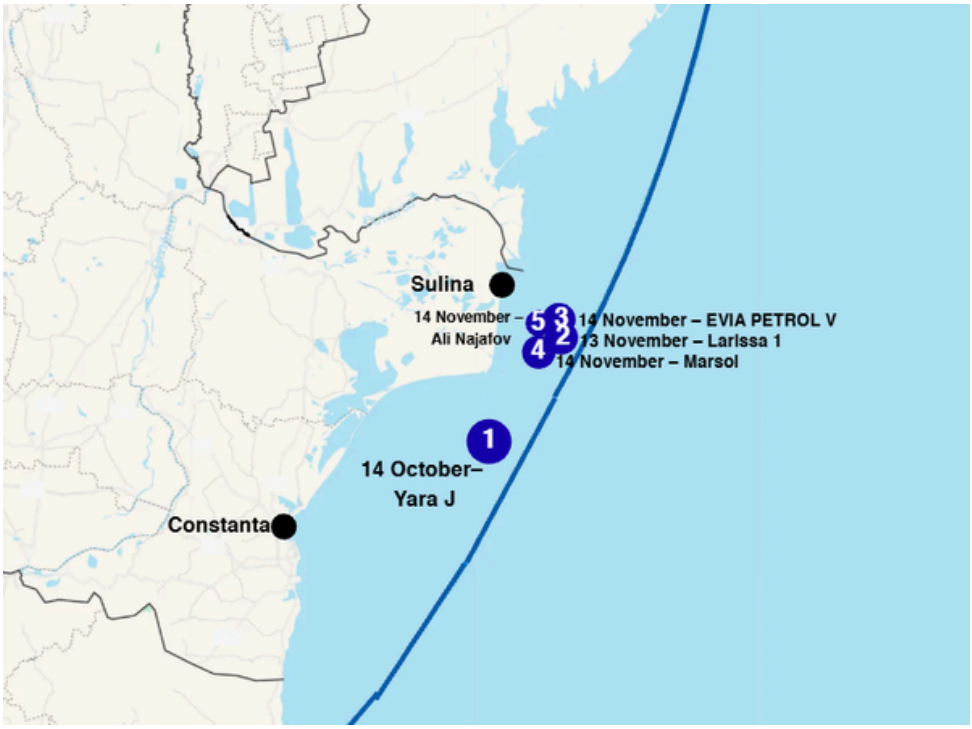


Source: New Strategy Center, Snazzy maps

1. 5 October 2026 – Royad Mammadov: Commercial vessel attacked by drones and sunk in Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), near the Pescăruș offshore platform.
2. 14 October 2026 – Yara J: Commercial vessel struck by a drone and caught fire in Romanian territorial waters, approximately 9 nautical miles from Sulina.
3. 15 October 2026 – Wine Trader: Commercial vessel damaged by explosions and fire approximately 13 nautical miles from Sulina.
4. 17 October 2026 – Two Geran Drones: Two attack drones entered Romanian airspace and were shot down by F-16 fighter jets over Romanian territorial waters, near Sulina, at 18:01 and 18:05.
5. 23 October 2026 – Khoryv: Commercial vessel struck by a drone and sunk approximately 13 nautical miles from Constanța.
6. 13 November 2026 – Larissa 1: Palau-flagged commercial vessel struck by a drone in Romanian territorial waters, approximately 6.8 nautical miles northeast of Sfântu Gheorghe.
7. 14 November 2026 – Evia Petrol V: Greek-flagged oil and chemical tanker struck by a drone at approximately 21:10, around 4 nautical miles east-southeast of Sulina, in Romanian territorial waters.
8. 14 November 2026 – Marsol: Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged bulk carrier struck by a drone at approximately 21:45, around 5 nautical miles southeast of the Sulina Canal, in Romanian territorial waters.
9. 14 November 2026 – Ali Najafov: Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged oil tanker struck by a drone near the Sulina Canal, approximately 4 nautical miles southeast of the canal, at approximately 23.45.

Appendices

Commercial ships attacked in Romania's territorial waters

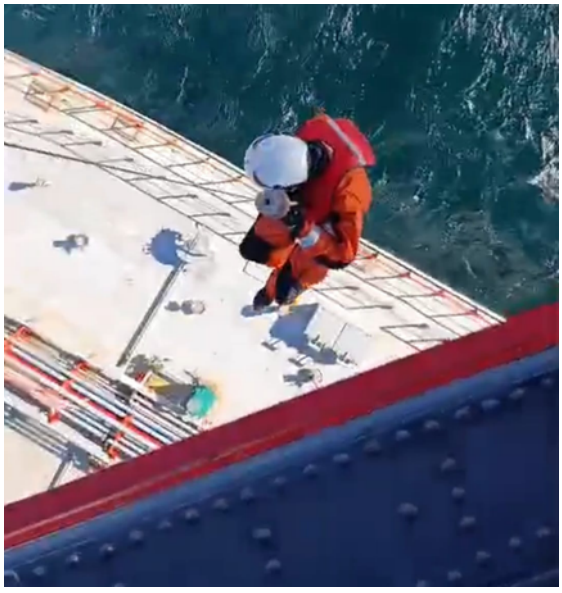


1. 14 October 2026 – Yara J: Commercial vessel struck by a drone and caught fire in Romanian territorial waters, approximately 9 nautical miles from Sulina.
2. 13 November 2026 – Larissa 1: Palau-flagged commercial vessel struck by a drone in Romanian territorial waters, approximately 6.8 nautical miles northeast of Sfântu Gheorghe.
3. 14 November 2026 – Evia Petrol V: Greek-flagged oil and chemical tanker struck by a drone at approximately 21:10, around 4 nautical miles east-southeast of Sulina, in Romanian territorial waters.
4. 14 November 2026 – Marsol: Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged bulk carrier struck by a drone at approximately 21:45, around 5 nautical miles southeast of the Sulina Canal, in Romanian territorial waters.
5. 14 November 2026 – Ali Najafov: Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged oil tanker struck by a drone near the Sulina Canal, approximately 4 nautical miles southeast of the canal, at approximately 23.45.

Source: New Strategy Center, Snazzy maps

Images from the Wine Trader rescue operation conducted by the Department for Emergency Situations





Source: Romanian Ministry of Interior, the Department for Emergency Situations

Period	Attacks Near the Border	Aircraft Scrambled	Unauthorized Airspace Incursions	Drones Shot Down	Drones/Fragments Identified, Recovered or Neutralized	Naval Mines Neutralized, Found Adrift in the EEZ or Washed Ashore
Since the Beginning of the War	185	131	58	6	81	9
2026	118	96	39	6	44	2
2025	28	21	9	0	16	1
2024	26	12	7	0	14	1
2023	12	2	2	0	6	1
2022	1	0	1	0	1	4

Source: Romanian Ministry of Defence

End notes

1. DW, Maria Theresheva, Black Sea drone strikes put key global trade route at risk, 11/09/2026, accessed from https://www.dw.com/en/black-sea-drone-strikes-put-key-global-trade-route-at-risk/svideo-79875350, on November 18th, 2026
2. MarketScreener, How NATO states on the Black Sea are being drawn into Ukraine war escalation, November 15th, 2026, accessed from https://www.marketscreener.com/news/how-nato-states-on-the-black-sea-are-being-drawn-into-ukraine-war-escalation-ce785ededc8ef72d, on November 18th, 2026
3. Bursa, Octavian Dan, Marea Neagră - transformată într-un câmp de luptă pentru navele comerciale, November 19, 2026, accessed from https://www.bursa.ro/marea-neagra-transformata-intr-un-camp-de-lupta-pentru-navele-comerciale-43890167, on 21 November 2026, citing reuters
4. DW, Alexander Detev, Attack off Cape Kaliakra: ship hit by naval drones, October 28th , 2026, accessed from https://amp.dw.com/bg/nova-ataka-kraj-nos-kaliakra-v-cerno-more-korab-e-bil-udaren-s-morski-dronove/a-79785891?utm, on November 18, 2026
5. GeoInsider, accesat de pe https://x.com/InsiderGeo/status/2122083663970030019?s=08, la data de November 18. 2026, https://www.maritime.bg/158517/
6. DW, Alexander Detev, Attack off Cape Kaliakra: ship hit by naval drones, October 28, 2026, accessed from https://www.dw.com/bg/nova-ataka-kraj-nos-kaliakra-v-cerno-more-korab-e-bil-udaren-s-morski-dronove/a-79785891, on November 18, 2026
7. DW, Alexander Detev, Attack off Cape Kaliakra: ship hit by naval drones, October 28, 2026, accessed from https://www.dw.com/bg/nova-ataka-kraj-nos-kaliakra-v-cerno-more-korab-e-bil-udaren-s-morski-dronove/a-79785891, on November 18, 2026
8. Dylan Malyasov, Drones have hit 15 ships in NATO's Black Sea waters since October, November 17, 2026, accessed from https://defence-blog.com/drones-have-hit-15-ships-in-natos-black-sea-waters-since-october/?fbclid=IwY2xjawVtcHtleHRuA2FlbQIxMABwZG9mAXNydGMGYXBwX2lkEDIyMjAzOTE3ODgyMDA4OTIAAR9emPz3xqzytihpu0rukV9Uc58y5Jt5k21aILJp-qWgbrxuZEZw6Ziu6YeCOw_aem_xuJfMBbXBb3c4YqwOYAt9Q, on November 18, 2026
9. Reuters, LPG tanker that sank off Bulgaria on Tuesday was hit by projectiles, official says, November 18, 202612:34 PM GMT+2Updated November 18, 2026 accesedfrom on November 19, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/lpg-tanker-that-sank-off-bulgaria-tuesday-was-hit-by-projectiles-official-says-2026-11-18/?utm and LPG tanker reported to have sunk off Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, November 17, 2026, accessed from https://www.reuters.com/world/lpg-tanker-sends-distress-signal-off-bulgarias-black-sea-coast-maritime-security-2026-11-17/?utm, on November 19, 2026
10. Amprenta, Nicușor Dan confirmă că drone aeriene au lovit cele două nave care au luat foc în apropiere de Sulina, dated October 15th, 2026, accessed from https://ziarulamprenta.ro/stirile-zilei/video-nicusor-dan-confirma-ca-drone-aeriene-au-lovit-cele-doua-nave-care-au-luat-foc-in-apropiere-de-sulina/594369/, on November 19, 2026
11. Mediafax, Radu Mocanu, Premierul Luca Niculescu condamnă atacul asupra navei din Marea Neagră O încălcare flagrantă a dreptului international, October 23rd, 2026, accessed from https://www.mediafax.ro/stirile-zilei/premierul-luca-niculescu-condamna-atacul-asupra-navei-din-marea-neagra-o-incalcare-flagranta-a-dreptului-international-23830597, on November 19th, 2026

12. Radio România Actualitați, Adina Sîrbu, MApN: Nave atacate cu drone în apropiere de Sulina, November 14th, 2026, accessed from https://www.radioconstanta.ro/2026/11/14/mapn-nave-atacate-cu-drone-in-apropiere-de-sulina-video/, on November 20th, 2026
13. ICWWM, Black Sea Ship Strikes: 15 Merchant Vessels Hit Off Romania and Bulgaria Since 5 October, in One Table. The rhythm: one ship every three days, November 17, 2026, accessed from https://icwwm.com/black-sea-ship-strikes-15-ships-ledger/
14. Dylan Malyasov, Drones have hit 15 ships in NATO's Black Sea waters since October, November 17 2026 accessed from https://defence-blog.com/drones-have-hit-15-ships-in-natos-black-sea-waters-since-october/?, on 19 November, 2026
15. UNCLOS, Article 2 Legal status of the territorial sea, of the air space over the territorial sea and of its bed and subsoil, accessed from https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf, on November 18, 2026
16. Yordan Bozhilov, Chairman of the Sofia Security Forum, How many more ships need to be sunk before we can begin to defend the Black Sea?, November 17th, 2026, accessed from https://www.mediapool.bg/analizi-i-komentari/kolko-oshte-koraba-tryabva-da-potanat-za-da-zapochnem-da-zashtitavame-cherno-more/, on November 18th, 2026
17. Nikita Khaindrava, Hromadske, Drone strikes Turkish-owned cargo ship off Romania, killing at least one crew member, 05 October, 2026, accessed from https://hromadske.ua/en/amp/war/272030-drone-strikes-turkish-owned-cargo-ship-off-romania-killing-at-least-one-crew-member?, and EUROPE / FOREIGN DRONE EVENTS, Fatal drone attack reported on grain ship Royad Mammadov off Romania, accessed from https://droneincidents.eu/events/2026-10-05-drone-attack-royad-mammadov-ship-romania/?
18. On November 22nd, 2026, In Marine Traffic data base , is specified same geografical position from 48 days and 5 hours, accessed from https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:301282/mmsi:341609002/imo:9356969/vessel:ROYAD%20MAMMADOV
19. Reuters, Cit,Op, 17 November
20. Some sources suggest that the attack may have occurred precisely on the limit between territorial waters and its contiguous zone.
21. Reuters, Cit,Op, 17 November and NRB, Black Sea ship strikes, accessed from https://nrb.bg/en/dashboard/blacksea-strikes/ on 22nd November 2026
22. Reuters, op. Cit. an NRB, op.cit
23. Gary Howard, SeatradeMaritime News, Black Sea drone strikes hit four ships near Romanian coast, November 16, 2026, accessed from https://www.seatrade-maritime.com/security/black-sea-drone-strikes-hit-four-ships-near-romanian-coast?, and NRB, op.cit. Black Sea…. on 21st November, 2026
24. Reuters, 17 Nov op.cit., Seatrade Maritime 16 Nov op.cit.
25. Reuters, 17 Nov op.cit., Seatrade Maritime 16 Nov op.cit.
26. https://www.vesseltracker.com/en/Ships/Ali-Najafov-9175195.html, ALI NAJAFOV, "The tanker was anchored in pos. 45° 06' N 029° 49' E."Mon Nov 16 23:23:59 CET 2026
27. The Insider, Drones attack three commercial vessels off the coast of Romania, all bound for Moldova, November 16th, 2026, accessed from https://theins.press/en/news/299656, on November 18th, 2026
28. https://lege5.ro/gratuit/g42diobv/articolul-51-actiunea-in-caz-de-amenintari-impotriva-pacii-de-incalcari-ale-pacii-si-de-acte-de-agresiune-carta?dp=haztkobrhe3q
29. Edmarverson A. Santos, INTERNATIONAL LAW · DIPLOMACY - GLOBAL AFFAIRS, October 6th, 2026, Drone Attacks on Merchant Ships in Bulgaria's Black Sea EEZ: What International Law Says, accessed from https://www.diplomacyandlaw.com/post/drone-attacks-on-merchant-ships-in-bulgaria-black-sea-eez, on November 21st , 2026

30. Roles and Responsibilities Within NATO's Chain of Command. Since 2012, MARCOM (Northwood) has served as the operational hub for all NATO maritime operations and commands the Alliance's Standing Naval Forces, including frigate groups and mine countermeasures groups. It hosts the NATO Shipping Centre, which serves as the interface between NATO and the commercial shipping industry. MARCOM develops the Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP), which is essential when threats target civilian vessels. JFC Naples is the operational command responsible for NATO's southern flank, including the Black Sea. Together with the Romanian Naval Forces and US Naval Forces Europe (US NAVEUR), it organised the Black Sea Maritime Forum in Bucharest in 2022 and coordinates Neptune Strike activities, which included operations over the Black Sea for the first time in 2025. The North Atlantic Council's decision of 20 October resulted in the deployment of maritime patrol aircraft, radar systems, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams, intelligence personnel, and unmanned systems to the region. France temporarily redeployed an Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft to Romania, while on 16 November, a US RC-135U reconnaissance aircraft flew over the Black Sea alongside a NATO E-3A airborne early-warning and control aircraft. The main limitation of these capabilities is their rotational and temporary nature: they do not constitute a permanent mission, while Romania and Bulgaria continue to request additional maritime patrol aircraft and counter-drone capabilities.
31. https://mc.nato.int/missions
32. Ministry of National Defence, Information and Public Relations Directorate, Press release No. 65 from April 06th , 2026. JFC Naples Commander, at the MoND Headquarters, accessed from https://english.mapn.ro/cpresa/6739_JFC-Naples-Commander%2C-at-the-MoND-Headquarters?, on November 19th, , 2026
33. NATO, NATO launches 'Baltic Sentry' to increase critical infrastructure security, January 14th, 2025, accessed from https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2025/01/14/nato-launches-baltic-sentry-to-increase-critical-infrastructure-security?, on November 18th , 2026
34. SHAPE, Eastern Sentry, accessed from https://shape.nato.int/operations/operations-and-missions/eastern-sentry & MOD, Press Release No. 75 of 12 September 2026, NATO Launches Operation Eastern Sentry to Strengthen Defence on the Eastern Flank, accessed from https://www.defense.ro/nato-lanseaza-operatia-eastern-sentry-pentru-intarirea-apararii-pe-flancul-estic, on November 21st, 2026.
35. SHAPE, Arctic Sentry, accessed from https://shape.nato.int/operations/operations-and-missions/arctic-sentry, on and AGERPRES, NATO a lansat misiunea 'Arctic Sentry' pentru a-și consolida prezența în Arctica, February 11 2026, accessed from https://agerpres.ro/politic-extern/2026/02/11/nato-a-lansat-misiunea-arctic-sentry-pentru-a-si-consolida-prezenta-in-arctica--1527242, on November 21st, 2026
36. Ministry of National Defence, Press release No. 138, 08.07.2026, Romania, Bulgaria and Türkiye expand the MCM Black Sea TG Missions, accessed from https://english.mapn.ro/cpresa/6813_romania%2C-bulgaria-and-turkiye-expand-the-mcm-black-sea-tg-missions, on November 21st, 2026
37. OMV, Neptun Deep advances towards first gas, expected in the first half of 2027, September 28th, 2026, accessed from https://www.omv.com/en/investors/news-and-events/news/2026/neptun-deep-advances-towards-first-gas?, and Neptun Deep - A stronger Romania. With energy from the Black Sea, on November 19th , 2026
38. Forbes, Slovacia își arată interesul pentru gazele din proiectul românesc Neptun Deep, March 27th, 2026, accessed from https://www.forbes.ro/slovacia-isi-arata-interesul-pentru-gazele-din-proiectul-romanesc-neptun-deep-494061, on November 21st, 2026

39. Financial Intelligence, Ancuţa-Carolina Stanciu, 21 noiembrie 2026, Ungaria vrea să cumpere gaze din Neptun Deep pentru a înlocui importurile din Rusia; ministrul Energiei anunță discuții cu România, accessed from https://financialintelligence.ro/ungaria-vrea-sa-cumpere-gaze-din-neptun-deep-pentru-a-inlocui-importurile-din-rusia-ministrul-energiei-anunta-discutii-cu-romania/, on November 21st, 2026
40. HotNews, O parte din gazele din Marea Neagră vor ajunge în Germania. Un acord pe 5 ani a fost deja încheiat – Reuters, https://hotnews.ro/o-parte-din-gazele-din-marea-neagra-vor-ajunge-in-germania-un-acord-pe-5-ani-a-fost-deja-incheiat-reuters-1875976
41. Balkan Energy, Turkey's total Black Sea gas output reached 6.7 billion cubic meters, August 24, 2026, www.portal.balkanenergy.com, accessed from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/turkeys-total-black-sea-gas-output-reached-67-billion-cubic-0b0uf/, Republc of Turkiye Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Oil Production Increased by 26 Percent, Natural Gas Production Increased by 39 Percent, accessed from https://enerji.gov.tr/news-detail?id=31701, on November 21st, 2026
42. DW, Mina Kirkova, Black Sea security: Is Bulgaria the weak link?, October 08th 2026, accessed from https://amp.dw.com/en/security-in-the-black-sea-region-is-bulgaria-the-weak-link-in-europes-defense-against-threats-from-russia/a-79592663?, on November 18, 2026
43. TVRInfo, Șeful Armatei Române, generalul Gheorghiță Vlad, avertizează că o zonă a României nu este acoperită de Articolul 5 al NATO. „Există riscul să apară interferențe", Jan 15th, 2026, accessed from https://tvrinfo.ro/seful-armatei-romane-generalul-gheorghita-vlad-avertizeaza-ca-o-zona-a-romaniei-nu-este-acoperita-de-articolul-5-al-nato-exista-riscul-sa-apara-interferente/ on November 18, 2026
44. EEAS, EU strategic approach to the Black Sea region accessed from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-strategic-approach-black-sea-region_en and Emilia Milcheva EUalive November 17, 2026, Two centres, one Black Sea hub. Who will take the decisions?, accessed from https://eualive.net/two-centres-one-black-sea-hub-who-will-take-the-decisions/
45. Yordan Bozhilov, Chairman of the Sofia Security Forum, How many more ships need to be sunk before we can begin to defend the Black Sea?, op.cit
46. AGERPRES, Romanian Naval Forces divers destroy two drones found drifting in the Black Sea, accessed from https://agerpres.ro/english/2026/08/11/romanian-naval-forces-divers-destroy-two-drones-found-drifting-in-the-black-sea--1584137, on , on 21st November 2026
47. Ministry of Defence press release, Nr. 236/11.08.2026 , accessed from https://www.mapn.ro/cpresa/19344_informa%C8%9Bie-de-presa, on 21st November 2026
48. Ministry of Defence press release, Nr, 252 din 20.08.2026 accessed from https://www.mapn.ro/cpresa/19360_informa%C8%9Bie-de-presa on 21st November 2026
49. AGERPRES, UPDATE Radu Miruță: Dronă marină distrusă în zona platformei Neptun Deep, 20-08-2026, accessed from https://agerpres.ro/news-alert/2026/08/20/radu-miruta-drona-marina-distrusa-in-zona-platformei-neptun-deep--1586420, on 21st November 2026
50. https://www.navy.ro/media/revista_mr/numere/rmr242.pdf?, and https://www.senat.ro/PAGINI/Buget/2026/Lege%20plafoane%202026/SFB%202026-2028.pdf?

51. Defense Romania, Ciprian Dumitrache, Avem informații noi: Se vor integra inclusiv sisteme antidronă Gokdeniz pe corveta August Roman. Ar putea România opta pentru o a doua navă Hisar din Turcia?, 17 OCTOMBRIE 2026, accessed from https://www.defenseromania.ro/corveta-august-roman-va-primi-inclusiv-sisteme-antidrona-gokdeniz-ar-putea-lua-romania-si-o-a-doua-nava-din-clasa-hisar_651057.html?, on 21st November 2026 and Corveta „Contraamiral August Roman" - 261 a intrat în serviciul Forțelor Navale Române, accessed from https://www.mapn.ro/cpresa/19287_corveta-%E2%80%9Econtraamiral-august-roman%E2%80%9D---261-a-intrat-in-serviciul-for%C8%9Belor-navale-romane?
52. https://www.mapn.ro/programul_safe/index.php, and List of SAFE projects that have received prior approval from the Romanian Parliament, and AGERPRES, Lista cu achiziții de armament prin programul SAFE: elicoptere, rachete, transportoare blindate, sisteme antiaeriene, drone, https://agerpres.ro/justitie/2026/01/26/lista-cu-achizitii-de-armament-prin-programul-safe-elicoptere-rachete-transportoare-blindate-sisteme--1522160
53. Newsweek, Stelian Negrea, România pune rachete de 500.000.000€ pe coasta Mării Negre. Gazele, energia și frontiera NATO, apărate, accessed from https://newsweek.ro/politica/marea-neagra-devine-fortareata-romania-aduce-rachete-nsm-pentru-gaze-eolian-offshore-si-securitatea-nato?, on November 21st, 2026, and navy.ro, op.cit. Corveta „Contraamiral August Roman" – 261 a intrat în serviciul Forțelor Navale Române
54. DIGI24, Rheinmetall a achitat integral prețul pentru Șantierul Naval Mangalia. Ce mai lipsește pentru finalizarea tranzacției, accessed from https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/rheinmetall-a-achitat-integral-pretul-pentru-santierul-naval-mangalia-ce-mai-lipseste-pentru-finalizarea-tranzactiei-4029301?, on November 21st, 2026, and ZF24, Roxana Rosu, Grupul Rheinmetall a achitat luni integral, prin intermediul Rheinmetall Real Estate România SRL, suma de 138 milioane euro, fără TVA, pentru achiziţia Şantierului Naval Mangalia , accessed from https://www.zf.ro/zf-24/grupul-rheinmetall-a-achitat-luni-integral-prin-intermediul-rheinmetall-real-estate-romania-srl-suma-de-138-milioane-euro-fara-tva-pentru-achizitia-santierului-naval-mangalia-23278627?, on 22nd November 2026
55. Ministers Of Defence of Türkiye, Romania and Bulgaria Has Signed the "Black Sea Mine Countermeasure Task Group" in İstanbul, accessed from https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/b7810cfbf7ea40edb0423cd8cc0b1597, and International Crisis Group, The EU and Türkiye: Uniting in Defence?, accessed from https://www.crisisgroup.org/brf/europe/european-union-turkiye/b99-eu-and-turkiye-uniting-defence, and Hurriyet Daily News, Türkiye to continue its active role in Black Sea security, accessed from https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkiye-to-continue-its-active-role-in-black-sea-security-220576
56. Thomas de Waal, Carnegie Europe, Managing Montreux: Turkey and the Russia-Ukraine War in the Black Sea, July 1st, 2026, accessed from https://ns1.ceip.org/europe/research/2026/07/managing-montreux-turkey-and-the-russia-ukraine-war-in-the-black-sea?, and Dimitar Bechev, How NATO Became Anchored in the Black Sea, July 14th, 2026, on November 18th, 2026

57. Montreux Convention, July 20th , 1936, accessed from https://nordicmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Montreux_Convention.pdf?, on November 19th, 2026
58. The Rize project was publicly announced by the AKP provincial chairman in Rize, rather than by the Turkish Ministry of National Defence; the wording below reflects the fact that the project has not yet been officially confirmed.
59. Will Xavier, BAIRD, Turkish Navy unveils plans for new base on Black Sea coast, 19 November 2026, accessed from https://www.bairdmaritime.com/security/naval/turkey-plans-rize-naval-base, on November 19, 2026
60. Euronews, ALEXANDER KAZAKOV/AFP, Abkhasia's leader says he has agreed to allow Moscow to set up a naval base in the Black Sea port of Novorossysk after a series of Ukrainian attacks on Russia's fleet in Sevastopol., 5 October 2023, accessed from https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/05/russia-strikes-deal-to-build-new-black-sea-naval-base-in-breakaway-abkhazia-region, on 21st November 2026
61. ALEXANDER KAZAKOV/AFP, By Euronews with Agencies, Russia strikes deal to build new Black Sea naval base in breakaway Abkhazia region, 5 October 2023, accessed from https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/05/russia-strikes-deal-to-build-new-black-sea-naval-base-in-breakaway-abkhazia-region, on November 20th, 2026
62. Nefes, Marina a ales o provincie pentru noua sa bază militară masivă din Marea Neagră. Oamenii din acea provincie vor locui acolo. November 18th, 2026, accessed from https://www.nefes.com.tr/deniz-kuvvetleri-karadenizde-devasa-yeni-askeri-us-icin-il-secti-o-ildekiler-yasayacak-165260, on November 21st, 2026
63. Istoria Comandamentului Zonei Mării de Nord, accessed from https://www.dzkk.tsk.tr/ArsivAskeriTarih/icerik/kuzey-deniz-saha-komutanligi-tarihces i on November 20th, 2026
64. United States Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service, North Africa Shifts Toward Black Sea Supplies for Wheat Imports. Wheat Exports to North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco). Accessed from https://apps.fas.usda.gov/PSDOnline/Circulars/2025/07/Grain.pdf?, on 21st November 2026
65. Daria Ulybina and Cordula Rastogi, WORLD BANK BLOGS, Global wheat shipments withstood the shock of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, February 22, 2024, accessed from https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/trade/global-wheat-shipments-withstood-shock-russias-invasion-ukraine?
66. European Council, Ukrainian grain exports explained, accessed from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/ukrainian-grain-exports-explained/?on 21st November 2026
67. https://apps.fas.usda.gov/PSDOnline/Circulars/2025/07/Grain.pdf?, OECD, Report, Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation 2025. Making the Most of the Trade and Environment Nexus in Agriculture, accessed on https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/agricultural-policy-monitoring-and-evaluation-2025_a80ac398-en/full-report/ukraine_0e71d61e.html?, and https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/trade/global-wheat-shipments-withstood-shock-russias-invasion-ukraine?
68. European Council, Supporting Ukraine's trade, accessed from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ukraine-solidarity-supporting-ukraine-trade/?, and Ukrainian grain exports explained, and https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/trade/global-wheat-shipments-withstood-shock-russias-invasion-ukraine?, on 21st November 2026

69. AP News, For a second day running, a merchant ship sinks off Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, November 17 2026, accessed from , https://apnews.com/article/bulgaria-romania-black-sea-gas-tanker-gas-husky-3265b6f9e84eb28b349dceb3223fd37f, on November 19, 2026

70. Pavela Kostova, Svobodna Tochka, The drone effect. How attacks in the Black Sea are making imports and exports more expensive, and workers are already being laid off, November 19, 2026, accessed from https://svobodnatochka.bg/, on November 19th, 2026

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Carnegie Europe, «Managing Montreux», iulie 2026: https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/research/2026/07/managing-montreux-turkey-and-the-russia-ukraine-war-in-the-black-sea
2. Daily Sabah; Sakarya / Osman Gazi): https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkiye-committed-to-montreaux-convention-amid-nato-debate/news ; https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkiye-marks-new-step-in-domestic-energy-with-osman-gazi-platform
3. Diplomacy and Law (statutul juridic al ZEE): https://www.diplomacyandlaw.com/post/drone-attacks-on-merchant-ships-in-bulgaria-black-sea-eez
4. DW, Emilia Milcheva, Why is Romania destroying naval drones, but Bulgaria is not?, November 18, 2026. accessed from https://www.dw.com/bg/zaso-rumnia-unisozava-morski-dronove-a-blgaria-ne/a-79976997, on November 18, 2026
5. Euromaidan Press (Betul 8, ISW): https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/11/17/grain-carrier-betul-8-capsizes-off-bulgaria-with-wheat-for-egypt-likely-hit-by-russian-sea-drones-isw-says/
6. Euromaidan Press (propunerea de comandament NATO): https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/10/16/romania-finally-holds-russia-responsible-for-the-drone-attacks-on-ships-off-its-coast-and-wants-a-joint-nato-command-for-the-black-sea/
7. EUROMAIDAN, Alya Shandra, Romania finally holds Russia responsible for the drone attacks on ships off its coast, and wants a joint NATO command for the Black Sea, October 16th, 2026, accessed from https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/10/16/romania-finally-holds-russia-responsible-for-the-drone-attacks-on-ships-off-its-coast-and-wants-a-joint-nato-command-for-the-black-sea/, on November 18th, 2026
8. Euronews, atacul asupra Contship Jet: https://www.euronews.com/2026/11/02/watch-unseen-images-of-drone-sinking-greek-tanker-off-bulgarian-coast
9. Floating Energy Castle of the Black Sea, Osman Gazi, Türkiye's first floating production platform, which will double the domestic natural gas production in the Black Sea, was sent off to the Black Sea from Zonguldak Filyos., https://enerji.gov.tr/news-detail?id=31948&utm_
10. https://defence-blog.com/drones-have-hit-15-ships-in-natos-black-sea-waters-since-october/
11. https://www.portofconstantza.com/pn/ro/home
12. Ion TIȚA-CĂLIN, Mangalia News, 26 iunie 2026, Portul Constanța – investiții strategice în sprijinul agriculturii românești, accessed from https://www.mangalianews.ro/2026/06/29/portul-constanta-investitii-strategice-in-sprijinul-agriculturii-romanesti-ion-tita-calin/, on 21st November 2026

13. Kyiv Independent (NAC decision): https://kyivindependent.com/nato-to-bolster-black-sea-presence-with-patrol-aircraft-drones-after-attacks-on-commercial-ships/
14. LegisRo, Monitorul Oficial nr. 462 din 19 mai 2025, Legea 73 din 19.05.2025 privind controlul utilizării spațiului aerian national
15. Marine Insight and VesselTracker (Alfa Watan, Able): https://www.marineinsight.com/two-commercial-ships-hit-by-drones-in-bulgarias-eez-one-sinks-and-crew-remains-missing/
16. NATO, maritime activities (MARCOM): https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/70759.htm
17. Offshore Engineer (Neptun Deep): https://www.oedigital.com/amp/news/538741-romanian-neptun-deep-black-sea-gas-project-begins-to-lay-pipeline
18. Pavela Kostova, Svobodna Tochka, The drone effect. How attacks in the Black Sea are making imports and exports more expensive, and workers are already being laid off, November 19, 2026, accessed from https://svobodnatochka.bg/, on November 19th, 2026
19. prosperaimpact, Statistics, Crop output volumes fell from 2021 to 2024, accessed from https://agrifinatlas.com/romania/statistics/, on 21st November 2026
20. Reuters, «How NATO states on the Black Sea are being drawn into Ukraine war escalation», 15–17 nov. 2026: https://www.marketscreener.com/news/how-nato-states-on-the-black-sea-are-being-drawn-into-ukraine-war-escalation-ce785ededc8ef72d
21. Romania Insider (Black Sea Sentry; Neptun Deep și garanțiile NATO): https://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-defense-minister-calls-nato-black-sea-mission-2026
22. Romania Insider (Yara J, Wine Trader): https://www.romania-insider.com/society/two-vessels-reportedly-hit-drones-near-romanian-territorial
23. Seatrade Maritime, Gas Husky și Betul 8: https://www.seatrade-maritime.com/security/seafarers-injured-as-two-vessels-struck-in-black-sea-off-bulgaria
24. Sofia Globe (13 oct.): https://sofiaglobe.com/2026/10/13/new-drone-attacks-on-ships-in-bulgarias-black-sea-eez-one-sunk/
25. The Insider, «Drones attack three commercial vessels off the coast of Romania, all bound for Moldova», 16 nov. 2026: https://theins.press/en/news/299656

Follow us on social media:

 NSC_Romania

 New Strategy Center - NSC

 office@newstrategycenter.ro

 https://newstrategycenter.ro/en/home/

 New Strategy Center

NEW
STRATEGY
CENTER