

As NATO and Ukraine's war against Russia escalates, drone attacks on ships in the Black Sea increase

Bar?? Demir
6 August 2026

On Monday, the Ro-Ro vessel *Nadezhda*, owned by a Turkish company, and another Turkish civilian merchant ship, the *Ya?ar*, came under attack off the Russian port of Novorossiysk.

The *Nadezhda*, which was reportedly carrying fresh fruit and vegetables from Russia to Türkiye, had a crew of 22, 13 of them Turkish citizens. The crew was evacuated to the port of Novorossiysk. A number of the seafarers were wounded, three of them seriously. The ship's captain, Yalç?n ?ahin, said that the attack had been carried out by Ukraine and that six or seven drones had been used.

On July 22, the *Reyhan Sar?*, which had left the Russian port of Taman with a cargo of coal, was struck in international waters. Two of the 22 Turkish crew members on board were wounded, and Sava? Çakar, who was working in the engine room, was killed.

Carried out with NATO's backing and intelligence, Ukraine's attacks—both deep inside Russia and in international waters—are aimed at civilian and economic infrastructure, such as ports, ships and refineries. Maritime trade in the Black Sea has become one of the central targets of the latest escalation, drawing in third parties, above all Türkiye.

Russia, for its part, is responding to the Ukrainian attacks by striking the ports of Odessa and Nikolayev (Mykolaiv) and Ukrainian vessels in the Black Sea. On August 3, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had hit two dry cargo ships in the Black Sea, which it claimed were carrying supplies for the Ukrainian army, as well as two further ships that were unloading cargo at the port of Nikolayev. These attacks are severely disrupting maritime trade.

According to *Sputnik*, the governor of the National

Bank of Ukraine, Andriy Pyshnyi, wrote on Facebook: “The restrictions on maritime logistics are being felt very acutely, above all by enterprises in the real economy. As a result, exports of goods are being seriously delayed or temporarily suspended.”

Following the intensifying attacks in the Black Sea, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement expressing “deep concern” that the war between Russia and Ukraine “is spreading further into the Black Sea, also affecting civilian vessels, despite all our warnings.”

The ministry added: “We therefore reiterate our call to all relevant actors, particularly the warring parties, to urgently implement concrete measures to ensure the safety of navigation in the Black Sea.”

The response of the regime of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the Ukrainian attacks on Turkish ships and Turkish seafarers has been to look the other way. This silence is part of Ankara's ever-deeper integration into NATO's war against Russia.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ankara pursued a balancing policy, maintaining its commercial and political ties with both countries. This policy guaranteed the flow of critical oil and natural gas from Russia to Türkiye and shielded Turkish economic activity, above all, exports and tourism, from serious damage. Joining the sanctions against Russia would have dealt a heavy blow to an already unstable, crisis-ridden Turkish economy. At the same time, Ankara developed its defense and military cooperation with Ukraine. However, the renewed escalation of the war against Russia, driven above all by the European NATO powers, is cutting the ground from under this policy and compelling Türkiye to take sides openly.

Ukraine and Russia are Türkiye's Black Sea neighbors to the north, while Iran, which is under US-Israeli attack, lies on the country's eastern border. As Ukraine's attack on an Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea demonstrated, these fronts have the potential to merge—and Türkiye stands at the point where they intersect.

The Erdoğan government's answer to this is to tighten its bonds with its US and European imperialist allies and to seek a more active role for itself. At last month's NATO summit in Ankara, Erdoğan presented himself not merely as the host but as the leader of the largest land army in European NATO and of a rapidly expanding arms industry. He underlined the indispensable role of the Turkish military in the war agenda of the United States, NATO and the European Union. Since the summit, Ankara has begun to demonstrate its determination to take up this role through its readiness to form part of the growing military build-up stretching from the Red Sea to the Baltic.

As part of the escalation of NATO's war against Russia, a "Coalition of the Willing" has been assembled under the leadership of Britain and France, while the European powers prepare for direct war by rearming and moving to reintroduce conscription. Ankara has made it possible for the "Coalition of the Willing" to establish a naval headquarters in Istanbul directed against Russia.

From August to November, Türkiye has deployed five F-16 fighter jets and 76 personnel to the Ämari Air Base in Estonia. The unit, drawn from the 181st Squadron of the 8th Main Jet Base Command in Diyarbakır, will carry out NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission. Commenting on this deployment, which is directed against Russia, the Defense Ministry stated on X: "The Turkish Air Force continues its powerful contribution to the protection of NATO airspace and to the resolve for common defense."

In the meantime, the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran is in its sixth month and turning into a conflagration that is drawing in the entire region. Last week, the United States and Saudi Arabia carried out joint air strikes in Iraq against the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi), which have been formally integrated into the state security forces.

In Yemen, meanwhile, the Houthis, who hold the

capital and the country's main port cities, declared a blockade of the Red Sea against Saudi Arabia, following attacks on Sanaa International Airport on July 20. Having shifted its oil exports to the Red Sea after the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Riyadh proposed a "Multinational Maritime Defense Alliance" on July 28, at a meeting attended by 43 of the 51 states invited. Fourteen states, among them Türkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan and Djibouti, announced their support for this proposed coalition, which is to be headquartered in Riyadh.

Despite its anxieties over the possible consequences of the spread of the war against its eastern neighbor, Türkiye is also showing its willingness to play an active role in the US war against Iran and its allies. Depicting the assault on Iran as an "Israeli war," Erdoğan has pointedly refrained from condemning his "friend" Trump and the United States. Instead, Ankara has condemned Iran for exercising its right to self-defense. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan claimed that the first wave of strikes, which wiped out part of Iran's leadership including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had created an "opportunity," and advised the Iranian regime to surrender without resistance.

The Erdoğan government has previously intervened in Syria, Libya and in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and has extended its military reach into Africa. Now Türkiye is preparing to join a naval coalition in the Red Sea, while establishing its presence in the Baltic and the Black Sea as a component of NATO. These are the reactionary responses of a regional power to the deepening imperialist war. The only way forward lies in building an international, socialist anti-war movement in the working class, directed against imperialism and all of its defenders.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact