

NATO deploys additional forces to the Black Sea as war against Russia escalates

Ula? Sevinç
22 October 2026

NATO announced on Tuesday that it will send additional forces to the Black Sea, citing mounting military attacks on commercial shipping. This move marks a dangerous escalation of NATO's war against Russia over Ukraine.

The announcement followed a meeting on the Black Sea in Brussels of the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal political decision-making body. US Army Col. Martin O'Donnell, a NATO military spokesperson, said, "Allies have or will send additional maritime patrol aircraft, radar systems, explosive exploitation teams, intelligence personnel, drones, and more to the Black Sea."

NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said, "NATO has already strengthened our posture along the eastern flank, including with counter-drone capabilities. We will continue to stand united and ensure that we are ready and able to address any threat and to keep our one billion people safe."

On Tuesday, Bulgaria confirmed that a US P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft had begun patrolling the Black Sea. France reportedly sent a maritime reconnaissance aircraft to Romania on October 18.

NATO's escalatory moves came in response to demands from Romania and Bulgaria, the two members of the alliance on the western coast of the Black Sea. On October 6, two commercial vessels were struck by naval and aerial drones in Bulgaria's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), roughly 70 nautical miles east of the coast at Byala. It was the first recorded attack in Bulgaria's economic zone. The Togo-flagged *Alfa Watan* sank and 10 sailors remain unaccounted for.

On October 14, the Comoros-flagged tanker *Yara J* was hit by a drone attack in Romanian territorial waters near Sulina. On October 17, Romania claimed that its F-16s had shot down two drones that had entered its

territorial waters. According to *The Maritime Executive*, at least eight attacks on commercial vessels have been recorded in the western Black Sea this month, excluding attacks on Ukrainian ports: four off the Romanian coast and four in Bulgaria's EEZ, with between 23 and 27 sailors reported dead or missing.

Bulgaria, Romania and NATO have not been able to establish that Russia is responsible for these attacks. Bulgarian Prime Minister Rumen Radev said that "There is no logic in Ukraine attacking its own ships and crews, given that the outcome of all these attacks favors Russia — and indeed, the logic points in that direction," adding, "The problem is that we cannot prove it."

There is a very clear logic pointing to Ukraine possibly carrying out such attacks: as the latest decision to reinforce the Black Sea shows, such provocations are accelerating NATO's preparations for direct war with Russia.

Last week, Romanian defense analyst Radu Tudor told the AP, "It's a matter of discussion whether the exclusive economic zone is included in the Article 5-type reaction or not," and demanded more aggressive steps from NATO: "Tens of incidents are happening and Russia is getting closer to NATO borders... Words are not enough."

Proposals for NATO forces to provide military escorts for commercial ships in the Black Sea threaten a direct clash between NATO and Russia. An unnamed source speaking to the AP stated that "they have heard Türkiye 'would like to summon all the riparian (Black Sea) states to plan a mission to escort these convoys' through a militarized safe corridor." There has been no official statement on the matter.

In July, the Romanian Defense Ministry announced that Romania, Bulgaria and Türkiye had expanded the

“Black Sea Mine Countermeasures Task Force naval pact,” to include a permanent naval presence in Romania’s EEZ. Romania has recently proposed the establishment of a joint military command among the three NATO members bordering the Black Sea.

NATO’s Black Sea deployment comes as the European NATO powers reaffirm their commitment to full political, military and financial support for Ukraine in the war against Russia. This includes Ukrainian military strikes deep inside the country and plans to blockade Russia’s Baltic coast, including the strategic territory of Kaliningrad.

Last Saturday, Ukraine attacked St. Petersburg with more than a thousand drones. NATO threats against Kaliningrad in early October prompted Russia to warn that it would respond with all means, including nuclear weapons.

The Black Sea, through which roughly a quarter of the world’s wheat trade flows has become a battlefield, particularly this year with the targeting of merchant vessels, disrupting that trade and driving up global wheat prices. According to data from Türkiye’s Chamber of Shipping (IMEAK), 226 civilian and commercial vessels have been affected by attacks in the Black Sea since the war erupted in February 2022, 163 of them in the first eight months of this year.

As reported by *CBC News*, Ambrey, a British-based firm specializing in global maritime risk, calculated that there were more than 210 strikes on commercial vessels only between July and the end of September. It attributed 125 of those strikes to Ukraine and 88 to Russia. According to Romanian Foreign Minister Oana ?oiu, the Black Sea has become the most dangerous region in the world for commercial shipping.

Attacks on commercial vessels in the Black Sea have escalated dramatically this year, after NATO leadership signaled in December 2025 that it would back Ukrainian attacks on Russia’s “shadow fleet.” As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in March 2026:

The attacks in the Black Sea are being carried out with NATO’s knowledge and approval. In early December, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte implied that they had approved such attacks, stating: “We are strengthening our support for Ukraine and increasing pressure on

Russia. This includes countering Russia’s Shadow Fleet and other measures to pose strategic dilemmas for the Kremlin.”

Russia has warned of the dangerous consequences of NATO’s expanded presence in the Black Sea. The TASS news agency reported on October 20 that Russian Foreign Ministry’s European Affairs Department Director Vladislav Maslennikov told *Izvestia*, “Reconnaissance activity by NATO allies has also increased in the region. Reconnaissance aircraft based in Romania’s Constanta are constantly monitoring the Black Sea. NATO servicemen are passing the data they collect on to the Kiev regime.” He added that “Against this backdrop, the risk of incidents, including unintentional ones, is indeed increasing.”

Through encouraging strikes deep inside Russia and provocations in the Baltic and Black Sea, the imperialist powers are seeking to goad the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin into a response that would provide NATO with a pretext to enter the war directly. This underscores the urgency of building a socialist anti-war movement in the international working class, opposed to imperialist aggression and independent of the Putin regime, which defends the reactionary interests of the Russian capitalist oligarchy.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact