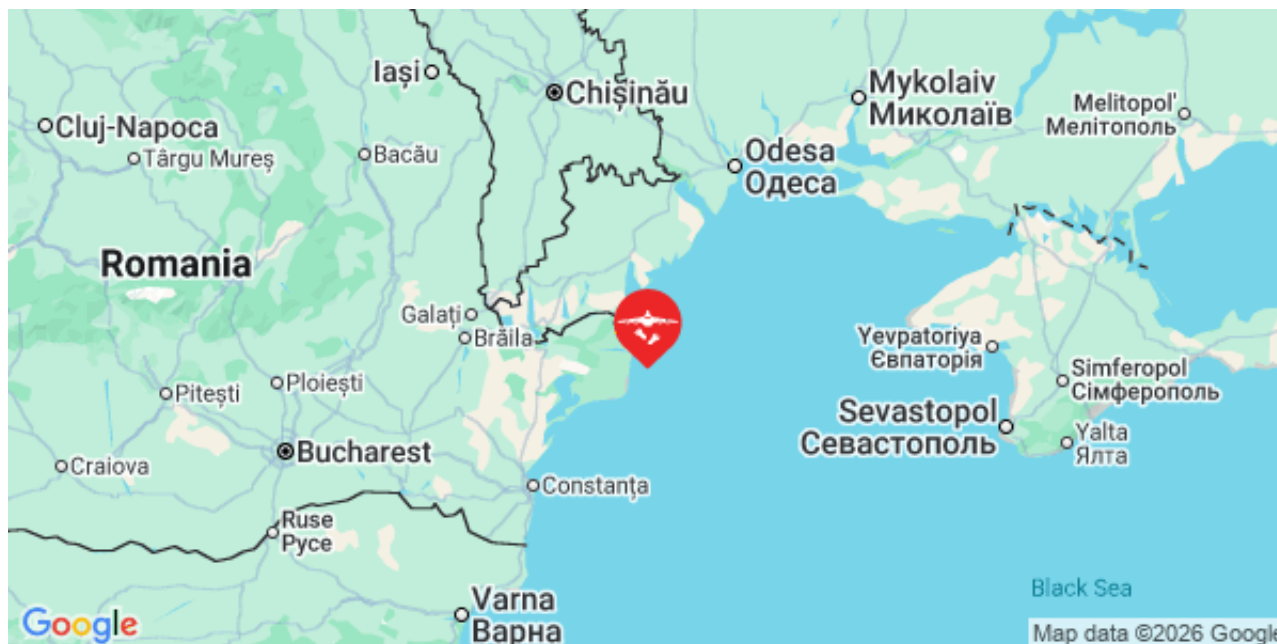


Air Strike



16

OCT
8:40 UTC

Black Sea Alert: UAV strikes hit two commercial vessels near Sulina Canal, Romania's coast on October 14-15; heightened risk of further UAV, USV attacks on commercial shipping to persist

Current Situation

- On October 14- 15, UAV strikes hit two chemical tankers near Romania's Black Sea coast, close to the Sulina Canal leading into the Danube River, causing fires on both vessels.
- On October 15, a San Marino-flagged tanker Wine Trader was struck approximately 24 kilometers southeast of the Sulina Canal. The chemical tanker was traveling from Tunisia to Romania. Of the 12 crew members aboard, five were rescued, while seven remained missing.
- On October 14, a Comoros-flagged chemical and oil tanker, Yara J, caught fire after being struck approximately 18 kilometers southeast of Sulina, inside Romanian territorial waters. The tanker was traveling from Turkey to Sulina, Romania. All crew members aboard the vessel were reported safe.
- Romanian President Nicusor Dan confirmed that both vessels were struck by UAVs but did not attribute responsibility to Russia. However, a NATO military source stated that the UAVs were of Russian origin.
- Following the incidents, Romania's Interior Ministry deployed two Black Hawk helicopters and two vessels carrying medical personnel to search for the missing sailors. However, rescue operations were hampered by rough sea conditions and high waves.

- Additionally, on October 15, NATO reported that two other vessels were targeted during the overnight hours (local time) on October 14–15, including the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier Sea Destiny inside Romanian territorial waters and the Tanzanian-flagged tanker Dania J, moored at Ukraine's Izmail Port. No casualties were reported.

Source: [Reuters](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. The airstrikes reinforce a deteriorating maritime security environment in the western Black Sea, with commercial vessels being increasingly exposed to UAV and USV attacks inside and near NATO territorial waters. The incident follows similar UAV strikes on October 5 in Romania's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), on October 6 in Bulgaria's EEZ, and on October 13 off Bulgaria's coast when two commercial vessels were struck, leaving 11 sailors missing and five injured. Overall, at least five other cargo vessels have been struck near Romania and Bulgaria over the preceding ten days. This indicates an expanding threat to commercial shipping stemming from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, with tankers, bulk carriers and their crews remaining increasingly vulnerable to UAV and USV attacks.
2. The proximity of the latest UAV strikes to the Sulina Canal also indicates increasing risks to Ukraine's alternative maritime trade routes, particularly as Russian attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea ports have increased Kyiv's reliance on Danube ports. These include Izmail and Reni, along with shipping corridors near Romania and Bulgaria. This is supported by an August 31 report that Ukraine's main Black Sea ports, which previously handled 90 percent of its grain exports, had been effectively blocked by Russian attacks, forcing cargo through lower-capacity Danube ports. Consequently, approximately 80 vessels were waiting to enter the Sulina Canal on August 31, with only five to seven vessels entering daily, while grain shipments toward Danube ports increased by 35 percent over the preceding week. This indicates the growing importance of the Sulina Canal to Ukrainian exports and its increased exposure to further disruptions from recurring UAV and USV attacks.
3. Given Moscow's continued efforts to disrupt Ukrainian maritime exports, Russian involvement in the latest UAV strikes remains likely, to undermine the reliability of these alternative shipping routes and increase operational risks for commercial vessels. This is further supported by a NATO military source's October 15 attribution of the UAVs to Russia, although Romanian authorities have not formally confirmed responsibility.
4. **FORECAST:** Given this and the repeated attacks in recent weeks, further UAV and USV strikes against commercial vessels are likely near the Sulina Canal, Danube Delta and approaches to Ukrainian and Romanian ports. This is likely to increase risks to commercial vessels, ship personnel, and port infrastructure, while prompting shipping operators to adjust routes or temporarily suspend operations in higher-risk areas. Consequently, increased maritime insurance costs, shipping delays, and intermittent disruptions to exports and regional supply chains are likely in the near term.
5. **FORECAST:** Recurring UAV and USV incidents inside or near NATO waters are expected to prompt an expansion of existing maritime security measures. This is supported by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's October 13 commitment to adjusting the alliance's deterrence and defense posture as needed, alongside Bulgaria's proposal for a moratorium on attacks against civilian vessels in the Black Sea. Consequently, Romania and other Black Sea NATO members are expected to intensify maritime surveillance, naval patrols, and counter-UAV deployments near major shipping routes and ports. This is likely to result in increased security checks, temporary navigation restrictions, and delays to vessel movements across affected areas of the western Black Sea, further increasing operational costs and disrupting regional maritime trade and supply chains.

Recommendations

1. Those managing or operating vessels in the Black Sea on October 16 and in the coming days are advised to avoid non-essential travel and take necessary precautions in light of the heightened maritime security risks associated with the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
2. Take precautions against the heightened risk of explosions, fires, and vessel damage due to potential UAV and USV attacks, particularly near Romanian and Ukrainian ports.
3. Exercise heightened caution, including reviewing maritime security protocols and adhering to navigational warnings and instructions issued by relevant authorities.
4. Remain cognizant of authorities' updates regarding potential security incidents and associated restrictions on maritime navigation.
5. For more information on the security situation and assistance, please contact intel@max-security.com