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Moscow Dismisses Franco-German Statement on Ukrainian Sailors

By Reuters

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EPA / TASS

Russia on Saturday dismissed a statement by the leaders of France and Germany accusing it of using military force and carrying out illegitimate checks on Ukrainian vessels in the Black Sea.

In asking Moscow on Friday to release 24 Ukrainian sailors captured last month near the Kerch Strait, which adjoins Crimea and gives Ukrainian ports on the Azov Sea an exit to the Black Sea, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron listed issues that "greatly concern us."

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These were "the human rights situation in Crimea, annexed by Russia in contravention of international law, and Russia's use of military force in the Kerch Strait, and abusive checks in

the Azov Sea."

Russia's Foreign Ministry issued a blunt retort, saying: "It is regrettable that the second part of this statement, in which Berlin and Paris presumptuously accuse Russia of certain violations of human rights in the Crimea and escalation of tension in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, present us with unacceptable requirements."

Russian President Vladimir Putin told Merkel in a phone call that the sailors were under investigation and were being dealt with in accordance with Russian law, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by the news agency RIA.

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