

Black Sea Oil Spill Spreads to Beaches in Annexed Crimea

By [AFP](#)

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Volunteers clear oil from a beach. **Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS**

Oil from two damaged Russian tanker ships has been detected on beaches in annexed Crimea, Russian authorities said Thursday, as volunteers intensify efforts to address the environmental fallout.

The tankers, Volgoneft-212 and Volgoneft-239, were struck by a storm last month in the Kerch Strait, which connects the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea near Crimea and Russia's Krasnodar region.

The vessels carried 9,200 tons of heavy fuel oil, with an estimated 40% of the cargo spilling into the sea. Russian President Vladimir Putin described the incident as an "ecological disaster."

"Two sites of oil product pollution were detected in Crimea," Russia's Emergency Situations

Ministry said, citing contamination near Kerch and further south by Tobechytske Lake.

Authorities said they have removed nearly 73,000 tons of oil-contaminated sand from beaches along the Russian coast, with the total amount of polluted sand and soil estimated at 200,000 tons. Cleanup efforts include volunteers in protective suits manually scooping oil-soaked sand in areas such as Anapa, a popular resort city.

The Emergency Situations Ministry reported that 2,100 birds have been rescued so far, though environmentalists and scientists have criticized the cleanup operation for inadequate equipment and methods.

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