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Estonia Says Russian Military Jet Violated Airspace After Attempt to Detain 'Shadow Fleet' Tanker

By Reuters

May 15, 2025



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Estonia's foreign minister said Thursday that a Russian military jet violated the Baltic country's airspace as its navy tried to detain a Russia-bound oil tanker, accusing it of sailing illegally without a flag.

After the vessel, which is under British sanctions, refused to cooperate with an attempt to board it, the Estonian Navy said it was escorted to Russian waters.

"The Russian Federation sent a fighter jet to check the situation, and this fighter jet violated NATO territory for close to one minute," Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna told reporters in the Turkish city of Antalya.

"We need to understand that Russia has officially tried and connected itself to the Russian

'shadow fleet'," he said, speaking ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers.

"[The] Russian Federation is ready to protect the 'shadow fleet'... The situation is really serious," Tsahkhna added.

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The vessel, Jaguar, is one of more than 100 ships in Russia's so-called "shadow fleet," a term Western countries use for ships they accuse Moscow of deploying to avoid international sanctions, typically unregulated and uninsured by Western organizations.

Military jets from a NATO policing mission based in the Baltic states took off to inspect the Russian vessel, said Tsahkhna, who earlier called for Russia to "face tougher, faster sanctions" in response to the incident.

Russia's Foreign Ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Britain has said its sanctions restricting or prohibiting the movement and access of the "shadow fleet" to some of its ports will constrain Russian President Vladimir Putin's war effort.

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