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U.K. Tightens Sanctions on Russia's 'Shadow Fleet'

By AFP

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS

Britain on Tuesday imposed new sanctions targeting Russia's so-called "shadow fleet," blacklisting 20 additional vessels, as well as 10 individuals and entities linked to the country's energy and shipping sectors.

Security analysts say the aging fleet is used by Moscow to skirt international sanctions that prohibit it from selling oil.

Hundreds of vessels have been sanctioned by the U.K. and European Union since President Vladimir Putin launched Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Britain's latest asset freezes include Orion Star Group and Rosneft Marine (U.K.), both described as significant players in Russia's energy sector, as well as a deep-sea research unit within the Russian Defense Ministry.

Two U.K. residents, Vladimir Pristoupa and Olech Tkacz, were also sanctioned for allegedly operating a shadowy network of shell companies that funneled more than $120 million worth of high-tech electronics to Russia.

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Though Russia's economy has withstood the sanctions, British officials maintain they are biting.

"These sanctions strike right at the heart of Putin's war machine, choking off his ability to continue his barbaric war in Ukraine," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement. "We will not hesitate to keep tightening the screws."

Downing Street claimed sanctions have deprived Russia of at least $450 billion, saying "by one estimate, that's equivalent to around two more years of funding for the invasion."

Since 2022, the U.K. has sanctioned more than 2,300 individuals, entities and vessels.

Starmer said he hopes to coordinate new measures with G7 partners meeting this week in Canada.

"We should take this moment to increase economic pressure and show President Putin it is in his and Russia's interests to demonstrate he is serious about peace," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had sought to press U.S. President Donald Trump to toughen sanctions during the summit, but Trump left early amid rising tensions in the Middle East, saying he had "big stuff" to do in Washington.

The EU has enacted 18 rounds of sanctions on Russia since the war began.

Downing Street said new intelligence shows Western restrictions are causing "significant challenges" for Russian state enterprises, including funding shortfalls, project delays and ballooning debt amid soaring interest rates.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the new sanctions "show we will systematically dismantle [Putin's] dangerous shadow fleet, starve his war machine, and support Ukraine to defend itself."

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