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Russia Threatens to Ban Norwegian Ships Over EU Fishing Sanctions

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Fishing in the Barents Sea near the Kola Peninsula and the village of Teriberka. **Lev Fedoseyev / TASS**

Russia's fisheries agency on Wednesday threatened to block Norwegian fishing vessels from the country's territorial waters as retaliation for Oslo joining EU sanctions against two Russian fishing companies.

In May, Brussels sanctioned Murman Seafood and Norebo, accusing them of using ships for activities unrelated to fishing, including suspicious movements near NATO exercises, undersea cables and critical infrastructure. Some vessels were also alleged to have links to Russian state-backed surveillance.

Norway, a non-EU member, joined the sanctions in early July, a move that was condemned by both Russia's Foreign Ministry and Murman Seafood. The Foreign Ministry vowed to respond to the sanctions.

On Wednesday, Russia's fisheries agency Rosrybolovstvo repeated that threat during an emergency bilateral meeting of the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission.

“If the Norwegian side doesn’t reconsider its position within a month, Russia will close its exclusive economic zone to Norwegian fishing vessels,” Rosrybolovstvo head, Ilya Shestakov, was quoted as saying by the agency.

“In addition, fishing and the allocation of fishing quotas in the open waters of the Barents and Norwegian Seas will be conducted based on Russian national interests,” Shestakov added.

Norway and Russia struck a deal on fishing quotas in the Barents Sea in 1976 despite Cold War tensions. The two neighbors have since renewed the agreement annually for the cod-rich waters.

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