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Black Sea Tanker That Sustained Blast Hit Again

By AFP

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Turkish emergency services extinguish the blaze on the 274-meter-long tanker Kairos. **Screengrab / @kiyiemniyet / X**

Turkey's Transport Ministry said one of two empty oil tankers hit by blasts in the Black Sea late Friday had been struck again early on Saturday, blaming an unmanned sea vehicle.

"The Virat, which was previously said to have been attacked by unmanned maritime vehicles approximately 35 nautical miles off the Black Sea coastline, was attacked again by unmanned maritime vehicles early this morning," the ministry said on X.

It said the tanker sustained only "minor damage" on the starboard side and that none of the 20-strong crew were hurt.

On Friday evening, Turkey's Transport Ministry said two empty oil tankers, the Virat and the Kairos, had reported explosions but sustained no casualties, saying they had been struck in

Turkish waters but without saying what had caused the blasts.

The ministry's post was the first official confirmation that the Virat was attacked by drones.

Turkey said the Kairos was en route to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, where a major Russian oil terminal halted operations early on Saturday after being hit by a naval drone attack, the consortium that owns the terminal said.

The terminal, part of which sustained "significant damage," is a major conduit for Kazakh oil, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) said, without saying who was responsible for the attack.

Related article: Naval Drones Halt Operations at Russian Oil Terminal

A Ukrainian source later claimed responsibility for the attacks on two oil tankers.

"Modernized Sea Baby naval drones successfully targeted the vessels," a source in Ukraine's SBU security service told AFP.

The blast struck the Kairos around 15:00 GMT on Friday, with rescuers evacuating its 25 crew members after a fire broke out. At the time, it was about 100 kilometers east of the point where the Bosphorus Strait enters the Black Sea, Turkish officials said.

The Virat was struck later. At the time, it was about 400 kilometers further east, according to the VesselFinder tracking site.

Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said both had suffered "explosions," telling private NTV television late Friday the tankers might have been hit by a mine or struck by a rocket or a drone.

"An external impact means the vessel was hit by a mine, a rocket, or a similar projectile, or perhaps by a drone, or by an unmanned underwater vehicle. These are the first things that come to mind," he said.

Gambian-flagged, under sanctions

In a post on X, the Turkish Maritime Affairs Directorate said the Kairos was "en route to Russia's Novorossiysk" when it reported an "external impact causing a fire 28 nautical miles off" the Turkish coast.

It posted dramatic images of flames and thick black smoke pouring out of the vessel, with the blaze still raging some five hours later.

Embed:

> BİLGİLENDİRME!!
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> Rusya'ya seyir halindeyken Karadeniz açıklarında patlama ve yangın meydana

> gelen KAIROS isimli gemide devam eden yangına, NENE HATUN Acil Müdahale Gemimiz ve KURTARMA-12 Römorkörümüz ile @kiyiemniyet'e bağlı ekiplerimiz müdahale etmeye devam etmektedir.... pic.twitter.com/gx7iG5Rc5F
>
> — T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı (@UABakanligi) November 28, 2025

The directorate later said the Virat had reported "being hit approximately 35 nautical miles offshore," adding that all 20 crew were unharmed but there was "heavy smoke detected in the engine room," although those on board had not requested evacuation.

Both tankers — which are flying a Gambian flag, according to the VesselFinder website — are subject to Western sanctions for transporting oil from Russian ports in defiance of an embargo imposed after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, both sides have planted sea mines to protect their coastlines. Many have since been located and destroyed in the Black Sea, but others have drifted, notably due to storms, endangering shipping.

In response, NATO members Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania — all of whom border the Black Sea — set up the Mine Countermeasures Naval Group (MCM Black Sea) in 2024 to oversee de-mining operations.

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