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Russia Orders Underwater Inspections of All Foreign Ships Entering Its Ports

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The Port of Novorossiysk. **Eric Romanenko / TASS**

Russia has ordered port operators to carry out underwater inspections of foreign ships for explosive devices and other suspicious items, the Kommersant business daily reported Tuesday, citing a Nov. 25 government decree.

The move follows a presidential order requiring foreign vessels to obtain Federal Security Service (FSB) approval to access Russian ports.

Under the new rules, a port captain must notify the FSB within one hour of receiving a request from a foreign ship to enter port and provide details on the vessel's 10 most recent ports of call.

The FSB then has 48 hours to authorize or deny entry and may require an underwater inspection as part of the process.

Port operators are responsible for arranging the checks and can seek reimbursement from

shipowners for the cost of the procedure.

The inspections must be carried out using divers and specialized equipment. Any explosive devices found would be handled by the military or security services.

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Similar measures were already applied in most northwestern ports over the summer and are now being expanded to ports in the Azov-Black Sea basin, Kommersant reported.

According to Russia's Federal Agency for Sea and Inland Water Transport (Rosmorrechflot), foreign vessels made a total of 26,700 calls at Russian ports in 2024.

That includes 4,360 in Novorossiysk, 3,000 in Vladivostok, 2,750 in Ust-Luga, 2,570 in St. Petersburg and 1,670 in Vostochny.

While the average cost of an underwater inspection is about 300,000 rubles ($3,900) some ports have raised prices to as much as 1 million rubles ($12,900), one industry source told Kommersant.

He noted that the Far East in particular faces a shortage of divers and equipment.

Another industry representative said winter operations remain a major concern, saying: "Everyone is nervous about the upcoming ice."

The tightening of controls follows a series of mysterious explosions affecting tankers arriving at Russian ports since early 2025.

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