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Ukraine Claims Destruction of 2 Vessels Transporting Russian Arms in Caspian Sea

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The Vessel 'Composer Rachmaninov'. **fleetphoto.ru**

Ukraine's special forces said Friday they had carried out an operation with a Russian rebel group that allegedly destroyed two Russian cargo vessels they claimed were transporting arms and military equipment across the Caspian Sea.

The Ukrainian Special Operations Forces (SOF) said its unit and the rebel movement "Black Spark" targeted the Russian-flagged Kompozitor Rakhmaninov and Askar-Saridzha vessels off the coast of Russia's republic of Kalmykia.

SOF said the operation "resulted in the destruction" of both vessels, while "Black Spark" claimed they sustained damage but did not indicate whether they were destroyed.

Neither group mentioned the date of the operation or the means with which it was carried out.

Kompozitor Rakhmaninov and Askar-Saridzha have not transmitted any Automatic

Identification System (AIS) data for more than 18 days, according to the global vessel tracking service marinetraffic.com.

SOF credited Black Spark with providing "detailed information about the route and cargo of the destroyed ships."

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The United States has sanctioned Kompozitor Rakhmaninov and MG-Flot, which owns both vessels, for bringing cargo between Iran and Russia. The European Union sanctioned MG-Flot on claims that it transported Iranian military-related goods, including drone components, across the Caspian Sea.

The Moscow Times could not independently verify the SOF and Black Spark's claims.

Neither Russia's Defense Ministry nor any other officials have publicly commented on the purported operation.

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