The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kyiv Claims Drone Strike Against Russian 'Shadow Fleet' Tanker in Mediterranean

By AFP

December 19, 2025



@uniannet

Ukraine said Friday that it struck a Russian "shadow fleet" tanker with aerial drones in neutral waters of the Mediterranean Sea, the first such strike in the Mediterranean in the nearly four-year war.

Estimated to include up to 1,000 ships, which frequently change their flags and whose ownership is unclear, the fleet has enabled Moscow to keep exporting its crude oil for much-needed revenue despite curbs on exports.

Experts — as well as several European leaders — also believe some vessels have been used by Russia to conduct hybrid warfare across the continent.

A source in the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) said it was a "new, unprecedented special

operation" — Kyiv's first military action in the Mediterranean, carried out some 2,000 kilometres (1,243 miles) from the country's borders.

The source, however, did not give further details of the attack, including how the SBU deployed a drone in the Mediterranean, the place from which it was launched or which countries the drones could have flown over.

The SBU source said the cargo ship was empty at the time of the attack and that there was no environmental threat from the operation.

Related article: EU Sanctions Target Russia's 'Shadow Fleet' Backers and Disinformation Network

It claimed that the tanker called the QENDIL had "sustained critical damage and cannot be used for its intended purpose."

The source said the tanker was used to circumvent Western sanctions and fund Russia's war chest, and claimed that it was "an absolutely legitimate target."

"The enemy must understand that Ukraine will not stop and will strike them anywhere in the world, wherever they may be," the source added

Kyiv, which has been fending off Russia's invasion for almost four years, has claimed similar hits on Russia-linked tankers off Turkey's Black Sea coast, after two empty oil tankers were hit by explosions.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/12/19/kyiv-claims-drone-strike-against-russian-shadow-fleet-tanker-in-mediterranean-a91489