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France Seizes Russia-Linked Oil Tanker in Mediterranean Sea

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A French navy helicopter lands on the Grinch. **Emmanuel Macron / X**

French military forces boarded and took control of an oil tanker suspected of being linked to Russia's so-called "shadow fleet," President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday.

"This morning, the French Navy boarded an oil tanker coming from Russia, subject to international sanctions and suspected of flying a false flag," Macron wrote in a post on X.

He said the ship, later identified as the Grinch, was suspected of being part of a network of oil tankers with unclear ownership and which frequently change their flags in order to continue exporting Russian crude oil.

"The activities of the 'shadow fleet' contribute to financing the war of aggression against Ukraine," Macron said. "We will not tolerate any violation."

French maritime authorities said the Grinch was traveling from the Russian port city of Murmansk when it was intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea between southern Spain and

northern Morocco.

The French Navy diverted and began escorting the ship to a port for further investigation after it was found to be sailing under a false flag.

Maritime authorities said the operation was carried out in cooperation with France's allies, including the United Kingdom.

Vessel-tracking websites state that the Grinch was built in 2004 and sails under the flag of Comoros.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Macron for the "resolve needed to ensure that Russian oil no longer finances Russia's war."

"Russian tankers operating near European shores must be stopped... Vessels must be apprehended," Zelensky wrote in a post on X.

There was no immediate response from Russia.

The Trump administration has spearheaded what appears to be evolving into a global crackdown on oil tankers suspected of violating U.S. and Western sanctions on oil exports from Russia, Iran and Venezuela.

On Wednesday, U.S. forces seized a seventh sanctioned tanker linked to Venezuela in Trump's effort to control the South American country's oil.

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