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Ukraine Behind 'Terrorist' Attack on Russian LNG Tanker, Putin Says

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An imaged purported to be the LNG tanker Arctic Metagaz on fire near Malta. **@Archer83Able / X**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday accused Ukraine of carrying out a naval drone attack that sank a Russian-flagged liquefied natural gas carrier in the Mediterranean Sea earlier this week.

"This is a terrorist attack. This isn't the first time we've seen this kind of thing," Putin told a state TV reporter, pointing the blame on Ukraine.

Russia's Transportation Ministry said earlier in the day that a Ukrainian naval drone struck the LNG tanker Arctic Metagaz on Tuesday near the territorial waters of Malta after initial reports said the vessel had caught fire off the coast of the EU member state.

"The tanker was carrying cargo documented in full compliance with international regulations from the port of Murmansk," the ministry said in a statement.

It claimed the Ukrainian naval drone was launched from the coast of Libya. The ministry

called the incident an “act of international terrorism and piracy.”

Maltese and Russian rescuers managed to bring all 30 crewmembers of the LNG tanker to safety, the Transportation Ministry said.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine about the incident.

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On Tuesday, Reuters reported that Malta’s armed forces received a distress signal from Arctic Metagaz, which is under U.S. and U.K. sanctions. The tanker’s crewmembers were later found in a lifeboat within Libya’s search-and-rescue region.

Images shared on social media appeared to show the vessel engulfed in flames at night. It was not immediately possible to verify their authenticity.

Ukraine previously claimed to have attacked Russian oil tankers with naval drones near Turkey’s Black Sea coast. In December, Ukraine reportedly struck a Russian oil tanker in the Mediterranean Sea.

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