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Damaged Russian LNG Tanker Poses Grave Environmental Threat, EU States Warn

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Social media

Italy, France and seven other European Union countries have warned the European Commission that a damaged Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) carrier adrift in the Mediterranean poses a serious environmental threat, Reuters reported Monday.

Russia said that Ukrainian naval drones struck the LNG tanker Arctic Metagaz on March 3 near Malta's territorial waters.

“The precarious condition of the vessel, combined with the nature of its specialized cargo, gives rise to an imminent and serious risk of a major ecological disaster in the heart of the Union's maritime space,” Reuters quoted the EU members' letter as saying.

Any response, including monitoring or technical assistance, could risk “undermining the integrity, effectiveness and the deterrent value of the EU sanctions regime,” the countries

added.

The EU, U.S. and Britain have sanctioned the Arctic Metagaz for being part of Russia's "shadow fleet," a group of vessels meant to circumvent sanctions on Russian energy exports imposed over the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

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Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Moscow was in contact with the shipowner and foreign "competent bodies."

About 700 tons of fuel and a "a substantial amount of natural gas" remained on board, spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

"The international legal norms applicable to the current ⊠situation imply the responsibility of coastal countries ... for resolving the situation with the drifting vessel and preventing an environmental disaster," Reuters quoted Zakharova as saying. "Further involvement by the shipowner and Russia as the flag state will depend on the ⊠specific circumstances."

The Arctic Metagaz had departed the Arctic city of Murmansk on Feb. 24 bound for the Suez Canal.

Satellite imagery published by OSINTtech indicated the vessel was nearly split in two by the March 3 attack.

Russia's Transportation Ministry said the strike was launched from Libya's coast and called it an "act of international terrorism and piracy."

All crew members were rescued by Maltese and Russian specialists, authorities said.

Kyiv has not claimed responsibility for the attack.

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