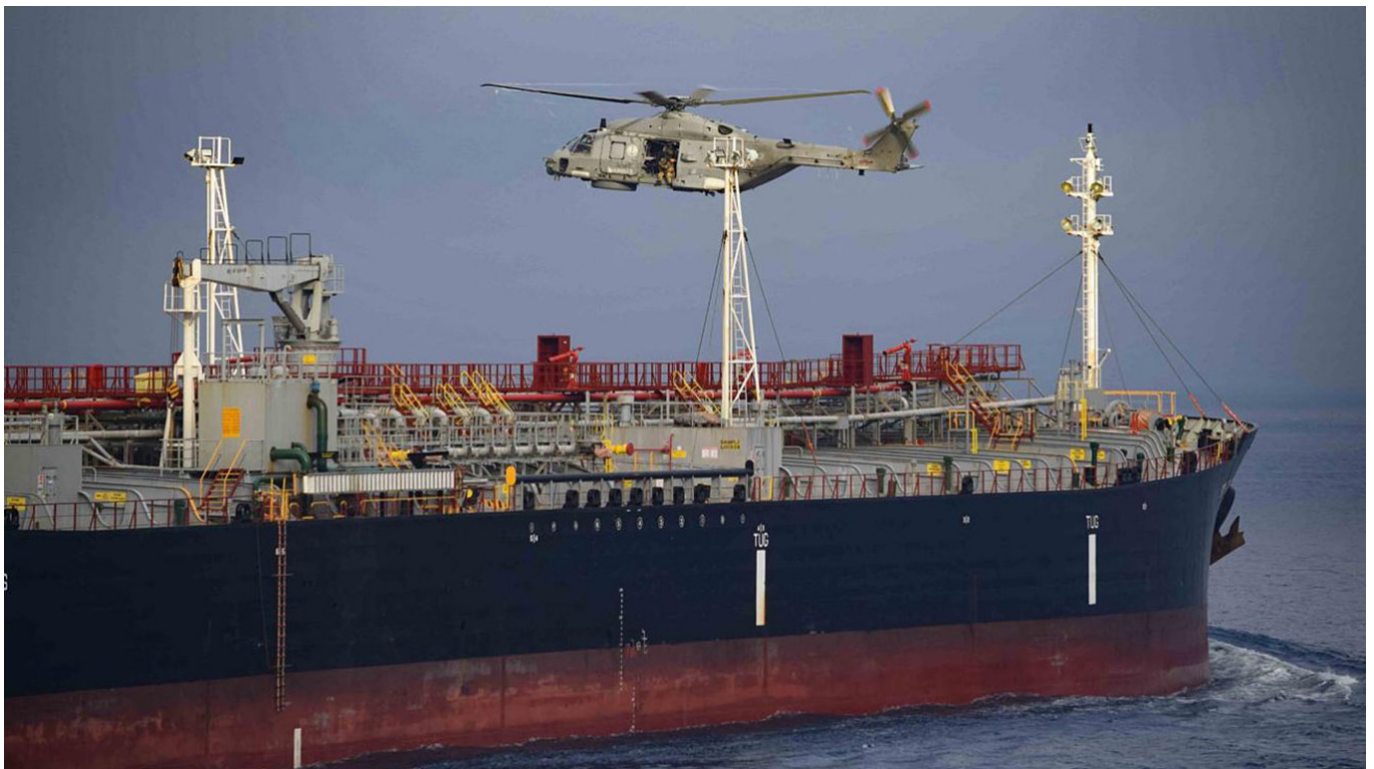


European Forces Intercept 'Shadow Fleet' Oil Tanker in Mediterranean Sea

July 22, 2026



European forces board the MV South Star. © [kajakallas/ X](#)

A European naval mission boarded a Russia-linked oil tanker suspected of sailing under a false flag this week, the EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas [said](#) Wednesday.

Personnel operating under the Mediterranean naval initiative Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI boarded the MV South Star on Monday for "flag verification," Kallas wrote in a post on X.

"We're turning up the pressure on Russia's shadow fleet," she said, referring to vessels with opaque ownership used to skirt Western sanctions against Russia.

The EU's naval force mission [confirmed](#) its crew boarded the sanctioned tanker in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea.

Both Kallas and the EU published photos showing military helicopters and speedboats encircling the vessel.

According to marine traffic monitoring data, the South Star, which sails under the flag of Cameroon, was [located](#) in the West Mediterranean as of Wednesday afternoon.

It was not immediately clear whether the flag verification operation was still underway 48 hours after the initial boarding.

The vessel reportedly departed the Tunisian port of Rades on July 10 and was scheduled to arrive there again on July 22.

Kallas said EU member states have also authorized the bloc's naval mission off the coast of Somalia and the western Indian Ocean to conduct similar flag verification boardings of suspected Russian "shadow fleet" vessels.

"This decision further tightens the net," she posted.

Brussels has [sanctioned](#) nearly 600 ships suspected of being part of Russia's "shadow fleet" network.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has slammed previous interceptions of Russia-linked vessels as "piracy."

Original url:

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