

Putin Threatens Retaliation if Europe Seizes Russian Ships

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President Vladimir Putin visits the Russian Navy missile cruiser Varyag. kremlin.ru

President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would retaliate in kind if European countries carried out plans to seize Russian commercial vessels, describing the proposed measures as “piracy and robbery.”

“We see the authorities of certain countries attempting, in violation of international maritime law, to restrict the movement of vessels operated by our businesses,” Putin [said](#) during a meeting with Pacific Fleet personnel aboard the missile cruiser Varyag on Wednesday.

“And recently, they went so far as to consider seizing our vessels and selling the property they have plundered from us. This is, of course, nothing other than piracy and robbery.”

The warning follows the European Union’s [adoption](#) in July of a mechanism allowing member states to confiscate and sell Russian oil carried aboard shadow fleet vessels attempting to evade the bloc’s sanctions. The measure, introduced as part of the EU’s 21st sanctions package, also covers grain cargoes.

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Putin said Russia would take similar action if European countries put the measures into practice, adding that Moscow's response would not necessarily be confined to the same waters where Russian ships were seized.

"We will not necessarily act in the waters where raids on our ships and vessels are being planned, but wherever we ourselves consider it necessary and appropriate. Anywhere, including in the Pacific Fleet's area of responsibility," he said.

Putin said the Defense Ministry had already received instructions to prepare a response.

Pacific Fleet Commander Viktor Liina then [told](#) Putin that the Russian military had conducted a "detailed analysis" of maritime traffic in the Asia-Pacific region.

"We know the routes, what they are carrying and whose ships they are," Liina said.

He said 1,001 vessels had passed through Russia's exclusive economic zone along the Kuril Islands between April 24 and Aug. 6, including 379 sailing under the flags of countries that Moscow officially classifies as "unfriendly."

Those vessels included 273 dry bulk carriers and 71 tankers, Liina said. Twenty-six were British and nine were French.

EU countries and Britain have [detained](#) five tankers carrying Russian oil since the start of the year.

The MV South Star was stopped on July 20 in an operation involving EU countries. France intercepted the tankers Grinch, Deyna and Tagor before later releasing them, while Britain has held the Smyrtos, carrying 100,000 metric tons of oil, since June 14.

Sweden in March detained the dry cargo ship Caffa, which Kyiv said had been transporting grain from Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory. Sweden's Supreme Court [ruled](#) in August that the ship should be handed over to Ukraine.

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