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Denmark Summons Russian Ambassador After Frigate Fires Flares Toward Military Helicopter

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Rune Dyrholm / Forsvaret

Denmark has summoned Russia's ambassador after accusing a Russian frigate of firing flares toward a Danish military helicopter in international waters on Monday, narrowly missing the aircraft.

The Fennec military helicopter was on a routine mission to photograph the Russian frigate, Danish military officials said in a statement late Monday. One of the flares — pyrotechnics usually used as a warning signal at sea — passed close to the helicopter.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the incident was serious but not surprising, describing it as part of a pattern in which Russia has intensified its so-called hybrid campaign against the European Union and NATO.

"Russia wants to sow fear and discord. Our answer is to stand closer together and strengthen

the defense of Denmark and Europe," Frederiksen said.

Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen called the incident "unacceptable" and said it could have endangered people's lives.

"Denmark is working to ensure that all shipping can pass peacefully through Danish waters, but Russia is gradually moving the line for what it considers acceptable behavior," Rasmussen said in a statement.

He said he had summoned Russia's ambassador to Denmark for a meeting.

The Russian Embassy in Copenhagen did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Danish straits are the main sea route in and out of the Baltic Sea for commercial and military shipping. They are also a major artery for global oil shipments, including from Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" of oil tankers used to circumvent Western sanctions.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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