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French Navy Boards Russia-Linked Tanker in Indian Ocean

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Armée française - Opérations militaires / X

The French navy intercepted and boarded an oil tanker linked to Russia's so-called shadow fleet in the Indian Ocean, President Emmanuel Macron announced Monday.

The French joint staff said naval inspectors boarded the vessel to verify its nationality after doubts arose over its claimed Benin registration. The operation took place around 450 nautical miles south of Réunion Island, an overseas territory of France.

Macron said the ship — the DF Peak — was suspected of sailing under a false flag and being involved in illicit fuel transportation. The vessel is under U.S., EU, U.K. and Ukrainian sanctions.

The tanker was being escorted to Réunion for further checks, said armed forces minister Catherine Vautrin.

The DF Peak is at least the sixth shadow-fleet tanker French authorities have detained over

the past year, according to the exiled outlet The Insider.

Embed:

> La France est déterminée à lutter contre la flotte fantôme, partout dans le monde. Ce matin, à plus de 450 nautiques au sud de La Réunion, notre Marine nationale a arraisonné le pétrolier DF Peak, suspecté de naviguer sous un faux pavillon et impliqué dans des activités illicites de transport de carburants. Cette action, conduite conformément au droit international de la mer, témoigne de notre détermination à faire respecter le droit et à lutter contre tous les trafics illicites, où qu'ils se produisent.
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> — Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron) October 12, 2026

President Vladimir Putin has previously condemned European seizures of Russia-linked tankers as "piracy and robbery" and threatened retaliation.

Built in South Korea in 2006, DF Peak previously operated as the NS Captain and later as the Kaliningrad under Russia's state shipping giant Sovcomflot.

Maritime database records cited by The Insider and Mediazona claim the DF Peak dropped its Russian flag in June 2025 to register under Benin and is currently registered to Hong Kong Ding Feng Shipping.

Russia's embassy in France said on Tuesday that France's seizure of the DF Peak was a blatant violation of international law, the state RIA news agency reported.

RIA cited the Russian embassy as referring to the seizure as "piracy" and as saying it was trying to determine if any Russian citizens had been among the ship's crew.

It was also quoted as saying that France had not notified Russia about the tanker's seizure.

AFP and Reuters contributed reporting.

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