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Russian Cargo Shifts to Baltic and Far East After Drone Attacks Halt Southern Container Traffic

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Russia's Black Sea and Sea of Azov ports handled no container cargo in October after Ukrainian drone attacks drove shipping lines out of Novorossiysk, sending freight to Baltic and Far Eastern ports.

Container traffic across Russia nevertheless rose 5% from a year earlier in October as other ports absorbed the diverted cargo, Gazprombank's Center for Economic Forecasting said.

The shift has raised shipping costs and strained rail capacity as well as disrupted grain exports, with one of Russia's largest grain traders cutting jobs after two of its Black Sea terminals shut down.

The last container carriers serving Novorossiysk withdrew by October after Ukraine stepped up attacks on ships over the summer, Sea Shipping CEO Alexei Gagarinov told InfraNews. The

port handled 1.1 million 20-foot equivalent units in 2025.

St. Petersburg has become the main alternative for shipments from Turkey, Gagarinov said. The voyage now takes two to three weeks, up from three to five days via Novorossiysk, and costs three to six times as much per container.

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Russia's Baltic ports handled more than 200,000 20-foot equivalent units in October for the first time since December 2021, while volumes in the Far East approached record levels, Gazprombank's forecasting center said.

Nationwide, container traffic rose 4.5% to 4.57 million units in the first 10 months of the year, just shy of the 2021 record.

Container operator Logoper said St. Petersburg's terminals had room for more cargo, but rail capacity limited how much they could move inland.

In the Far East, freight forwarder Tradest said containers were already waiting up to two weeks to be loaded onto trains in early October.

Two sources at grain trader Demetra Holding told Vedomosti that the company could cut its workforce by half after drone strikes halted operations at its Taman and Novorossiysk grain terminals over the summer.

Demetra confirmed it was cutting jobs and said it would retain workers at its port facilities.

Russia previously shipped about 80% of its grain exports through the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

Exporters have since begun diverting some shipments to the Baltic and Murmansk, where Demetra sent 3,400 metric tons of grain in late October for a trial shipment to Morocco.

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