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Russian Government Earmarks $576Mln to Build Rail Ferries Supplying Kaliningrad Region

By Reuters

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Kaliningrad Railway Station. **A.Savin**

Russia's government will spend 47 billion rubles ($576 million) to build two giant rail ferries to ensure the uninterrupted flow of supplies to its exclave of Kaliningrad amid rising regional tensions, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Monday.

The Kaliningrad region is located along the Baltic Sea coast, wedged between Poland and Lithuania. The exclave has grown increasingly reliant on sea freight cargo after Lithuania restricted the movement of some goods through its territory in compliance with EU sanctions against Russia.

"Due to the unlawful actions of certain countries, disruptions to logistics chains and attempts at a transportation blockade are complicating the operations of enterprises located" in the

Kaliningrad region, Mishustin said.

The two rail ferries are expected to enter into operation in 2030 and shuttle cargo between the port of Ust-Luga in northwestern Russia's Leningrad region and the port of Baltiysk in Kaliningrad. Most of the money to fund the ferries will come from Russia's National Wealth Fund, Mishustin said.

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The announcement comes after a Russian cargo ship with links to the military was hit by drones and caught fire in the Baltic Sea on Saturday, in what Finland's military said was likely an attack by Ukraine, highlighting growing security risks in the region.

Kaliningrad region Governor Alexei Besprozvannykh said on Saturday that a drone alert went off in a regional district bordering Lithuania after the appearance of a "suspicious object."

In a document sent to NATO in September, Russia warned NATO it would be ready to resort to nuclear weapons if the Western alliance attempted to cut off Kaliningrad.

Maritime shipping now accounts for over half of the supplies arriving in the Kaliningrad region, compared with just 8% in 2021. Around 30 ships, including four rail ferries, now transport goods between the exclave and Russian ports on the Baltic Sea.

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