

Statement by the Spokesperson on the escalating tensions in the Azov Sea

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Statements by the Spokesperson

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The tensions in the Azov Sea and Kerch Strait have increased dangerously today, after an incident this morning between Russian and Ukrainian naval vessels as the latter were attempting to pass through the Kerch strait as well as subsequent developments, including the closure of the strait for traffic by Russian authorities and reported seizures of Ukrainian vessels and shots being fired at them.

We expect Russia to restore freedom of passage at the Kerch strait and urge all to act with utmost restraint to de-escalate the situation immediately.

As clearly stated by the High Representative at the European Parliament recently, the events in the Sea of Azov are a demonstration of how instability and tensions are bound to rise when the basic rules of international cooperation are disregarded. The construction of the Kerch Bridge took place without Ukraine's consent and constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has led, in parallel with the militarisation of the Azov Sea, to tougher controls on naval traffic in the strait. The European Union expects Russia to stop the inspections.

The EU does not and will not recognise the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia.

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