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Three ships struck by drones in Black Sea near Romanian shipping canal, PM says

By **Reuters**

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Romania's Prime Minister-Designate, Luca Niculescu, prepares to deliver a speech in the Romanian Parliament in Bucharest, Romania, October 20, 2026. Inquam Photos/George Calin via REUTERS/File... Purchase Licensing Rights **Read more**

Summary

No casualties among the crews, defence minister says

Strikes underline NATO challenges on eastern flank

Romania asks allies for reinforcements

BUCHAREST, Nov 15 (Reuters) - Drones have struck three commercial ships in the Black Sea near Romania's Sulina canal, Prime Minister Luca Niculescu said on Sunday, adding that his armed forces had scrambled fighter jets twice.

Defence Minister Stefan Radu Oprea said there were no casualties and that the ships' crews had managed to control the fires on board after the strikes late on Saturday.

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A growing series of deadly strikes on merchant ships near NATO members Romania and Bulgaria shows how the escalating maritime war between Russia and Ukraine is expanding into a major challenge for the transatlantic alliance in the Black Sea.

The Sulina canal is a key Romanian shipping lane which links the Danube river to the Black Sea and is used by Ukraine for exports.

Romanian officials did not identify the origin of the drones but said they were a direct consequence of Russia's war in Ukraine.

"These incidents are unacceptable and constitute a violation of international law," Niculescu said. "They reflect the deteriorating security situation caused by Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine."

Russia has denied targeting Ukraine's neighbours with drones.

Oprea said the three struck ships were Greek-flagged oil and chemical tanker Evia Petrol V, bulk carrier Marsol and oil products tanker Ali Najafov, both under the flag of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Evia Petrol V and Marsol were struck 4 and 5 nautical miles southeast of the Sulina canal, the defence ministry said, inside Romanian territorial waters.

Oprea said a separate general cargo ship was hit by a drone late on Friday, also with no casualties. Private television station Digi24 said the vessel was Palau-flagged general cargo ship Larissa 1.

"On Tuesday and Wednesday I will be in Brussels for the meeting with my fellow (defence) ministers," Oprea said.

"We need the solidarity of our allies, shown through patrols with surveillance aircraft and through equipment for counter-drone warfare."

France temporarily relocated the Atlantique 2 maritime patrols aircraft to Romania after it asked for reinforcement.

Many of the ships hit in October and November were anchored near or sailing to or from the Sulina canal.

Reporting by Luiza Ilie, Editing by Andrew Cawthorne

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