

### **Black Sea states unite to clear maritime trade routes**



**Bulgaria’s caretaker cabinet will join forces with neighbours Romania and Türkiye to form a Black Sea task Force that will clear western Black Sea regional waters of Russian mines.**

Nick Savvides | May 30, 2024

The decision comes as a boost to the country’s already growing trade with consultancy Informall BG saying it expects trade to continue its upward trajectory as a result of safer maritime navigation.

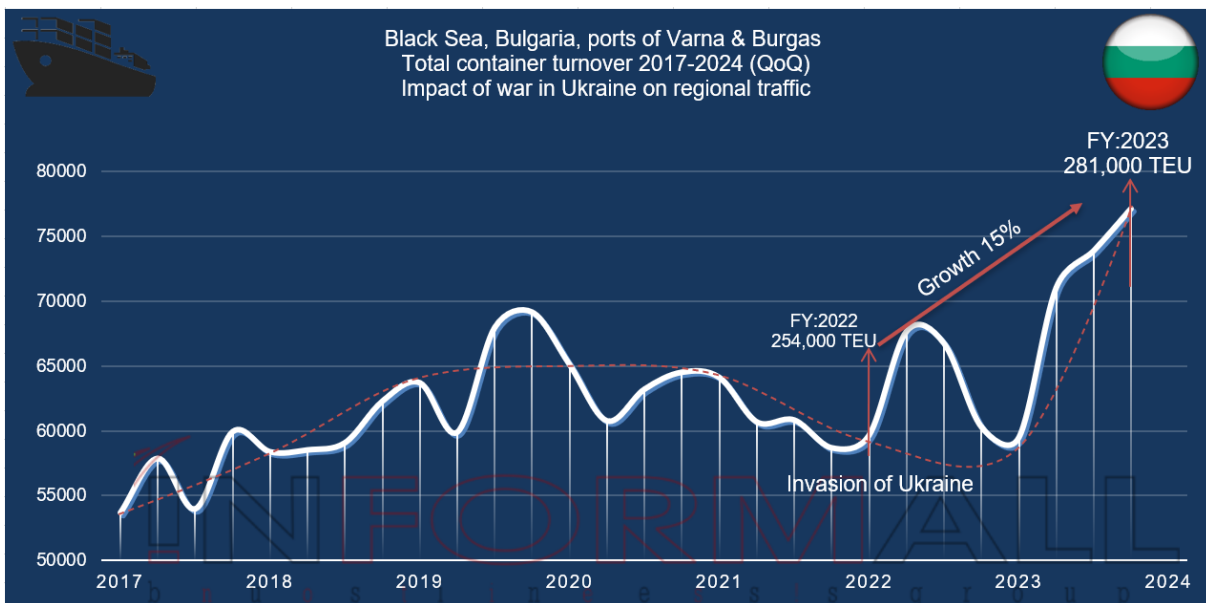
Sofia has authorised four ships to join the task force, including frigates and minesweepers, to join the Mine Counter Measures Task Group Black Sea, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 11 January by the three regional states.

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The Government's decision will also allow up to 10 military personnel to be deployed in Romania and Türkiye to coordinate the naval group's activities. The operation will take place within the exclusive economic zone, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone and the internal waters of Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, reported Radio Bulgaria today.

Daniil Melnychenko, an analytical consultant from Informall BG, said that the Bulgarian market is situated away from the war in Ukraine and has shown stability with a robust organic growth rate of 15% year-on-year by the end of 2023.

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“In 2022, Bulgarian container terminals processed 281,000 teu, with some Ukrainian cargo, contributing to this growth. However, by the end of 2023, logistics flows had predominantly shifted to the ports of Romania and Poland, which were preferred due to their closer proximity to the Ukrainian borders and more efficient transit solutions.”

Nevertheless, the Bulgarian port of Varna was once an appealing option for freight forwarders, offering seamless cargo movement with additional travel costs offset by lower handling charges and affordable stevedore services.

The shifting military situation in the Ukraine conflict, however, has seen the reopening of Ukrainian Black Sea ports in 2024, with the effect that freight transport through Varna has diminished, explained Melnychenko.

Growth in Bulgarian volumes is expected to offset the loss of Ukrainian cargo in 2024, as Ukrainian container traffic is again moving via Odessa ports.

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