

Black lists and false flags in Russia's sanctioned fleet

Panama flag moves to quickly eject six tankers recently added to the UK sanctions list.

[Gary Howard, Michele Labrut](#)

December 3, 2024



Image: Panama Ship Registry

A list of 30 tankers added to the [UK's Russia](#) Sanctions Regime late last month included vessels apparently falsely declaring their flag state, ships under flags blacklisted by port state control regimes, and six vessels on the [Panama Ship Registry](#), one of the world's largest flag states.

The Panama Maritime Authority (AMP) said it is cancelling the registration of six vessels under its flag which were among those added to the UK sanctions list on November 25, utilising new mechanisms introduced in October.

The Panama-flagged tankers range between 75,000 and 115,000 dwt and have a mix of owners and managers in countries including [China](#), [India](#), Moldova, and The Seychelles, according to Equasis data. The Equasis database showed eight of the sanctioned vessels as Panama-flagged at the time of writing, Seatrade Maritime News has contacted AMP to clarify the discrepancy.

Equasis data showed Panama as the second-largest flag for the sanctioned ships, beaten only by Russia's nine vessels. Gabon, a flag on the Tokyo MoU blacklist, has five ships, and fellow black lister Sierra Leone has a single vessel. Grey-listed Flags Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda have three ships and one ship, respectively.

Tokyo MoU's black list includes flags seen as the highest risk based on vessel inspections on a rolling three-year basis. Vessels flying black and grey list flags are more likely to be inspected at ports in Tokyo MoU nations. A recent MoU meeting agreed to change the list names list names to low, medium and high from July 2025.

Related: [Panama issues decree for immediate cancellation of sanctioned vessels](#)

The Equasis data shows two vessels with flags marked FALSE, indicating that the ships have been confirmed by the authorised Flag Administration as not being legally registered under the flag the ship claims. *Valour* reports to be flagged in Guinea, while *Daksha* claims to be flagged by Comoros.

One vessel on the list, *HS Everett*, shows no known flag since April 2024, before which it was flagged by Liberia from November 2022.

In October 2024, Panama's President issued Executive Decree 512 to enable the revocation of registration and navigation licenses for vessels appearing on EU, US, and UN sanctions lists.

"The State has a fundamental responsibility to protect the integrity of the Panamanian ship registry, ensuring it remains free from international sanctions and unlinked to vessels associated with such listings," said Ramón Franco, AMP's Director General of Merchant Marine, and head of the Ship Registry.

AMP said that since the decree was issued, three vessels' registrations had been successfully cancelled and a further eight annulments were being processed.

Related: [Panama takes action against vessels evading sanctions](#)

The UK's Russia sanctions regime has designated 90 ships since July 2024, barring the vessels from the UK flag, and UK ports. The regime aims to limit Russian economic activity in retaliation for Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. Ships are generally targeted for carrying oil of Russian origin to third countries.