

Ukraine formally closes seaports captured by Russia

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Ukraine has formally closed the four Black Sea and Azov Sea ports over which Ukraine has lost control, the Ukrainian agriculture ministry said on Monday May 2nd.

The Azov Sea ports of Mariupol, Berdyansk, and Skadovsk and the Black Sea port of Kherson were closed “until the restoration of control”, the ministry said in a statement.

“The adoption of this measure is caused by the impossibility of servicing ships and passengers, carrying out cargo, transport and other related economic activities, ensuring the appropriate level of safety of navigation,” it said.

All Ukrainian seaports have suspended their activity since the Russian invasion on February 24th. Even the ports over which Ukraine retains land control have no sea exit because of mines and a Russian blockade.

That blockade has become fractionally less effective since Ukraine sank Russia’s flagship vessel the Moskva, and it has been revealed that Russia will not be able to replace the vessel because Turkey will not permit any replacement to traverse the Bosphorus straits. Because of the Montreux convention from the 1930s, the Bosphorus remains closed to all non-Turkish warships.

The UK Ministry of Defence noted in an intelligence update that, despite the losses of the landing ship SARATOV and cruiser MOSKVA, Russia’s Black Sea Fleet retained the ability to strike Ukrainian and coastal targets.

“Approximately 20 Russian Navy vessels are currently in the Black Sea operational zone, including submarines,” the ministry said.

Ukrainian troops destroyed the Russian landing ship Saratov in the port of Berdyansk on March 24th and Ukrainian military hit the Russian cruiser MOSKVA from the Neptune anti-ship missile system, causing serious damage to the warship, on April 13th. Russia confirmed later that the cruiser sank while being towed to its destination.