

On Russian submarine activity in the Atlantic: Joint statement to the OSCE

16.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Ambassador Holland updates on recent Russian activity in the Atlantic, speaking on behalf of Norway, the Netherlands and the UK.

Thank you, Mr Chair. Norway and the Netherlands have also aligned with this statement.

The United Kingdom has tabled this current issue today to put on record in this Council an update given by the UK Defence Secretary on 9 April 2026 regarding Russian activity in the Atlantic. I am doing so to provide this information to all States in the spirit of transparency and risk reduction, and to highlight our readiness to respond to activity which threatens our security.

As stated by my Defence Secretary, the UK - in partnership with Norway and other Allies - has responded to increased Russian activity in the Atlantic, north of the UK.

This operation involved a Russian Akula Class Submarine and a concurrent deployment of two Specialised Submarines from GUGI, Russia's Main Directorate for Deep-Sea Research. These GUGI units - including the Spy ship YANTAR - are vessels directed by Russia to conduct hybrid warfare activities against the UK and its Allies, specifically around Critical Undersea Infrastructure.

They are designed to survey underwater infrastructure during peacetime, and be prepared to sabotage it in conflict. This deployment operated across the North Atlantic including in UK and Allied Exclusive Economic Zones.

In response to the activity of the Russian submarines, the UK deployed our Armed Forces to track and deter any malign activity by these vessels.

A Royal Navy warship and Royal Air Force P8 aircraft, alongside Allies', ensured the Russian submarines were monitored 24/7. The Akula Submarine subsequently returned home having been closely tracked throughout, and we continued to monitor the two GUGI submarines.

Our Armed Forces left them with no doubt that they were being monitored, that their movements were not covert as had been planned, and that their operations had been exposed.

Those GUGI submarines have now returned home, and this operation - which lasted more than a month - has now concluded.

I want to thank all the Allies involved, including Norway, with whom we have cooperated closely throughout.

Chair, we have publicised this operation to make it clear that we are watching and that we see these operations over the Critical Undersea Infrastructure of the UK and our Allies.

Our message to Russia is this: you cannot operate in secret. We are ready to meet the increased threat in the North Atlantic. The UK and our Allies are ready to respond to any threat to our Critical Undersea Infrastructure. And any attempt to damage our Critical Undersea Infrastructure would have serious consequences.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/on-russian-submarine-activity-in-the-atlantic-joint-statement-to-the-osce>