

## Russia Harasses Dutch Ship in the Black Sea To Send Message to NATO

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OE Watch Commentary

Thanks in part to a BBC news crew onboard the HMS Defender at the time, the world was aware of Russian shadowing and intimidation tactics towards the British warship operating in the Black Sea in late June. The story all but eclipsed a strikingly similar encounter between Russian forces in the Black Sea and the HNLMS Evertsen. According to private Dutch naval news media outlet *Marineschepen*, the Dutch ship, which had sailed aside the HMS Defender days earlier, was also harassed. The article quoted the Dutch Ministry of Defence as stating “the frigate was repeatedly harassed between about 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. local time on Thursday (24 June).” And that “they flew dangerously low and close and carried out feint attacks...”. Also according to the Dutch Ministry of Defense, the HNLMS Evertsen was at the time sailing toward Romania for a port visit. The Dutch also claimed that the ship’s electronics were disrupted. No further explanation was given but days before this incident it was reported that both ships

were being electronically tracked within a couple miles of Russian positions on Crimea (See Russian Electronic Warfare in the Black Sea, *OE Watch*, June 2021). Russian actions like this, if they continue, demonstrate Russia’s willingness to ratchet up the tension in the Black Sea basin, at least in the vicinity of Crimea. Operationally, this

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would affect freedom of navigation exercises and NATO naval visits to regional ally Georgia.

**Source:** “Zr.Ms. Evertsen urenlang lastiggevalen door Russische gevechtsvliegtuigen (HNLMS Evertsen harassed for hours by Russian fighter planes),” *Marineschepen.nl* (private Dutch naval news website), June 29, 2021. <https://marineschepen.nl/nieuws/Evertsen-urenlang-lastiggevalen-door-Russische-gevechtsvliegtuigen-260621.html>

*The Dutch frigate Zr.Ms. Evertsen was harassed for hours by Russian planes in the Black Sea. According to Defense, the frigate was sailing in international waters, southeast of Crimea.*

*Last Wednesday, the British destroyer HMS Defender (Type 45) sailed past the Crimea. That passage did not go unnoticed because Russia said it fired warning shots. According to the Ministry of Defense, De Evertsen was on his way to Romania at that time for a port visit.*

*A day later, as appears from a statement from the Ministry of Defense, the Evertsen himself was targeted. The frigate was repeatedly harassed between about 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. local time on Thursday. “They flew dangerously low and close and carried out feint attacks. The fighters were armed with bombs and so-called air-to-surface missiles, intended to fire at a target from the air. After the hours of intimidation, there were also disruptions of electronic equipment of the Everts,” the Ministry of Defense reports.*

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*Commander of Zr.Ms. Evertsen KLTZ George Pastoor finds the actions irresponsible and unsafe: “Sr.Ms. Evertsen sailed on the open sea in international waters. There was no reason for these aggressive actions. Despite this, the fake attacks continued for several hours. It was irresponsible and unsafe behavior. at sea.”*

*Minister of Defense Ank Bijleveld also reacts with irritation: “Hr. Ms. Evertsen has every right to sail there. There is no justification whatsoever for this type of aggressive action, which also unnecessarily increases the risk of accidents. The Netherlands will address Russia about this. “*