

RUSSIAN BORDER GUARD REMOVES ESTONIA'S NAVIGATION BUOYS FROM THE NARVA RIVER

At 3 a.m. on 23 May 2024 the Russian Border Guard unilaterally removed light buoys that Estonia had placed in the Narva River to mark the fairway along the border; the Estonian Foreign Ministry called it 'a provocative border incident' and demanded an explanation and their immediate return. The ministry later gave the number removed as 25. Russia refused a joint riverbed survey to fix the fairway.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
BEYOND UKRAINE
AS OF 20 OCT 2026

DEGREE OF PROOF

OFFICIAL ATTRIBUTION

A government, a prosecutor, the EU, NATO or a UN body has formally named Russia, its services or its state-backed forces. This is a position of that authority, not a verdict.

WHO ESTABLISHED IT

Named: Russia. Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs statements of 23 May 2024 and 30 May 2025; Estonia summoned Russia's chargé d'affaires over the dispute (Oct 2024).

LATEST

On 30 May 2025 Estonia ended the 'futile' talks; it did not reinstall the buoys for summer 2025 and stepped up patrols, keeping the temporary control line in place. A further Russian crossing on the Narva River occurred at Vasknarva on 17 Dec 2025 (see separate entry).

LINK TO THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

The ministry called the refusal to cooperate 'a typical tactic of Russia'; the incident came amid Russia's pressure on NATO's eastern flank during its war on Ukraine.

SOURCES

A Estonian MFA – Statement regarding the border incident on the Estonian-Russian border · 2024-05-23

<https://vm.ee/en/news/statement-estonian-ministry-foreign-affairs-regarding-border-incident-estonian-russian-border>

A Estonian MFA – Estonia ends talks with Russia over Narva River navigation buoys · 2025-05-30

<https://vm.ee/en/news/estonia-ends-talks-russia-over-narva-river-navigation-buoys>

C The Moscow Times – Estonia summons Russian diplomat over border river dispute · 2024-10-29

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/07/26/estonia-summons-russian-diplomat-over-border-river-dispute>

WHAT WE ASK OF MEMBER STATES

- Name the instrumentalisation of migrants as a hybrid attack by the state that organises it.
- Support the EU and frontline states in protecting their borders while respecting international law.
- Sanction the officials and networks that move people to the border.

