



Snake Island



Context:

Ukraine has said it has caused “significant losses” to the Russian military in airstrikes on **Zmiinyi Island, also known as Snake Island, in the Black Sea.**



Relevance:

GS II- International Relations

Dimensions of the Article:

1. About Snake Island
2. About the Black Sea
3. Russia and the Black Sea
4. Black Sea in the Ukraine war

About Snake Island

- Zmiinyi Island, also known as Snake or Serpent Island, is a small piece of rock less than 700 metres from end to end, that has been described as being “X-shaped”.
- It is located 35 km from the coast in the Black Sea, to the east of the mouth of the Danube and roughly southwest of the port city of Odessa.
- The island, which has been known since ancient times and is marked on the map by the tiny village of Bile that is located on it, belongs to Ukraine.
- On February 24, the day Russia launched its invasion, two warships from the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Vasily Bykov and Moskva, attacked Snake Island, followed by Russian troops landing on it.
- Ukraine has claimed to have launched several attacks on the Russian occupiers of Snake Island even before the latest ongoing operation.
- Recently, Ukraine said it had sunk a Russian naval tug called Spasatel Vasily Bekh,



which was delivering personnel and military supplies to the island.

- Earlier in April, it had sunk the Moskva, the 600-foot flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, which had attacked the island on day 1 of the war.

About the Black Sea



- The Black Sea is a marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean lying between Europe and Asia; east of the Balkans (Southeast Europe), south of the East European Plain in Eastern Europe, west of the Caucasus, and north of Anatolia in Western Asia.
- The Black Sea is bordered by Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.
- The Black Sea ultimately drains into the Mediterranean Sea, via the Turkish Straits and the Aegean Sea.
- The Bosphorus Strait connects it to the small Sea of Marmara which in turn is connected to the Aegean Sea via the Strait of the Dardanelles. To the north, the Black Sea is connected to the Sea of Azov by the Kerch Strait.

Russia and the Black Sea

- The famed water body bound by Ukraine to the north and northwest, Russia and Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west, which links to the Sea of Marmara through the Bosphorus and then to the Aegean through the Dardanelles, has traditionally been Russia's warm water gateway to Europe.
- For Russia, the Black Sea is both a stepping stone to the Mediterranean as well as a strategic buffer between NATO and itself.
- Domination of the Black Sea region is a geostrategic imperative for Moscow, both to project Russian power in the Mediterranean and to secure the economic gateway to key



markets in southern Europe.



Black Sea in the Ukraine war

- Russia has been making efforts to gain complete control over the Black Sea since the Crimean crisis of 2014.
- During the ongoing invasion, the domination of the Black Sea has been a major Russian objective, along with the land bridge to connect Russia and Crimea.
- As such, there have been intense efforts to capture Mariupol, the Sea of Azov port in the breakaway eastern Ukrainian oblast of Donetsk.

-Source: *The Hindu*