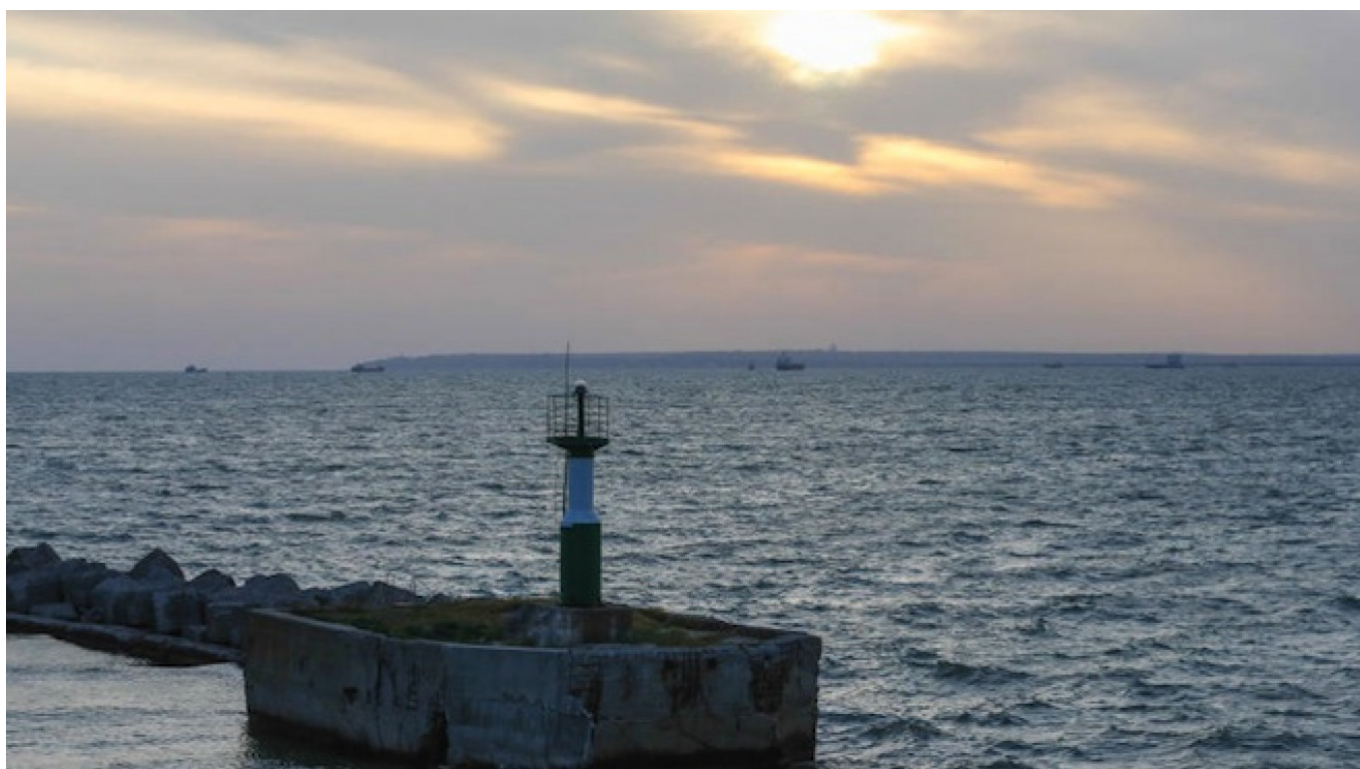


# Ferry Link to Crimea Set to Double Passenger Volumes in 2015

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Kerch Strait in Crimea.

Passenger volumes across the Kerch Strait, the only viable transport link between Crimea and Russia's mainland besides air travel, are forecasted to double this year, according to Russia's Transportation Ministry.

"Our task is to transport daily about 50,000 passengers and 10,000 automobiles both ways," Igor Titov, head of the United Transport Directorate, was quoted by news agency TASS as saying on Saturday. On average, ferries in the area transported about 26,000 passengers and 7,000 cars daily last year.

Ferries across the Kerch Strait carried 2.9 million passengers last year, almost three times more than in 2013, the Transportation Ministry said on Saturday.

After Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in March, a secure transport link with

the peninsula became vital as all ground transport through Ukraine was cut off.

To meet growing passenger demand, in 2014 ferry routes to and from Crimea were increased from 18 to 50 a day running around the clock, Transportation Minister Maxim Sokolov said in a statement issued by the United Transport Directorate, a state-run company that manages the ferry link.

But Kerch Strait ferries are susceptible to delays and disruptions caused by bad weather. A number of these occurred last year, forcing people to stand in lines for hours waiting to be shipped across the 20 kilometer stretch of water.

In order to support the growing passenger volumes the government plans to spend 170 million rubles (\$2.7 million) on improving infrastructure at the two corresponding ports — Kerch and Kavkaz on Russia's mainland, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said at the end of October.

Russia also has plans to build a 247 billion ruble (\$4 billion) rail and automobile bridge to Crimea, slated for completion by 2019.

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