NATO Seeks Provocation in Sea of Azov, Russian Senator Says

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Moscow, Apr 4 (Prensa Latina) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is seeking a provocation in the Sea of Azov, Senator Alexei Pushkov said on Thursday, when commenting the presence of 20 warships from that regional bloc in the Black Sea.

The presence of NATO warships will be impossible, because we will not remain with our arms folded in light of that possibility. So, if it is like that and they know our attitude, then it is an open provocation, the Russian official noted.

NATO is rather seeking a pretext to justify the reinforcement of its presence in the Black Sea and, if possible, in the Sea of Azov, the senator said in reference to the basin shared by Russia and Ukraine as an exclusive maritime zone.

So far, Ukrainian commercial ships are passing through the Kerch Straight without any serious incidents, the Russian lawmaker told Prensa Latina.

The Ukrainian military even held maneuvers in the Sea of Azov and nothing happened, but if there is a provocation, that might have serious consequences, said Pushkov, who noted that the Black Sea would become a new zone of tensions in the world.

Pushkov's statements were made in response to comments by a US official before NATO who said that the purpose was to escort Ukrainian ships through the Kerch Straight and the Sea of Azov.