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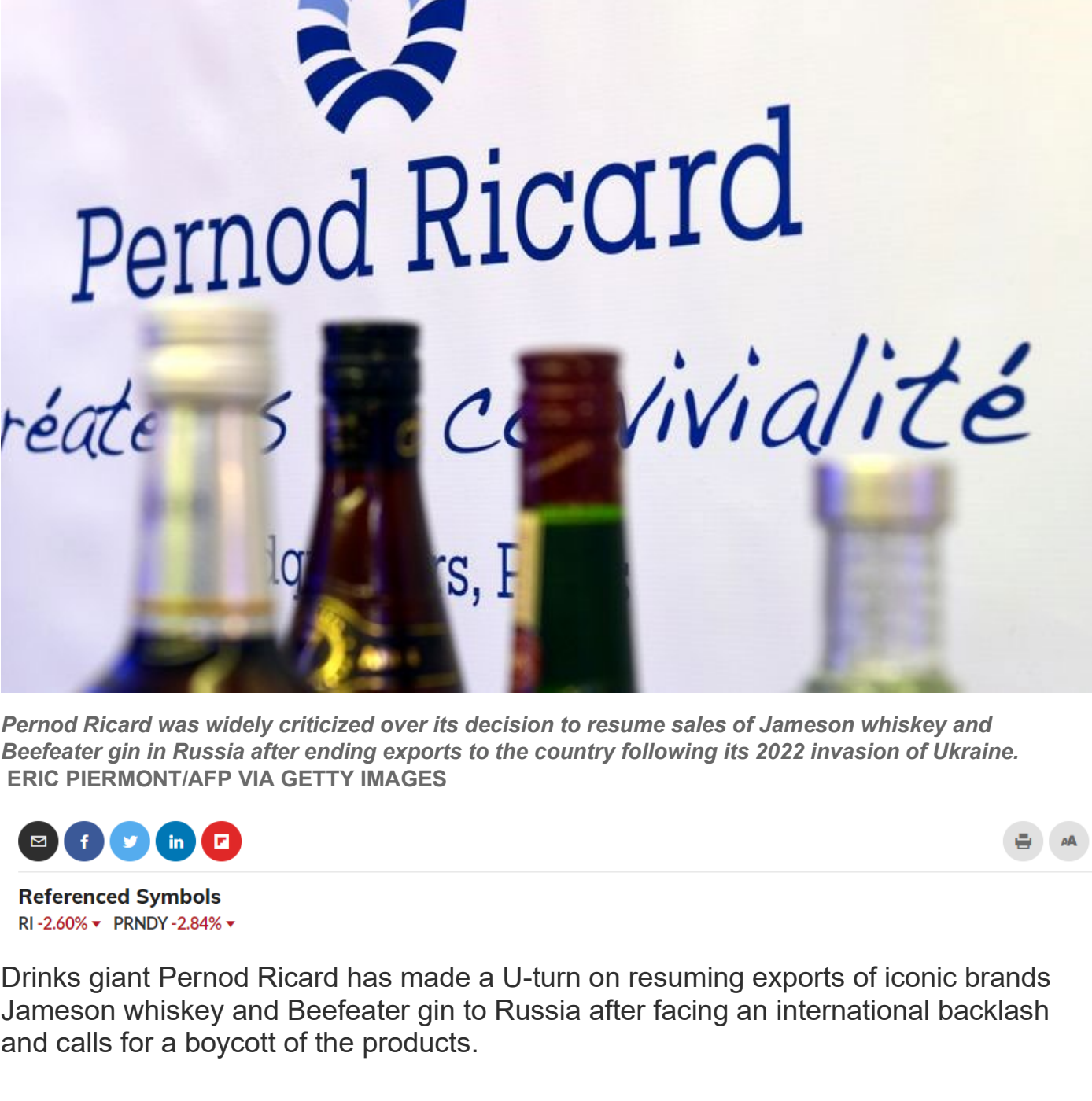
Pernod Ricard makes U-turn on Russia after backlash over Jameson and Beefeater exports

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Beverage giant describes exiting Russia as 'both complex and extremely challenging'



Pernod Ricard was widely criticized over its decision to resume sales of Jameson whiskey and Beefeater gin in Russia after ending exports to the country following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. ERIC PIERMONT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Referenced Symbols
 RI -2.60% PRNDY -2.84%

Drinks giant Pernod Ricard has made a U-turn on resuming exports of iconic brands Jameson whiskey and Beefeater gin to Russia after facing an international backlash and calls for a boycott of the products.

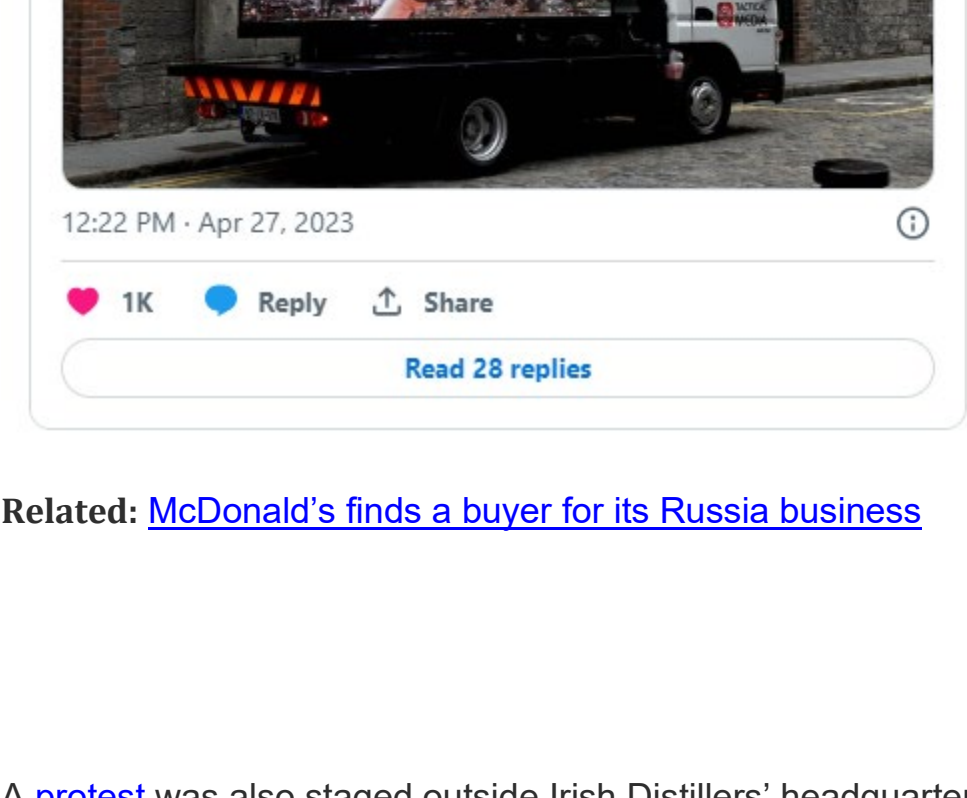
In a statement released Thursday, Pernod Ricard [RI, -2.60%](#) [PRNDY, -2.84%](#) described exiting Russia as “both complex and extremely challenging.” “We also fully understand and acknowledge the reaction over the recent days as we sought to give context to the decisions we have taken,” it added. “Many companies, in our industry and in others, have made the same difficult choice.”

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In its statement, the company continued: “We are working hard to find the best way to navigate this complexity, including stopping the export of our international brands while ensuring the welfare and safety of our team, considering the local legal constraints. Knowing that to do so will not prevent any of our brands falling into the hands of the ‘grey market,’ which has strongly increased in recent months, over which we have no control.”

The drinks conglomerate was widely criticized over its decision to resume sales of the drinks in Russia, after ending exports to the country following the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Jameson is produced in Cork, Ireland, by Pernod Ricard-owned Irish Distillers. The French company also owns Beefeater gin, which is produced in London.

“Time for @jamesonwhiskey to sober up and stop serving Putin,” the Ukraine Solidarity Project tweeted Thursday along with an image of a truck bearing a “Boycott Jameson” sign.



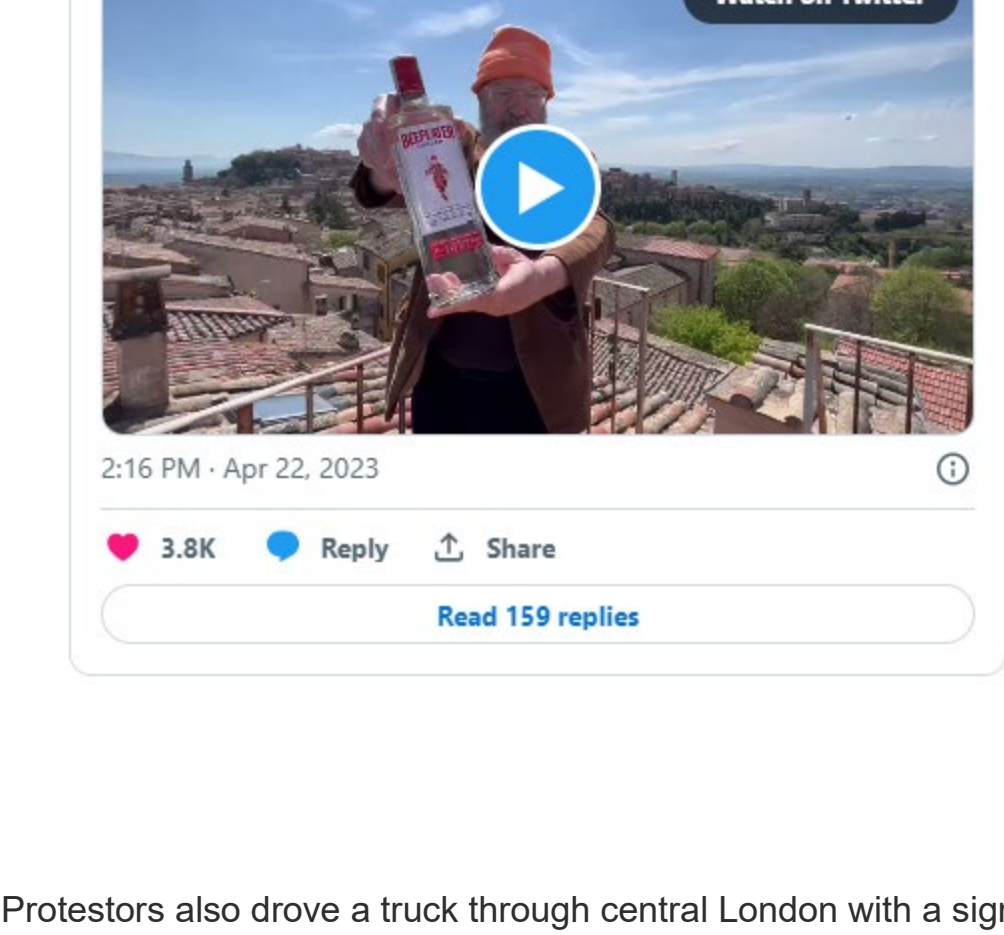
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A [protest](#) was also staged outside Irish Distillers' headquarters in Dublin on Thursday, according to Irish broadcaster RTE. In a [statement](#), Irish Sen. Garret Ahearn described Pernod Ricard's decision to resume Jameson exports to Russia as “morally unjustifiable and wrong.”

The decision to resume sales of Beefeater gin in Russia was also widely condemned. The [Moral Rating Agency](#), an organization set up after the invasion of Ukraine to examine whether companies were carrying out their promises of [exiting Russia](#), blasted Pernod Ricard. “It is ironic to return to Russia while others are still getting out,” said Moral Rating Agency founder Mark Dixon in a statement this week. “It is the first large group we've tracked swimming against the moral tide.”

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“@beefeaterLondon is on sale in Russia thanks to @Pernod_Ricard,” British journalist John Sweeney tweeted last week. “So while that continues, throw your Beefeater Gin away,”



Protestors also drove a truck through central London with a sign calling for a boycott of Beefeater gin.



“Beefeater Gin funds [#RussianFascism](#) by trading with Putin's Russia,” tweeted Mick Antoniw, a member of the Welsh Senate, with an image of the truck outside the Tower of London.



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The Moral Rating Agency also noted that Pernod Ricard was recently forced to reverse its decision to restart exports to Russia of Absolut vodka in the face a backlash in Sweden. “Pernod Ricard had justified its decision to restart supply of Absolut by saying it needed to protect its Russian employees,” Dixon said in the statement. “However, as soon as Swedish people started boycotting Absolut, Pernod promptly cancelled the plan, revealing that Pernod cares more about lost profits in the West than its employees in Russia.”

MarketWatch has reached out to Pernod Ricard with a request for comment on this story.