

Chinese coastal box ships set course for Russia and Red Sea trades



Photo: VesselFinder

By [Martina Li in Taiwan](#)

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Operators focused on providing liner services to Russia and the Red Sea are chartering box ships that were originally plying Chinese domestic routes to fulfill their tonnage requirements.

According to consultancy Linerlytica, Russia-focused operators OVP Shipping, Safetrans Line and Transit recently chartered the newly built 2,070 teu *De Xin Shang Hai*, 2,754 teu *Xin Yong Chang* 27 and the 1,660 teu *Xiang Yuan He Run*, respectively.

De Xin Shang Hai, belonging to Jiangxi Dexin, was fixed for \$25,000 per day for a year. *Xin Yong Chang* 27, owned by Shishi Yongyi Shipping, was chartered for \$43,000 per day for six-to-10 months, while the daily hire rate for Anhui Sunriver's *Xiang Yuan He Run* was undisclosed.

Sealead reportedly chartered Zhonggu Logistics' 2018-built 2,518 teu *Zhong Gu Ri Zhao* for \$28,000 per day for a year.

The twin threats of sanctions and security are deterring other shipowners and tonnage providers from allowing their ships to call at ports in these areas, despite the increasing availability of feeder vessels for charter, which have hitherto been the main workhorses of the Russia and Red Sea trades.

While opportunistic Chinese operators emerged in 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, SeaLead Shipping and other new players began offering Red Sea transits early this year, shortly after Houthi rebels began attacking vessels. Both events resulted in mainline operators vacating these lanes.

Meanwhile, freight rates to Russia have weakened, with stiff competition forcing out some smaller players, according to Linerlytica analyst Tan Hua Joo.

He told *The Loadstar*: "These Chinese ships are in demand because they're able to trade in Russia and the Red Sea, while most other owners are unwilling to allow their ships to trade in these areas.

"Safetrans and OVP have taken on some ships recently due to the split of their former joint service."

He added that last month Chinese carrier Safetrans cashed in on four owned sister ships in the 2,200 teu range – the *SFT China*, *SFT Saudi*, *SFT Egypt* and *SFT Turkey* – which were sold to MSC for "a tidy profit", and has since replaced them with chartered tonnage from Chinese owners.