

Denmark Guards Chinese Bulker Linked to Subsea Cable Damage



Yi Peng 3 passes under the Great Belt Bridge (Storebaelt Bridge webcam)

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Denmark's defense ministry has confirmed that it is monitoring a Chinese bulker suspected of potential involvement in the severing of two subsea cables in the Baltic last weekend. The damage is being investigated as a presumed sabotage attack.

The vessel, the *Yi Peng 3*, was outbound from St. Petersburg in the Baltic during the timeframe of the two back-to-back cable breaks. Its AIS record shows that it exhibited unusual course and speed changes at positions that may have corresponded to the twin casualties.

The ship was intercepted by a Danish Navy patrol ship as it transited towards the Great Belt on November 18. The bulker then went to anchor in the Kattegat, with the patrol ship waiting nearby. Despite the appearance of formal intervention, Denmark stopped short of announcing that the ship had been detained.

"The Danish Defence can confirm that we are present in the area near the Chinese ship *Yi Peng 3*. The Danish Defence currently has no further comments," the ministry said in a brief statement.

Sweden's National Operations Department confirmed that the vessel is under scrutiny. "It is part of the sphere of interest, but there may be more," spokesman Per Engström said.

Given the recent pattern of Russian sabotage attacks in the EU and the UK, combined with Russia's advanced subsea warfare capabilities and repeated threats against European nations, speculation about the identity of the attacker immediately turned to Moscow. German news outlet Bild reports that the vessel's master is a Russian national, a common arrangement given the large number of

Russian officers in the global fleet. On Wednesday, the Kremlin dismissed suspicions of Russian involvement as "ridiculous."

Sweden is leading an investigation into the suspected sabotage attack, including any potential role played by the *Yi Peng*, according to the Financial Times. On site investigations are planned with ROV dives, but so far the effort has been hampered by poor winter weather.

Finland's security service noted that accidental cable breakages are globally common, amounting to about 200 incidents per year, with most attributable to anchoring or trawling.

The last major subsea infrastructure incident in the Baltic occurred in October 2023, and it has been attributed to the Chinese container ship, the *NewNew Polar Bear*. As the vessel transited across the northeastern Baltic Sea towards St. Petersburg, it trailed an anchor along the bottom for hundreds of nautical miles, rupturing the Balticconnector gas pipeline and severing two fiber-optic cables. Chinese investigators confirmed that the *NewNew Polar Bear* was responsible, but reportedly concluded that the anchor-drag incident was an accident, according to the South China Morning Post. A Finnish-Estonian criminal investigation into the case is still under way.