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Submarine fiber-optic cable connections in the Baltic Sea

vulnerabilities and threats

CDR (retired) Olli Peltonen | RIPE 90 | 15.5.2025

NEWS > POLITICS

'Everything indicates' Chinese ship damaged Baltic pipeline on purpose, Finland says

'I would think that you would notice that you're dragging an anchor behind you for hundreds of kilometers,' says minister.

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Finland and Estonia have since been in touch with Chinese officials seeking their cooperation with the investigation.
Hanna Saaremaa/Laifundus/REUTERS/Gallo Images

DECEMBER 1, 2023 4:32 PM CET
BY CLAUDIA CHAPPA AND PIERRE-EMMANUEL NGENDAKUMANA

BRUSSELS — As the investigation into damage to Baltic Sea critical infrastructure continues, Finland's Minister of European Affairs Anders Adlercreutz said it's hard to believe sabotage to the undersea gas pipeline was accidental — or that it happened without Beijing's knowledge.

"I'm not the sea captain. But I would think that you would notice that you're dragging an anchor behind you for hundreds of kilometers," Adlercreutz said in an interview Thursday in Brussels. "I think everything indicates that it was intentional. But of course, so far, nobody has admitted to it."

Finland and Estonia have been investigating the rupture of the Balticconnector, a 77-kilometer-long gas pipeline that connects the two NATO members beneath the Baltic Sea. The pipeline was damaged around October 7-8, along with two telecoms cables connecting Estonia to Finland and Sweden.

New Atlanticist November 21, 2024

Suspected sabotage by a Chinese vessel in the Baltic Sea speaks wider threat

By Elisabeth Drew



Officially the *Yi Peng 3* is just a bulk carrier, one of countless such ships carrying everything from aluminum, and fertilizer. But as she left Russia's Baltic port of Ust-Luga last week, the Chinese-flagged vessel has had a rather different mission. Authorities and the open-source intelligence (OSINT) community have pointed to the ship as potentially responsible for cutting two undersea cables on her journey through the Baltic Sea, and Germany's defense minister has already called this a hybrid attack. More such incidents are expected.

On November 17, an undersea cable connecting Sweden and Lithuania was cut, and less than a week later, the only communications cable connecting Finland with Germany was also severed. As OSINT quickly gathered, the *Yi Peng 3* was at the scene both times. Swedish, Lithuanian, Finnish, and Danish officials have not yet publicly blamed the bulk carrier, but as she sailed from the Baltic Sea toward Denmark from there toward the Atlantic Ocean, her actions have drawn scrutiny. By the time the bulk carrier reached the Great Belt, on November 19, she was being followed by Danish Navy vessels.

TAGS: Tankers and Gas Ukraine crisis Geopolitics

Russia-linked cable-cutting tanker seized by Finland 'was loaded with spying equipment'

Listening equipment was placed on *Eagle S* and related tanker *Swiftsea Rider* during the ship's naval and aircraft activities, Lloyd's List was told

27 Dec 2024 NEWS



by Michelle Wiese Bockmann

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Eagle S, the Russia-linked tanker suspected of damaging an underwater electricity cable, was kitted out with special transmitting and receiving devices that were used to monitor naval and aircraft activities, a source with direct involvement in the ship, which has since been detained by Finnish authorities.

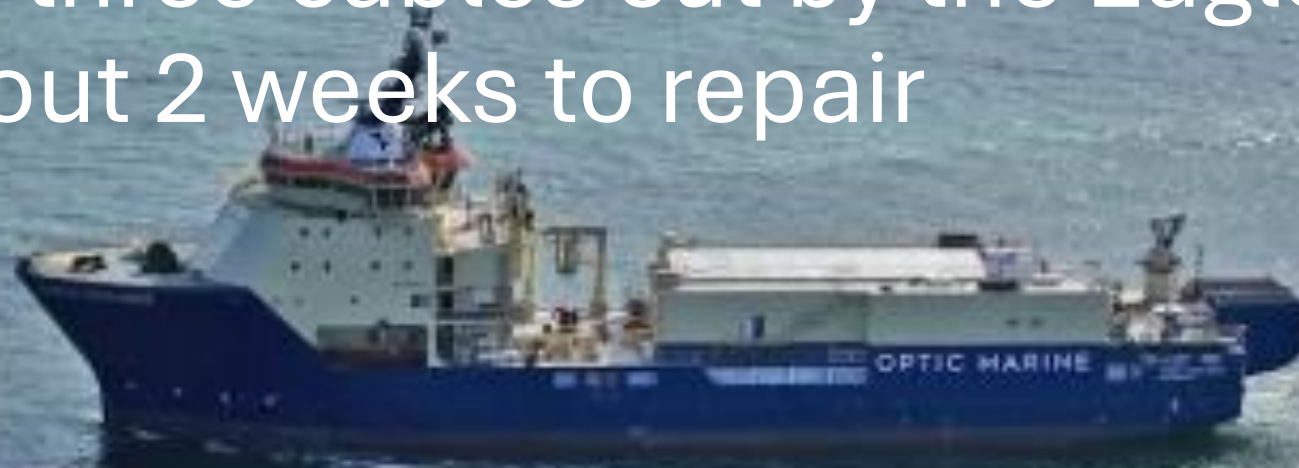
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FINNISH COAST GUARD WITH *EAGLE S* SHOWN IN THE BACKGROUND AFTER SUSPECTED CABLE SABOTAGE INCIDENT

RUSSIA-LINKED dark fleet* tanker *Eagle S* (IMO: 9329760), seized by Finland on December 27, was found to have been equipped with special transmitting and receiving devices that effectively allowed it to monitor naval and aircraft activities, a source with direct involvement in the ship, which has since been detained by Finnish authorities.

The first three cables cut by the Eagle S took about 2 weeks to repair



C/S CABLE VIGILANCE

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Kuvat julki: tältä katkenneen merikaapelin korjaus näyttää

C-Lion1-merikaapelin korjaustyöt ovat alkaneet.



Ranskalainen Cable Vigilance -laiva korjaa katkennutta merikaapelia Itämerellä. Korjaustyöissä käytetään muun muassa kauko-ohjattavaa robottia. Kuva: Cinia Oy

There are a few
cable ships
available

Simultaneous repair of several
submarine cables causes a
resource bottleneck for
submarine cable owners

The location information of submarine cables is public



The services rely on the internet – the internet relies on submarine connections

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- A significant part of cloud services and their service components are produced from data centres located at the end of submarine cable connections
- Even when services are provided from a nearby data center, much of the traffic is routed through Europe, often from countries like Germany or Ireland, as well as the United States
- Disrupting connections can have a significant impact on society and the everyday lives of citizens



Summary

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- Cable damage in the Baltic Sea is deliberately caused by hybrid influence
- We have to be prepared also for the worst-case scenario
- Operators and service providers should take a comprehensive look at end-user services and consider how we can improve the production, management, and routing to verify the services in the European regions, also in times of crisis.





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