

Underwater Drone Identifies Drag Marks Along Chinese Ship's Path Over Damaged Baltic Cables

Two underwater telecommunications cables were damaged last month, as the Chinese cargo vessel Yi Peng 3 transited the Baltic Sea.

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A view of the anchor of the Chinese ship, the bulk carrier Yi Peng 3, in the sea of Kattegat, near the City of Grenaa in Jutland, Denmark, dated Nov. 20, 2024. Mikkel Berg Pedersen/Ritzau Scanpix/via Reuters



By Ryan Morgan

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Underwater drone operators have reportedly found drag marks in the Baltic seabed that overlap with the path of a Chinese vessel that transited the waterway as two undersea telecommunications cables were damaged last month.

Blueye Robotics, which partnered with Denmark's TV2 and Sweden's TV4 news stations, sent underwater drones into the Kattegat Strait to search for signs of sabotage after cables connecting between Finland and Germany and between Sweden and Lithuania were damaged.

The search specifically focused on the path of the Yi Peng 3, a Chinese cargo vessel that had operated in the area when the cables were damaged.

In a Dec. 17 press statement, Blueye Robotics **announced** its search had uncovered "unusual seabed activity where the vessel Yi Peng 3 crossed key power and telecom cables in Kattegat."

TV2 reported Danish defense official Jens Wenzel Kristoffersen identified the drag marks along the Chinese ship's course as the potential imprint of an anchor.

Swedish and Danish coast guard and naval forces closed in on the Chinese vessel after underwater cables were damaged on Nov. 17 and Nov. 18. Both cables were damaged within Sweden's exclusive economic zone.

Last month, the Chinese Foreign Ministry **denied** having knowledge of the Yi Peng 3's operations and called for investigating authorities to respect the ship's right to navigate through the waterway.

The ship has remained anchored in the waterway in the weeks since, as authorities from the surrounding countries have sought access to the ship as part of their investigations.

China permitted investigators from Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark to board the Yi Peng 3 on Dec. 19.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said he helped facilitate the visit aboard the cargo ship in order to break the standoff that has halted the vessel's transit.

The Chinese ship departed from the Russian Baltic Sea port in Ust-Luga on Nov. 15.

“It is our expectation that once the inspection has been completed by this group of people from the four countries, the ship will be able to sail towards its destination,” Lokke Rasmussen said.

In a press statement, Swedish police said they were invited to act only as observers, while Chinese authorities conducted investigations aboard the ship during the visit.

The Swedish authorities said they're continuing their investigation into the deep sea cable sabotage separate from the visit aboard the suspect vessel.

It remains to be seen what new information will be gleaned from the international visit and the Chinese-led investigation aboard the Yi Peng 3 on Dec. 19.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius has previously dismissed speculation that the damage to the two underwater cables was accidental.

“So we have to state—without knowing in concrete terms who it came from—that this is a hybrid action. And we also have to assume—without already knowing it, obviously—that this is sabotage,” Pistorius said in a Nov. 19 press statement.

Reuters contributed to this report.

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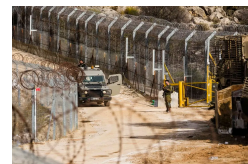
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