The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Finland Probes Apparent Russian Arms Smuggling to Syria

By The Moscow Times

February 17, 2013



HELSINKI — Finnish customs officials are investigating an apparent Russian attempt to smuggle arms to Syria through a Helsinki port in breach of an EU ban, after intercepting a container with spare parts for tanks last month.

Customs confiscated the parts, found in a container on the Finnsun, owned by Finnlines, when the vessel docked at the port of Vuosaari.

The container appeared have been sent from Russia to Syria, customs said in a statement, adding that there had been no requests for permission of such a delivery.

Finnlines confirmed that the cargo in question had been loaded in St. Petersburg on Dec. 20 and said it raised the alarm after finding the equipment in a regular onboard audit at the port of Antwerp, Belgium.

The company decided to deliver the container to customs officials in Finland, its previous stop.

“Finnlines immediately requested the Finnish customs to restrain the cargo,” it said in a statement.

Russia is one of Syria’s main arms suppliers and has long been an ally of President Bashar Assad, sending him nearly $1 billion in weapons in 2011.

The European Union prohibits the delivery of arms from its countries to Syria, where almost 70,000 people have been killed in two years of civil war, according to the United Nations.

The captain of the ship and Finnlines staffers were questioned, the customs office said, adding that it was also asking for help from other countries.

Vyacheslav Davidenko, a spokesman for Russia’s state arms exporter, Rosoboronexport, said he had no information about the delivery of any spare tank parts from his company to Syria, adding that they may have been confused with other arms parts.

“Sending spare parts through Finland is not exactly logical,” he said by telephone.

Related articles:

- Foreign Ministry Expects Moscow Talks Over Syria This Month
- Russian Arms Sales Double as Sales to Syria Continue
- Two Russian Hostages Freed in Syria

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/02/17/finland-probes-apparent-russian-arms-smuggling-to-syria-a21591