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Dutch Deny Russian Suggestion That Mystery Vessel in Sweden Is Theirs

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This photo made available by the Swedish Defense Ministry shows an object in the sea near Stockholm.

Amid unconfirmed reports that a mystery vessel being hunted by the Swedish navy is a Russian submarine, a source in the Russian Defense Ministry told state news agency RIA Novosti on Monday that the object of the search could be a Dutch submarine.

"In order to relieve tensions in the Baltic Sea and save the Swedish taxpayers' money, we would recommend asking the Dutch naval command for an explanation," the unidentified source was quoted as saying, clarifying that a Dutch Bruinvis diesel-electric submarine had been carrying out a mission in the past week in the vicinity of Stockholm, where the search is under way.

The Swedish navy has been tracking "foreign underwater activity" in its territorial waters since Friday. A Swedish newspaper report that the search had been prompted by an emergency radio transmission in Russian sparked public speculation that a damaged Russian submarine may be stranded in the area.

Norway's VG newspaper cited the Dutch Defense Ministry as denying that one of its submarines was in Swedish waters.

"Our fleet was in the Baltic Sea as part of NATO exercises. These exercises are now finished, and our ships are on their way home," a Dutch Defense Ministry representative was quoted as saying, Gazeta.ru reported.

The unidentified Russian military source echoed previous statements made over the weekend that there were no emergency situations in the Baltic involving Russian vessels.

"[Russia] has rendered all possible assistance to the Swedes in their fruitless search, having stated there are not and have not been any emergency situations involving Russian navy ships — submarines included," RIA cited the source as saying.

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