

Russia Secures Pens Holding 'Spy Whales,' Satellite Images Show

By [The Barents Observer](#)

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Dagbladet / Youtube

Two whale pens along Russia's Barents Sea coast have been securely tied up months after a runaway beluga whale nicknamed 'Whaledimir' was first spotted by local fishermen in Norway, satellite imagery shows.

In May, a series of Google Earth satellite images [showed](#) two locations on the Kola Peninsula within closed Russian naval territories where beluga whales were being held in pens. The whale, which was wearing a harness with mounts for a GoPro camera when it [approached](#) humans in Norway, may have escaped from Russia while the pens were being moved to a new location.

Recently updated satellite images from the same area now show two fewer pens in Goryachie Ruchy, south of Polyarny. These two are likely the ones moved to the inlet of Olenya Bay and tied up between a small island and the mainland.

There are three clearly visible mooring ropes and lines to each side from the two pens, with additional ropes in between the mooring lines. At least one beluga whale can be seen inside the largest pen.

The new location is a few hundred meters to the north of the easternmost pier at the submarine base in Olenya Bay. Unlike other submarine bases on the coast of the Kola Peninsula, the submarines here do not carry weapons but are specially designed for underwater research and spy operations.

The Covert Shores has [published](#) two maps found on Russian social media that appear to show a plan for relocating three beluga pens at a new facility in the eastern end of Olenya Bay.

The reports have led observers to speculate that a secret Russian military program that trains beluga whales and maybe other marine mammals like seals or dolphins for underwater missions.

It is still unclear how the well-trained, people-friendly whale managed to escape from the Russian Navy or what possible mission it was part of with the GoPro camera when it appeared in Norwegian waters outside Hammerfest.

Swimming from Olenya Bay or Goryachie Ruchy to Hammerfest is a distance of 500 kilometers.

Olenya Bay is home to Russia's 29th Special Submarine Squadron, a fleet of secret special-missions submarines operated by the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research (GUGI). Last year, The Barents Observer [reported](#) on the base and the fleet of spy submarines, including several small nuclear-powered subs that can sit still on the seafloor.

The bay was also the homeport of the Losharik nuclear-powered special purpose submarine which was hit by a fatal [fire](#) in July, killing 14 crew members.

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