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Russia Blocks Second Cargo Ship Over 'Explosives Traces'

July 27, 2023



The Bmo River. **Babur Haluluport security officer / MarineTraffic.com**

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said Thursday it had found "explosives traces" on a cargo ship bound for the southern Russian port of Rostov-on-Don through the Black Sea.

The ship, Bmo River, arrived from Turkey and had previously sailed twice to the Ukrainian port of Reni, the state-run Interfax news agency reported, citing security officials.

"The foreign ship may have been used earlier to transport explosive substances to Ukraine," the FSB said.

"A decision was made to prevent the ship's passage under the shipping arch of the Kerch Strait and it has been turned back from Russian territorial waters," it added.

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Online vessel tracking shows that the Bmo River is a cargo ship sailing under the flag of

the Micronesia nation of Palau. The ship's home port is in Valletta, the capital of Malta.

Bmo River's last documented location early Thursday was as an anchorage point south of the Crimea bridge, which connects the annexed peninsula with mainland Russia.

It is the second ship Russia turned away over "explosives traces" since Moscow pulled out of a deal that had allowed Ukraine to bypass Russia's blockade of the Black Sea and export millions of tons of grain.

On Monday, the FSB said it had blocked an unidentified foreign cargo ship from crossing the Kerch Strait that leads to ports in Russian-occupied southern Ukraine.

Russia's intelligence agency suggested at the time that Kyiv might be using "foreign civilian vessels to deliver explosives to Ukraine."

Since quitting the Black Sea grain deal last week, Russian forces have carried out daily air and missile strikes on southern Ukraine's Odesa region, damaging port infrastructure facilities and civilian vessels.

AFP contributed to this reporting.

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