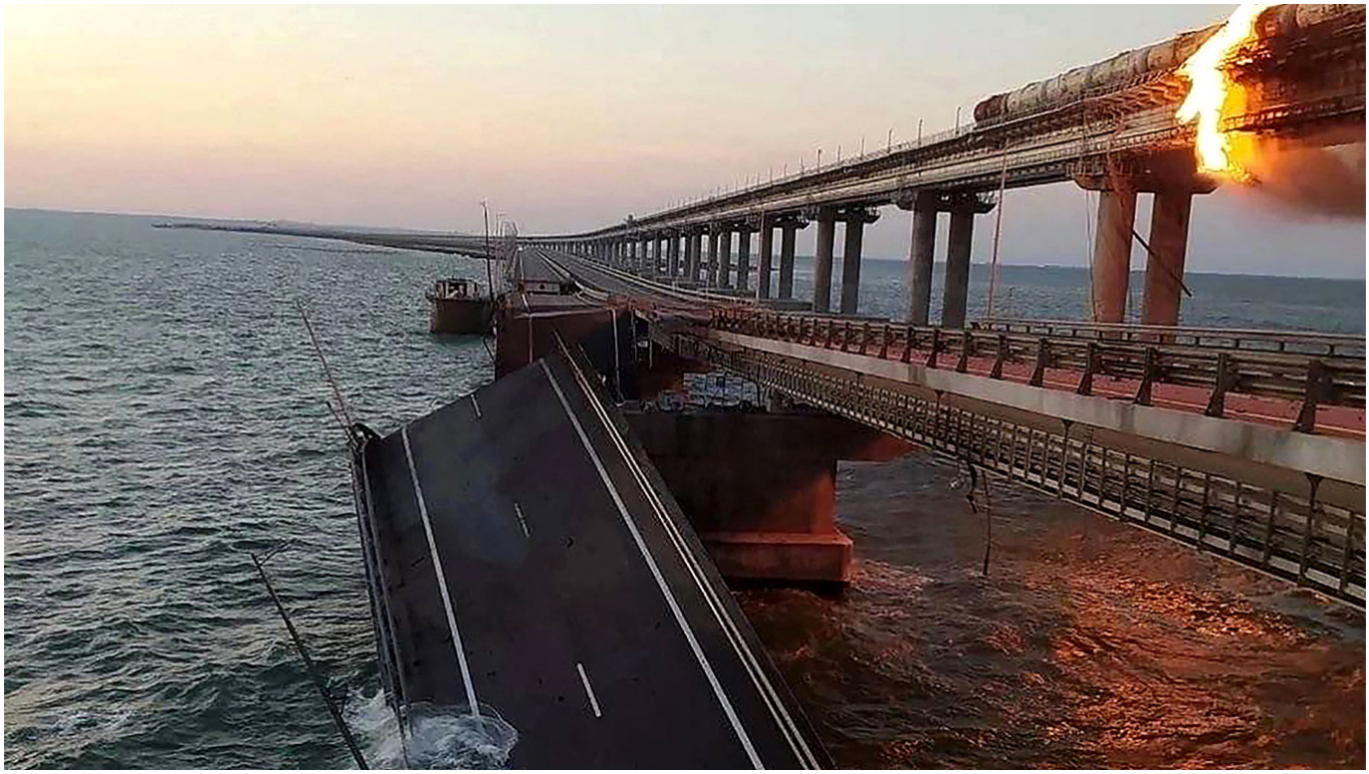
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian and Chinese Business Leaders Discuss Undersea Crimea Tunnel

November 24, 2023



A fire sparked by a car bomb that has broken out on a key bridge linking Crimea to Russia. **Security Service of Ukraine / AFP**

Russian and Chinese business executives with government connections have secretly discussed building an underwater tunnel connecting Crimea to Russia, according to communications obtained by the Ukrainian security services and corroborated and reported by the Washington Post.

The Russian-built bridge over the Kerch Strait is vulnerable to Ukrainian attacks, having been hit twice since Feb. 2022.

As a result, Russia is looking for safer alternative transportation routes.

The Washington Post reported that an October email from the state-owned Chinese Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) said they were "ready to ensure the construction of railway and road construction projects of any complexity in the Crimean region."

Another email, from Vladimir Kalyuzhny, a Russian businessman leading the project, describes the CRCC as being ready to act as the general contractor for the tunnel construction project specifically.

The project is evidence of Russia's commitment to maintaining its hold on Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

It also opens China, which has not recognized Russia's claim of sovereignty over Crimea, up to political and financial risks including Western sanctions.

Chinese communications indicated a desire to keep their involvement secret, saying the CRCC would only participate under a "strict provision of complete confidentiality" and would use the name of a different legal entity on contracts.

The Washington Post reports that the discussions included meetings in late October and the creation of a Russian-Chinese consortium in Crimea directed by Kalyuzhny.

Kalyuzhny, told Washington Post reporters the issue was "a lot of hot air" and said he would not provide "enemy media" with any information.

U.S. officials and engineering experts told the Washington Post while technically feasible, a similar project has never been attempted in a warzone. That it would take years to complete and cost billions of dollars.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/24/russian-and-chinese-business-leaders-discuss-undersea-crimea-tunnel-a83207