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Germany Races To Secure Stricken 'Russian Shadow Fleet' Oil Tanker

By AFP

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The tanker Eventin **HANDOUT/Havariekommando/AFP**

Germany raced Saturday to secure a heavily loaded tanker stranded off its northern coast, towing the stricken ship it said was part of Russia's sanctions-busting "shadow fleet" away from shore to avert an oil spill.

The 274-meter-long Eventin was sailing from Russia to Egypt with almost 100,000 tonnes of oil on board when its engine failed and it lost the ability to maneuvre, according to Germany's Central Command for Maritime Emergencies.

As the vessel drifted in coastal waters Friday, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock slammed Russia's use of "dilapidated oil tankers" to avoid sanctions on its oil exports, calling it a threat to European security.

Three tugs have linked up with the Eventin and are attempting to steer it northeast, away

from the coast and toward a "safer" area where there is "more sea space", the command said.

It said it had taken "safety measures" due to rough seas, with 2.5-metre-high (8 feet) waves and strengthening wind gusts.

The ship was intercepted off the island of Ruegen, having come within 14 kilometers (9 miles) of the coast.

No oil leaks were detected by several surveillance overflights, authorities said Friday, and responders have passed radios and flashlights to the stranded crew.

It will take around eight hours to pull the Eventin roughly 25 kilometers to safer waters northeast of Cape Arkona, the command said early Saturday, adding they expected it to arrive by mid-morning.

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Although the tanker was navigating under the Panamanian flag, the German foreign ministry linked it to Russia's sanctions-busting "shadow fleet."

Baerbock said that "by ruthlessly deploying a fleet of rusty tankers, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is not only circumventing the sanctions but is also willingly accepting that tourism on the Baltic Sea will come to a standstill" in the event of an accident."

Following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Western countries have hit Russia's oil industry with an embargo and banned the provision of services to ships carrying oil by sea.

In response, Russia has relied on tankers with opaque ownership or without proper insurance to continue lucrative oil exports.

The number of ships in the "shadow fleet" has exploded since the start of the war in Ukraine, according to US think tank the Atlantic Council.

In addition to direct action against Russia's oil industry, Western countries have moved to sanction individual ships thought to be in the shadow fleet.

The European Union has so far sanctioned over 70 ships thought to be ferrying Russian oil.

On Friday, the United States and Britain moved to impose restrictions on around 180 more ships in the shadow fleet.

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