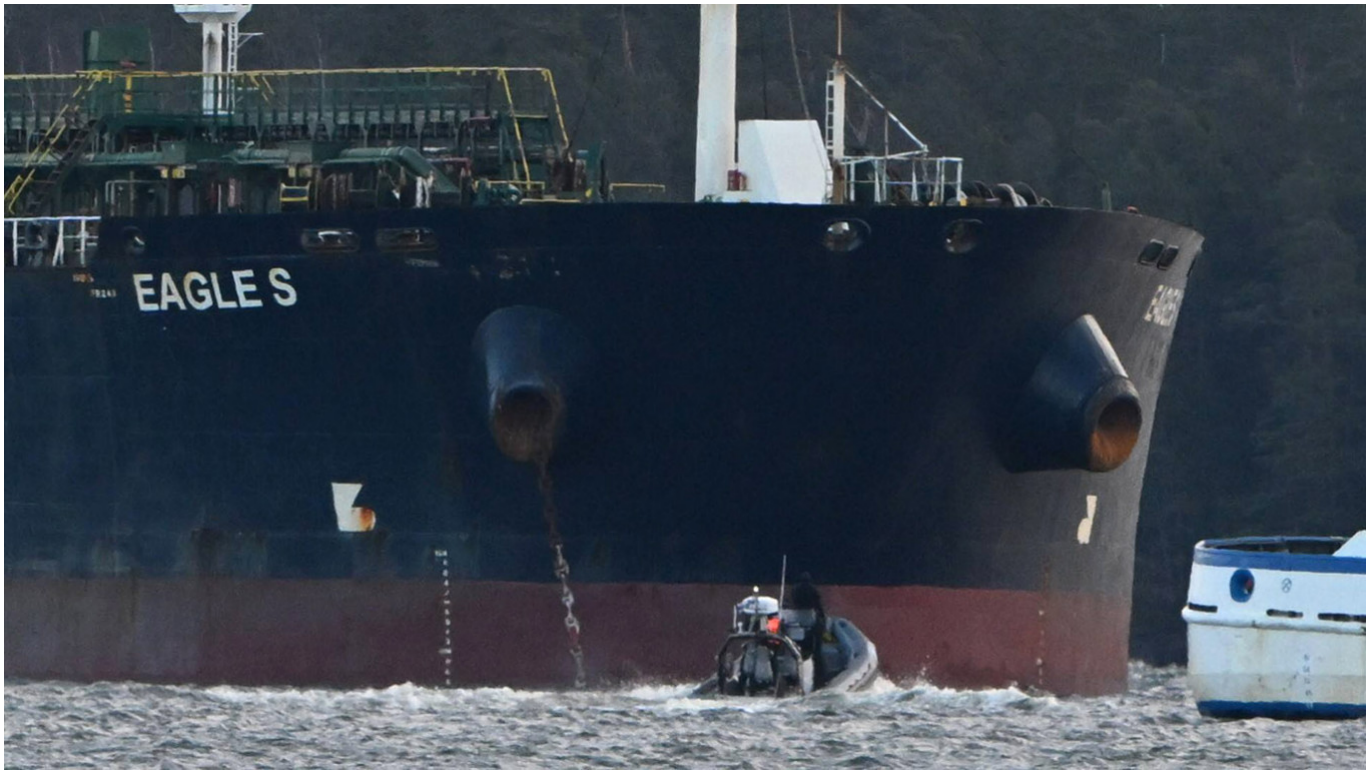
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Tanker Suspected of Damaging Baltic Cables Allowed to Leave Finland

By AFP

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The seized oil tanker Eagle S in Porvoo, Finland. **Jussi Nukari / IMAGO / TAS**

An oil tanker believed to belong to Russia's "shadow fleet" and suspected of sabotaging undersea Baltic cables has been allowed to leave Finland's waters, where it has been held since December, Finnish police said Sunday.

The Eagle S, which is registered in the Cook Islands, is suspected of intentionally dragging its anchor dozens of kilometres along the Baltic seabed, damaging an electrical cable and four telecommunications cables on Dec. 25.

"As the criminal investigation conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation, including the forensic investigation on board Eagle S, has progressed, there are no longer grounds for continuing the seizure of the tanker," police said in a statement.

The Swedish navy found the anchor in January.

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Finnish police suspect eight of the tanker's crew of involvement, and three of them are still barred from leaving Finland.

The investigation will continue, the police said, adding they expect it to be completed by the end of April.

Security analysts say Russia is operating a large "shadow fleet" of hundreds of vessels, seeking to dodge the sanctions Western nations imposed on its oil exports over the war in Ukraine.

Several undersea Baltic cables were damaged last year, with some experts calling it part of a "hybrid war" carried out by Russia against Western countries.

Both Sweden and Finland joined NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and the military alliance has recently increased its surveillance in the Baltic Sea.

The Finnish coast guard will escort the Eagle S to international waters.

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