The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

In First, Chinese Cargo Ship Docks in Sanctioned Crimean Port – FT

September 23, 2025



vesselfinder.com

A Chinese-owned cargo vessel has docked in the port of Sevastopol for the first time since Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, the Financial Times reported Tuesday, citing satellite images, photographs and transponder data.

The series of stops by a foreign tanker in Sevastopol, which is internationally recognized as part of Ukraine and is barred by Western sanctions, is unprecedented.

The Panama-flagged container ship Heng Yang 9, operated by the Guangxi Changhai Shipping Company, has stopped in Crimea at least three times in recent months, the FT said, citing Ukrainian officials.

The vessel moored in Sevastopol on Sept. 14 after departing Istanbul on Sept. 2 and stopping near the southern Russian port of Novorossiysk four days later.

While the crew later declared it was heading to the Port Kavkaz, satellite images from the

European Space Agency on Sept. 9 and 11 showed the ship had diverted to Sevastopol.

According to the FT, the vessel repeatedly falsified its transponder data during the two-week voyage in the Black Sea to conceal its movements.

Related article: China Pledges Closer Ties With Russia After Trump's Sanctions Threat

Ukraine's presidential office said the ship had already visited Sevastopol in June and August before sailing on to Turkey and Egypt, possibly transporting goods from the Russian-occupied Donetsk and Kherson regions, which are known for heavy industry and agriculture.

"Ukraine has made it clear that such actions are unacceptable and expects all international partners and companies to strictly avoid contacts with the occupied territories," Vladyslav Vlasiuk, Kyiv's sanctions policy envoy, told the FT.

Although China has not joined Western sanctions on Russia, its vessels had until now avoided Crimean ports, FT said.

Ukraine's embassy in Beijing lodged a protest after the Heng Yang 9's first docking in Sevastopol in June, Vlasiuk told the FT.

China's Foreign Ministry in response pledged to look into the incident while reiterating its guidance that Chinese firms and citizens should steer clear of occupied Ukrainian territories.

Past investigations have found covert shipping links to Crimea despite sanctions. The investigative outlet OCCRP reported that vessels including the Palau-flagged General, Germany's MS Sudkap and Greek tanker Kriti had all docked on the peninsula.

The development comes shortly after China accepted its first cargo of liquefied natural gas from Russia's Arctic LNG-2 project, which is under U.S. sanctions.

Within three weeks, five more tankers delivered shipments to China, with Washington taking no steps to block the flows.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/09/23/in-first-chinese-cargo-ship-docks-in-sanctioned-crimean-port-ft-a90597