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Finland Releases Ship Suspected of Damaging Undersea Cable on New Year's Eve

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A Finnish coast guard ship. **Finnish Border Guard / raja.fi**

Finnish police said Monday that they lifted the seizure of a cargo ship suspected of damaging an undersea cable in the Gulf of Finland on New Year's Eve after it departed from a port in Russia.

Authorities in the Nordic country seized the Fitburg, which sails under a St. Vincent and the Grenadines flag, as it was traveling from St. Petersburg, Russia, to Haifa, Israel.

Finnish police allege that the Fitburg dragged its anchor along the seabed for "at least several tens of kilometers" before it struck a telecommunications cable linking Finland and Estonia.

Fourteen crew members from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan were detained for questioning after the ship was seized. Finnish customs authorities said the Fitburg's cargo contained steel products subject to Western sanctions.

On Monday, Fitburg left Finland's territorial waters at around 11:00 a.m. local time.

Related article: Vessel Coming From Russia Dragged Anchor Before Subsea Cable Damaged – Finnish Police

Finland's National Bureau of Investigation said it was continuing an investigation into "aggravated criminal damage, attempted aggravated criminal damage and aggravated interference with telecommunications."

"Criminal offenses may change as the investigation progresses," the law enforcement agency said in a statement.

A Helsinki court on Sunday placed a crew member of the Fitburg in custody pending trial and an unspecified number of other sailors under a travel ban, according to lead investigator Risto Lohi.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Western officials and security experts have increasingly viewed suspected cable sabotage in the Baltic Sea as part of a broader campaign of so-called "hybrid warfare" targeting NATO countries.

In December 2024, the Cook Islands-registered oil tanker Eagle S dragged its anchor across the seabed, damaging five undersea cables in the Gulf of Finland.

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