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Sweden Seizes False-Flagged Oil Tanker Allegedly Bound for Russia

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Swedish police board the Sea Owl I. **Swedish coast guard**

Sweden's coast guard said Thursday that it seized a false-flagged ship that is part of Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" of oil tankers, coming days after authorities in the Scandinavian country took control of a cargo ship suspected of transporting stolen grain from Ukraine.

Ship tracking services show that the 228-meter (748-foot) Sea Owl I left Santos in Brazil on Feb. 15 and was headed for Tallinn, Estonia when Swedish police boarded it off the southern town of Trelleborg. Sweden's coast guard claimed the ship was actually bound for the port of Primorsk, located northwest of the city of St. Petersburg.

"The tanker Sea Owl I flies the Comorian flag. The coast guard suspects that it is not included in their ship register, that it is sailing under a false flag and that there is therefore no flag state that can guarantee the safety on board," the coast guard said in a statement.

"A preliminary investigation into suspected violations of the maritime act regarding lack of seaworthiness has been initiated," it added, without saying whether any of the crew members

were detained.

Related article: Sweden Detains Crew Member of Russian 'Shadow Fleet' Ship

Sweden's coast guard said the Sea Owl I is on an EU sanctions list and has transported oil products between Brazil and Russia in recent years.

There was no immediate response from authorities in Moscow.

Russia's "shadow fleet" consists of vessels with opaque ownership used to skirt Western sanctions. In October, the EU sanctioned nearly 120 tankers belonging to the fleet.

Last week, police in Sweden seized a false-flagged cargo ship believed to belong to Russia's "shadow fleet" and suspected of transporting stolen Ukrainian grain.

The captain of that ship, the Caffe, was detained and is under investigation for violation of the maritime code on seaworthiness and ship safety.

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