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Russian Tanker 'Out of Control' After Failed Towing, Libyan Authorities Say

By AFP

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The Arctic Metagaz. **Libyan General Administration for Coast Security**

Libyan authorities on Thursday said efforts to tow a Russian gas tanker, abandoned after a series of explosions, had failed due to bad weather and that the vessel remained adrift in the Mediterranean.

The Arctic Metagaz was abandoned in the Mediterranean after it was hit by a series of explosions on March 3 while it was ferrying a consignment of liquified natural gas (LNG) from Russia to Egypt.

Russia accused Ukraine of trying to blow it up, though Kyiv has yet to comment.

According to Russian authorities, it was still carrying around 700 tons of fuel as well as "a significant amount of natural gas" at the time it was abandoned.

Libyan authorities had announced on March 24 the start of operations to tow the vessel, but

on Thursday said bad weather had prevented the operation.

The Libyan authority for ports or maritime transport said in a statement that the towing could not be undertaken due to "difficult weather conditions."

"Wind gusts reaching up to 40 or 50 knots and waves five meters high" prevented the operation, the authority said.

The tanker is now "out of control," it added.

It warned "all vessels, maritime units and competent authorities" of the failure, urging them to stay clear of the vessel and report any sightings of fire or smoke.

Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) had said it would collaborate with Italian group Eni to pull the wrecked vessel towards the North African country's shores.

But fears of an environmental disaster convinced the Libyan authorities to tow it away from the Libyan coast "to reduce the risk of pollution to the Libyan coastline."

All crew members were rescued after the ship was hit and it has since remained adrift between Libya and Malta.

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