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Sweden Releases Russian Captain After 'Shadow Fleet' Ship Detention

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The Caffa. **kustbevakningen.se**

Swedish authorities said Wednesday that they released the Russian captain of a cargo ship following his detention last month.

The Guinea-flagged Caffa was headed for St. Petersburg when Swedish police boarded it on March 7 on suspicion of being stateless due to its unclear flag status.

Authorities initially suspected the ship was part of Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" — a network of aging, poorly insured ships used to bypass Western sanctions — and may have been transporting Ukrainian grain.

The captain, a Russian citizen, was reportedly charged with misuse of false documents and violating maritime safety laws.

However, the Swedish Prosecution Authority announced Wednesday that it could not disprove the captain's claim that he was unaware the ship's registration papers were fraudulent.

“The suspect has made an objection that he was unaware that the documents were false. After extensive investigative measures, it is my assessment that the objection cannot be refuted,” senior prosecutor Adrien Combier-Hogg said.

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

Despite the captain’s release, prosecutors maintained that documents certifying the ship was flagged in Guinea were indeed forgeries. Swedish law enforcement will now launch special proceedings to seek a court order to destroy the falsified records.

The Caffa remains anchored off the coast of southern Sweden due to what transportation officials described as deficiencies in its seaworthiness.

Russia’s Embassy in Stockholm previously said that 10 of the Caffa’s 11 crew members are Russian citizens.

The Caffa is one of several Russia-linked vessels intercepted recently as part of a maritime crackdown. Two other ships, the Flora 1 and Hui Yuan, were released earlier this month after brief detentions for suspected environmental violations.

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