

France Arrests Russian Captain of Moscow-Linked Tanker – Prosecutor

By [AFP](#)

June 03, 2026



A French Navy vessel sails by the oil tanker Tagor, suspected of flying a false Cameroonian flag and boarded by the French navy on May 31, as it arrives in Douarnenez Bay, western France on June 2. **Fred Tanneau / AFP**

French authorities have taken into custody the Russian captain of a seized oil tanker believed to be part of Moscow's "shadow fleet," a prosecutor said Wednesday.

The French Navy detained the Tagor on Sunday in international waters with British help after the vessel allegedly failed to comply with orders and was suspected of sailing under a false flag.

It is the fourth ship that France has seized since September on suspicion of belonging to the "shadow fleet," a network of aging tankers that Western governments say has helped maintain Russian oil exports despite sanctions imposed after Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The tanker arrived in a harbor in Brittany on Tuesday.

The captain faces up to one year in prison and a fine of 150,000 euros (\$174,000), Brest prosecutor Stéphane Kellenberger said.

The owner of the vessel, who is still being formally identified, may be subject to the same penalties, he added.

The Russian Embassy in France said it had demanded "consular access be granted to the captain immediately."

In a statement published on Telegram, the embassy rejected what it called "baseless accusations" and called for the captain's release "as soon as possible."

Related article: [France Seizes 'Shadow Fleet' Tanker Near Brittany](#)

The Kremlin has likened the seizure to "international piracy."

The Tagor is suspected of transporting Russian or Iranian oil in violation of international sanctions.

The vessel has been linked by the open-source database Opensanctions.org to shipping magnate Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, the son of Ali Shamkhani, a senior Iranian security official who was killed alongside Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in U.S.-Israeli strikes on Feb. 28.

French authorities said the Tagor was on its way from Murmansk in northwestern Russia when it was boarded.

It was falsely flying a Cameroonian flag and was bound for Limbe, a seaside city in the west of the African country, they added.

France previously detained the tankers Deyna in March and Grinch in January in the Mediterranean Sea, though both vessels were later released after paying fines.

In a separate case, a French court in March sentenced in absentia the Chinese captain of the tanker Boracay to one year in prison and imposed a 150,000-euro fine (\$177,000) for refusing orders to stop off the coast of Brittany in September 2025.

Western governments have imposed sanctions on hundreds of vessels believed to be part of Russia's "shadow fleet."

Nearly 600 ships suspected of belonging to the fleet are subject to European Union sanctions.

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