

Ukraine asks Turkey to ban stolen grain cargoes from the Bosphorus

By admin On May 20, 2022 In Insurance Marine News, Keep, Marine Hull, Marine Liability, Political Risk, Credit & Finance

The Ukrainian ambassador to Turkey has asked the Turkish government to prohibit cargoes of stolen Ukrainian grain from crossing the Bosphorus. Ukraine has claimed that Russian forces were stealing wheat and other commodities from inside occupied territories in Ukraine before transporting them by lorry to Crimea for export to overseas destinations.

One such cargo had already been tracked to the port of Latakia, Syria, it was claimed.

Ukrainian officials claim that the Russian bulker **Matros Pozynich** (IMO 9573816) loaded a cargo of 27,000 tonnes of stolen grain in Crimea, then transited to Latakia.

Ukraine claimed that the stolen grain would be laundered through the Syrian market for sale in neighbouring countries.

Ukrainian ambassador to Ankara Vasyl Bodnar claimed earlier this week that a second vessel had taken on a load of grain at Sevastopol and was headed for the Bosphorus. He identified the ship as the Syrian-flagged **Finikia** (IMO 9385233), a small, geared bulker of about 19,000 dwt.

Bodnar called on Turkish authorities to take measures to prevent the vessel from transiting the Bosphorus or calling at Turkish seaports.

Finikia is one of three ships owned by Syriamar, the state-owned shipping agency of the Syrian government. The company is blacklisted on the US Treasury's sanctions list for its connections to the Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad and his military forces. Despite these sanctions, Syriamar's vessels have a long history of operating between Turkish ports and Sevastopol.

Over the past two months, Finikia twice transited north through the Bosphorus and disappeared from satellite AIS tracking. The signal reliably reappears upon its return to the Turkish Straits VTS zone, where AIS transmission is required.

Ukrainian open-source intelligence researchers obtained webcam footage of the vessel entering Sevastopol's harbour and calling at a grain terminal on May 11th. Its AIS reappeared in the Black Sea on May 14th and the vessel passed through the Bosphorus on May 15th.

Despite Ambassador Bodnar's request, Finikia completed its transit and headed south, bypassing Turkish seaports. As of Tuesday evening, the AIS signal showed it located north of Cyprus, headed east on a previously used route towards Syria.

Meanwhile, Russia has said that sanctions on Russia would have to be reviewed if it were to listen to a UN appeal to open access to Ukraine's Black Sea ports so that grain could be exported.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said on May 19th that "you have to not only appeal to the Russian Federation but also look deeply at the whole complex of reasons that caused the current food crisis and, in the first instance, these are the sanctions that have been imposed against Russia by the US and the EU that interfere with normal free trade, encompassing food products including wheat, fertilizers and others."

2010-built, Russia-flagged, 17,025 gt Matros Pozynich is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. As of May 16th, the vessel was underway to Kavkaz, Russia, ETA May 18th.

2009-built, Syria-flagged, 11,767 gt Finikia is owned and managed by Syriamar of Latakia, Syria. As of May 19th, it was at anchor of Iskenderun, south-eastern Turkey.