

## Russia claims to have offered safe passage of Ukraine grain shipments through Black Sea

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Russia on Wednesday June 15th claimed to have offered a safe passage for the movement of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea but said that it could not be held responsible for establishing the corridors. Turkey has suggested that ships could be guided around sea mines. The UN has been trying to broker a deal to resume Ukrainian exports and Russian food and fertilizer exports, with the US reported to have attended some of the talks on a non-publicized basis.

Russia UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said that “we are not responsible for establishing safe corridors. We said we could provide safe passage if these corridors are established. It’s obvious it’s either de-mine the territory, which was mined by the Ukrainians, or ensure that the passage goes around those mines”.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu had said earlier on Wednesday that it would take time to de-mine Ukraine’s ports, but that a safe sea corridor could be established in areas without mines. He said that Turkey was awaiting Russia’s response to the plan, claiming that “the location of the mines is known” meaning that certain safe lines could be established at three ports.

Commercial ships would use the guidance of Ukrainian vessels to avoid the mines, Cavusoglu said.

Ukraine however fears that de-mining its ports would leave it more vulnerable to a Russian attack from the Black Sea.

Ukrainian legislator David Arakhamia, a member of Ukraine’s negotiation team with Russia, said at an event in Washington on Wednesday that “our military people are against it, so that’s why we have very, very limited optimism for this model”.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said that President Biden was doing everything he could to get the grain stuck in Ukrainian silos out of the country and into countries suffering from wheat shortages. “We’re all mindful of the sense of urgency here. We’re working it very, very hard”, he said. One of Biden’s ideas was to build temporary silos along the Ukrainian border.

Turkey, which has the second-biggest army in NATO and a substantial navy, has indicated that it was prepared to take up a role within an “observation mechanism” based in Istanbul if there was a deal.

According to data collected Meanwhile the Ukrainian Ministry of Agriculture has claimed that five ships, including four bulk carriers and one general cargo ship, were transporting grain they allege had been stolen from Ukraine, via the Port of Sevastopol in Crimea. The ships were alleged to have been at work since early May, with Russia shipping the grain via Syria, switching off the vessel’s AIS temporarily and then rebadging the grain as non-Russian. Ukraine said that the origin of grain could be proved by analysis and grain characteristics.

The vessels concerned are:

2010-built, Russia-flagged bulk carrier Matros Pozynich (IMO 9573816), dwt 28351,

2009-built, Russia-flagged bulk carrier Matros Koshka (IMO 9550137), dwt 28434,

2009-built, Russia-flagged bulk carrier Mikhail Nenashev (IMO 9515539), dwt 28419,

2009-built, Syria-flagged, bulk carrier Finikia (IMO 9385233), dwt 18908,

2004-built, Syria-flagged, general cargo ship Souria (IMO 9274331) dwt 12716,

17,025 gt Matros Poznich is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. As of June 16th, the vessel was underway from Kavkaz South Anchorage, Russia, to Beirut, Lebanon, ETA June 17th.

17,039 gt Matros Koshka is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. No AIS since June 12th, when it was en route from Kavkaz South Anchorage to Kavkaz, Russia, ETA June 14th.

17,018 gt Mikhail Nenashev is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. No AIS since June 11th, when the vessel was underway from Iskenderun, Turkey, to Kavkaz, Russia.

11,767 gt Ginikia is owned and managed by Syriamar of Latakia, Syria. As of June 16th, the vessel was at anchor off Kavkaz, Russia, where it arrived from Latakia, Syria, on June 15th.

9,611 gt Souria is owned and managed by Syriamar of Latakia, Syria. No AIS since June 7th, when it was underway in the Eastern Mediterranean from Iskenderun, Turkey, to Tartous, Syria, ETA July 6th.