

Ukraine asks Turkey to detain ship it says is carrying stolen grain

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Ukraine has requested that Turkey detain and arrest Russian-flagged cargo ship **Zhibek Zholy** (IMO 9598880), which Ukraine said was carrying a cargo of Ukrainian grain taken from the Russian-occupied port of Berdyansk, *Reuters* reports.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry official, citing information received from the country's maritime administration, said the Zhibek Zholy had loaded the first cargo of some 4,500 tonnes of grain from Berdyansk, which the official said belonged to Ukraine. In a letter to Turkey's justice ministry at the end of June the Ukrainian prosecutor general's office stated separately that the Zhibek Zholy was involved in the "illegal export of Ukrainian grain" from Berdyansk, and that it was headed for Karasu, Turkey, with 7,000 tonnes of cargo. That was is a larger cargo than cited by the official. The vessel has indeed arrived at Karasu, as predicted.

The Ukrainian prosecutor general's office has asked Turkey to "conduct an inspection of this sea vessel, seize samples of grain for forensic examination, demand information on the location of such grain". The letter said that Ukraine was ready to conduct a joint investigation with Turkish authorities.

A Russian-installed official in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region said on Thursday July 1st that, after a stoppage of several months, the first cargo ship had left Berdyansk port, but did not confirm that it was the Zhibek Zholy. This would seem to indicate a slight change of tack on the part of Russia, which previously had denied that Russia has stolen any Ukrainian grain. The line now would appear to be that the "occupied territories" are no longer Ukrainian. Russia's defence minister has also said that the Ukrainian ports of Berdyansk and Mariupol, controlled by Russian forces, were ready to resume grain shipments.

Kazakhstan-based KTZ Express confirmed to *Reuters* that the Zhibek Zholy was owned by the company but said it was taken under a bare boat charter – when no crew or supplies are involved in the lease – by Russian company Green-Line, and that this company was not designated under any sanctions.

KTZ Express added that it was consulting the parties involved and would abide by all sanctions and restrictions.

Western countries have accused Russia of creating the risk of global famine by stopping Ukraine from exporting grain via its Black Sea ports. Moscow denies responsibility for the international food crisis, blaming Western sanctions.

Meanwhile bulk carrier **Fedor** (IMO 9431977) was among several freighters suspected of grain smuggling with a port of departure in Crimea and a port of destination in Syria or Turkey. The ship has been spotted in the port of Sevastopol, which Russia annexed in 2014, and also in Bandirma, a Turkish port city on the Marmara Sea south of Istanbul. Photos by Ukrainian activists and satellite photos by the company Planet Labs showed how the freighter was in the port of Sevastopol and was apparently being loaded with grain.

The Turkish buyer assured that the freight documents listed Russia as the place of departure for the delivery and not Crimea, and that the grain was not therefore subject to sanctions.

After unloading the cargo in Bandirma, the Fedor entered the Black Sea through the Bosphorus on June 28th, shortly after which the location of the freighter was lost. The port of destination was listed as the Russian port of Kavkaz on the opposite side of the Crimea.

Ports in Syria and Turkey are receiving cargoes of stolen Ukrainian grain via fleet of at least 10 Russia- and Syria-flagged handysize bulk carriers and cargo vessels, *Lloyd's List* reported recently. Some of the vessels were claimed to have switched off their transponders for part of voyages.

The Ukrainian government has estimated that at least 400,000 tonnes of grain has been looted by the invaders.

Eurogal also reported that Ukraine's agricultural sector has sustained losses of \$4.3bn on account of the conflict so far. This figure includes more than \$2bn for damage to farms and the non-gathering of harvest, over \$900m for damage to farming equipment, and some \$270m for damage to or destruction of warehousing. 2016-built, Russia-flagged, 5,686 gt Zhibek Zholy is owned by KTZ Express Shipping of Yesil audany, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. It is managed by Green-Line LLC of St Petersburg, Russia. As of July 3rd, it was at anchor off the Turkish port of Karasu, having arrived from Novorossiysk on July 1st.

2007-built, Russia-flagged, 6,699 gt Fedor is owned and managed by Anship LLC of Krasnodarskiy Kray, Russia. No AIS since June 21st, when it was en route from Bandirma, Turkey, to Kavkaz, Russia.