

Ukraine says ship carrying “stolen” Ukrainian grain has been detained by Turkey

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Ukraine claimed on Sunday July 3rd that Turkish officials had detained cargo ship **Zhibek Zholy** (IMO 9598880), the first merchant ship to carry grain out of the Ukrainian port of Berdyansk since Russians occupied the city early on in its invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine has claimed that the grain aboard the cargo ship had been stolen and that the exports were therefore unlawful.

The Zhibek Zholy went dark on AIS when it was near the Kerch Strait on June 25th, shortly after heading north from the Black Sea into the Sea of Azov.

The Russian-appointed governor of Zaporizhzhia in Ukraine, Yevhen Balytskyi, confirmed its departure from Berdyansk on June 29th. He said that the vessel would be carrying 7,000 tonnes of grain from Berdyansk to “friendly” nations. One possible candidate would have been Syria.

On June 29th the AIS reappeared, in about the same position near the Kerch Strait, but this time headed south from the Sea of Azov into the Black Sea. It then crossed the Black Sea and anchored off the small Turkish port of Karasu.

Ukraine’s representative in Ankara, According to Ambassador Vasyl Bondar, said that Turkish authorities had detained the Zhibek Zholy after an urgent request from Kyiv. “The ship is currently standing at the entrance to the port; it has been detained by the customs authorities of Turkey, Bondar told local media in Turkey.

Ukraine has said that this was at least the second time that Ukraine had managed to convince a neutral country not to accept a shipment of stolen grain.

Bulker **Matros Pozynich** (IMO 9573816) was claimed to have loaded a cargo of Ukrainian grain in Russian-occupied Crimea in April, which it then attempted to deliver to a buyer in Alexandria, Egypt. After an appeal by the Ukrainian government, Egyptian authorities refused to allow the vessel to enter, and the Pozynich diverted to a port in Syria instead (IMN, May 6th 2022).

Ukraine's ministry of agriculture claims that in total, Russian forces have stolen about one third of the grain available in recently-occupied territories, an amount equal to about 500,000 tonnes.

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.

2010-built, Russia-flagged, 17,025 gt Matros Pozynich is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. As of June 30th, the vessel was underway in the middle of the Black Sea, heading north.