

Ukraine asks Turkey to investigate three more Russian ships

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Ukraine has asked Turkey to investigate three Russian-flagged ships that it suspects might be carrying grain stolen from occupied Ukraine.

The vessels are the **Mikhail Nenashev** (IMO 9515539), **Matros Pozynich** (IMO 9573816) and **Matros Koshka** (IMO 9550137).

It has been revealed that in a letter dated June 13th Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office asked the Turkish Ministry of Justice to investigate and provide evidence on the three named vessels it suspects, which it said had been involved in transporting allegedly stolen grain.

The letter stated that the ships left Crimea's main grain terminal in Sevastopol in April and May. It has asked Turkey to obtain documents about their cargo and their arrival at Turkish ports.

The ships are said to be ultimately owned by a subsidiary of a Western-sanctioned Russian state-owned company called United Shipbuilding Corporation.

Ukraine has accused Russia several times since February of stealing grain, which Russia has repeatedly denied. However, the leaders of separatist parts of Ukraine in the Donbas have recently been taking a subtly different line, referring to grain which it says is from land that is no longer in Ukraine.

Most of the Russian wheat smuggling has followed a pattern, according to Windward's proprietary, AI-based data.

The usual method in confirmed cases – which Windward said included the Matros Koshka, Matros Pozynich, and Mikhail Nenashev vessels – was dark activity between Turkish and Ukrainian waters, or dark activity starting and ending in Ukrainian waters near Crimea.

The vessel typically sailed to Turkey and made a port call or sailed to the Eastern Mediterranean and went dark in Turkish or Cypriot waters in order to complete its journey to Syria, where the grain is offloaded – the vessel remaining dark.

Vessels will frequently say their destination is Kavkaz, Russia, before going dark, said Windward (see below). Windward said that Beirut, Lebanon, is their destination when heading out of Russia, and then they go dark and go to Syria instead.

When the vessels are dark in Ukraine, they are often at the grain terminal at Sevastopol, according to open sources that confirm this via satellite. Satellites also helped catch at least one at Latakia, Syria, offloading.

“This latest incident involving **Zhibek Zholy** is interesting, because it happened in the Sea of Azov, and in mainland Ukraine, not Crimea, where the other grain smuggling vessels have been spotted at Sevastopol. Russia seized Berdyansk in February. Is travelling to mainland Ukraine part of a brazen new grain smuggling strategy by Russia?” asked Windward.

2009-built, Russia-flagged, 17,018 gt Mikhail Nenashev is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. As of July 5th, the vessel was en route from Iskenderun, Turkey, to Kavkaz, Russia.

2010-built, Russia-flagged, 17,025 gt Matros Pozynich is owned and managed by Crane Marine Contractor LLC of Astrakhan, Russia. No AIS since June 30th, when it was at Kavkaz South Anchorage, south of Crimea.

2009-built, 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 at Kavkaz South Anchorage.