

Danish Maritime warns that Russian tankers will sail without pilots

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The Danish Maritime Authority has expressed safety concerns about Russian tankers operating through the Danish Straits, noting that, with increased sanctions on Russian oil due to begin in just over two months, Russian tankers might increase their attempts to hide their activities.

One possibility, the authority said, was that tankers carrying Russian oil might choose not to use pilots when transiting Danish waters. It noted similar efforts by Iranian and Venezuelan tankers. Another common tactic is to turn off AIS signals.

Maria Skipper Schwenn, executive director for climate, environment and security at Danish Shipping told the *Financial Times* that “as a significant shipping nation with more than 7,000 km of coastline, we are obliged to prioritize safe and environmentally sound navigation”.

Denmark-based commodity analyst Kpler has said that as much as 1.5m bpd was still passing through Danish waters sailing to the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Kpler reported that nearly 200 tankers were sailing through the sea lanes around Denmark. At the moment nearly all of them are currently using pilots.

However, earlier this year Danish pilots threatened to stop servicing Russian vessels. The Danish Maritime Pilots association (DMP) issued a statement in March condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine and looking for a decision on Russian ships’ access to Danish ports and territorial waters.

Some 30m tons of Russian oil pass through Danish waters each year, and the *Financial Times* has reported that the volumes have remained nearly constant since the start of the war.

Israel-based maritime AI consultancy Windward warned in the spring that it had already seen a strong increase in the number of “dark” incidents. At the end of March, they reported 33 incidents where signals were not received from Russian tankers.