FITBURG GULF OF FINLAND · 31 DECEMBER 2025

FITBURG, 31 DECEMBER 2025: AN ANCHOR DRAGGED ACROSS THE GULF OF FINLAND

On 30 December 2025 the general cargo ship Fitburg, flagged in St Vincent and the Grenadines, left St Petersburg for Haifa with Russian structural steel in its hold. Early on 31 December two telecom cables between Finland and Estonia were damaged. Finnish police and the Border Guard boarded the ship that morning. On 5 November 2026 the Helsinki District Court convicted the Russian captain and the Azerbaijani boatswain of deliberate aggravated sabotage: the anchor had been dragged along the seabed for about 130 km. The judgment is not final. The court did not find who, if anyone, directed the two men.

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130 km

the distance over which the anchor and chain were dragged along the seabed, for several hours, on 31 Dec 2025 A

Helsinki District Court, judgment R 706/2026/11841, press release, 5 Nov 2026

9 + 1

telecom and power cables and one gas pipeline crossed by the chain; two telecom cables damaged A

Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026

3 y 6 m

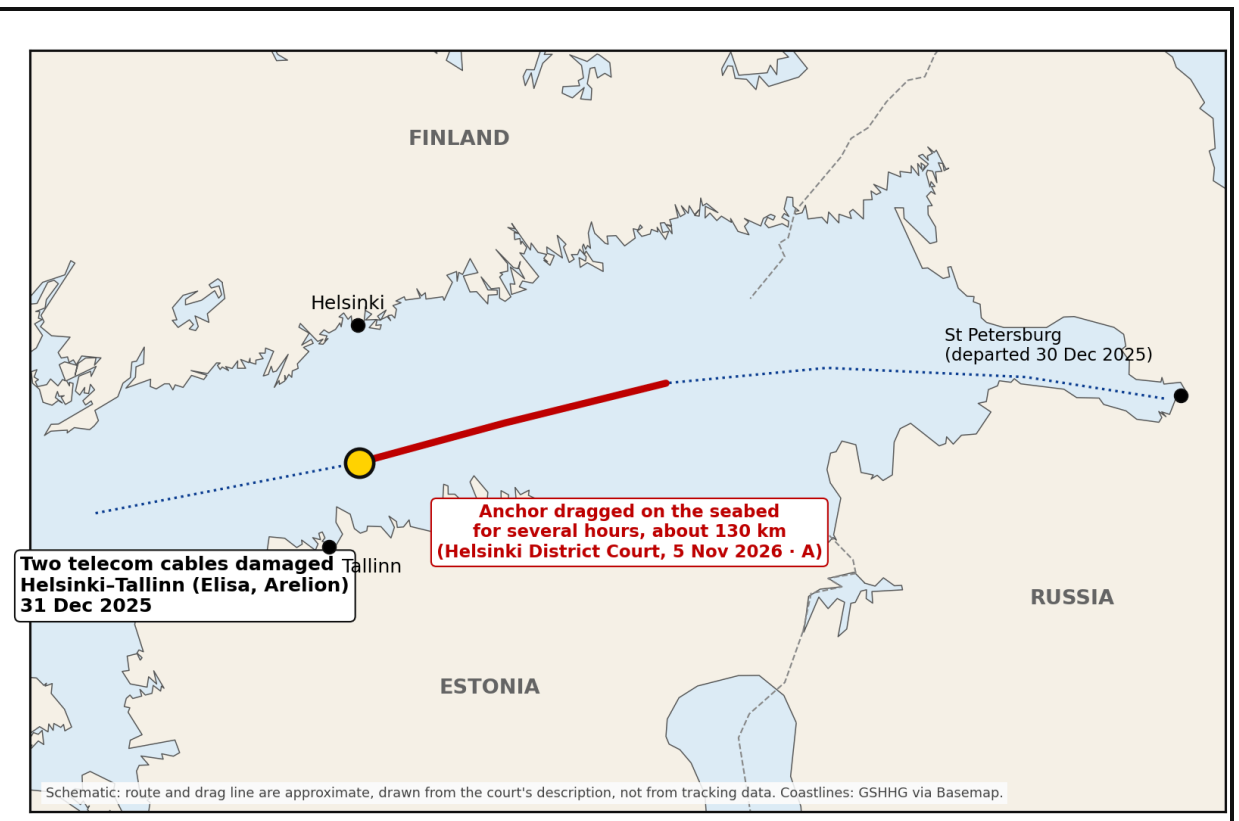
unconditional prison term for the captain; 2 years 10 months for the boatswain; both taken into custody; not final A

Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026

~2 h

the voyage continued with the anchor down after Finnish authorities first contacted the ship A

Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026



BOTTOM LINE

A court found it deliberate. Three professional judges ruled unanimously that the captain and the boatswain committed aggravated sabotage. The anchor's lock worked. The court found the act was meant to cause the greatest possible harm to society, and that the damage stayed limited only by chance.

Finland has jurisdiction. The damage was in Estonia's exclusive economic zone, outside Finland's territorial sea. The court held that Finnish courts may try the case because the offence was intentional and its consequences were felt in Finland. In the earlier Eagle S case the District Court had declined jurisdiction; the Court of Appeal reversed that on 27 August 2026.

The state question is open. The ship sailed from St Petersburg under a Russian captain with EU-sanctioned Russian steel aboard, and the court found the anchor was lowered before it left Russian territorial waters. The verdict does not attribute the act to the Russian state. Both men may appeal; the captain says he will.

LEGAL QUALIFICATION IN THREE LAYERS

AGGRAVATED SABOTAGE BY THE CAPTAIN AND THE BOATSWAIN, COMMITTED DELIBERATELY; FINNISH JURISDICTION — HELSINKI DISTRICT COURT, 5 NOV 2026, NOT FINAL — ESTABLISHED

BALTIC SEABED DAMAGE BY DRAGGED ANCHORS, 2023–2025: FIVE CASES, ONE RULED AN ACCIDENT, ONE CONVICTION — PATTERN, NO COMMON AUTHOR ESTABLISHED

HYBRID THREATS TO UNDERSEA INFRASTRUCTURE; NATO BALTIC SENTRY — STATEMENTS BY FINNISH, ESTONIAN AND NATO OFFICIALS — POSITION

Established. Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026 (R 706/2026/11841, unanimous, not final): the captain and the boatswain are guilty of aggravated sabotage (Criminal Code of Finland, törkeä tuhotyö). The anchor was dragged for about 130 km; nine cables and a gas pipeline were crossed and two telecom cables damaged; the act was deliberate and meant to cause maximum harm to society. Finnish courts have jurisdiction because the consequences were felt in Finland. The charge of aggravated interference with telecommunications was dismissed as included in the sabotage. **Pattern.** Since October 2023 ships' anchors have damaged Baltic cables or pipelines at least five times. Swedish prosecutors ruled one of them (Vezhen, January 2025) an accident; Fitburg is the first to end in a conviction. No court has linked the cases to one another or to a state. **Position.** NATO launched Baltic Sentry in January 2025 to protect undersea infrastructure. The court made no finding on who, if anyone, directed the two men; Russian state responsibility has not been established.

WHAT WE ASK

Close the gaps that let a cable be cut beyond the territorial sea without a clear forum: support work at the IMO, ITU and the International Cable Protection Committee on protecting submarine cables. Use sanctions listings against vessels and operators that carry sanctioned Russian goods. Back patrol, boarding and inspection cooperation in the Baltic. Share evidence across borders, as Finland and Estonia did in this case.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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FITBURG HOW IT HAPPENED

ONE ANCHOR, ABOUT 130 KM, TEN SEABED LINES

Between Helsinki and Tallinn the Gulf of Finland is crossed by telecom and power cables and a gas pipeline. The Fitburg's anchor chain ran over ten of them in one night. The court's findings are summarised from its Finnish-language press release.

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30 Dec 2025	The Fitburg leaves St Petersburg for Haifa. Its anchor is raised on departure, then lowered again at some point before the ship leaves Russian territorial waters. [A] — Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026; route: The Insider, 15 Jun 2026
31 Dec 2025, c. 05:00	Elisa reports a fault on its Helsinki–Tallinn telecom cable; an Arelion cable between Finland and Estonia is also hit. Estonia: the damage was detected at about 05:00, as a vessel moved from the Estonian into the Finnish economic zone. [B] — Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs (via ERR, 31 Dec 2025)
31 Dec 2025, morning	Finnish authorities see the ship moving with its anchor chain in the sea and contact it. The voyage continues for about two hours after first contact; the boatswain takes part. [A] — Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026
31 Dec 2025, c. 11:00	Police and the Border Guard board the ship by helicopter in Finland's economic zone and take it to Kantvik. All 14 crew — nationals of Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan — are detained. [B] — ERR, 31 Dec 2025; ERR, 12 Jan 2026
31 Dec 2025	Estonia's Prosecutor General's Office opens criminal proceedings: the damage site lies in Estonia's economic zone, about 60 km from the coast. Estonia prepares a joint investigation team with Finland. [B] — Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026
1 Jan 2026	Finnish Customs: the cargo is structural steel, preliminarily of Russian origin, which falls under EU sectoral sanctions; the goods are detained. [B] — Finnish Customs, press release, 1 Jan 2026
7 Jan 2026	Customs closes its inquiry: the steel is sanctioned, but the crew did not intentionally bring it into Finland, since the ship entered at the authorities' request. The goods are released once removed from Finland. [B] — Finnish Customs, press release, 7 Jan 2026
12 Jan 2026	Police lift the seizure and the Border Guard escorts the ship out of Finnish waters. One crew member stays in custody; several are under travel bans. [B] — National Bureau of Investigation (via ERR and The Baltic Times, 12 Jan 2026)
5 Jun 2026	The National Bureau of Investigation, working with Estonia's Central Criminal Police, concludes the pre-trial investigation with four suspects. [C] — ERR, 6 Jun 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026
15 Jun 2026	Charges are brought against the captain and the boatswain for aggravated sabotage and aggravated interference with telecommunications. Both deny them. The two other suspects are not charged. [C] — The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; MTV Uutiset; The Maritime Executive, 9 Sep 2026
27 Aug 2026	In the separate Eagle S case, the Helsinki Court of Appeal rules that Finland has jurisdiction over cable damage in its economic zone and sends the case back to the District Court. [C] — ERR, 27 Aug 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026
8 Sep – 8 Oct 2026	Trial at the Helsinki District Court over eight hearing days. Prosecutors seek unconditional terms of at least two and a half years; the defence contests jurisdiction and says the anchor gear was iced over. [A] — Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 8 Sep 2026; The Maritime Executive, 9 Sep 2026
5 Nov 2026	Verdict: both men guilty of aggravated sabotage; 3 years 6 months and 2 years 10 months, immediate custody; jointly liable for repair and investigation costs. The captain's lawyer says he will appeal; the boatswain is considering it. [A] — Helsinki District Court, press release, 5 Nov 2026; Yle, 5 Nov 2026

WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

The court found that the anchor's lock mechanism worked. The anchor was raised when the ship left St Petersburg, lowered at some point before it left Russian territorial waters, and not raised again until the morning of 31 December, after Finnish authorities had seen the dragging and alerted the ship. Evidence was presented that the drag marks ran back to the border of Russia's territorial sea.

The chain crossed nine telecom and power cables and one gas pipeline; two telecom cables were damaged and the rest put at risk. The court found the act was intended to cause as much harm to society as possible and that the limited damage was a matter of chance. Estonian prosecutors place the damage site in Estonia's economic zone, about 60 km from the coast.

WHO WAS CONVICTED

The captain, Andrei Maksimenko, a Russian national, approved the ship's course while the anchor was dragging; the court held him more to blame because he had overall command. The boatswain, Vusal Majidov, an Azerbaijani national, took part in keeping the ship moving for about two hours after first contact and did not ensure the anchor was up. The prosecution did not allege that either man ordered or carried out the lowering.

Both were sentenced to unconditional prison terms and taken into custody. The judgment is not final, and both men are presumed innocent until it is. The captain will appeal, his lawyer said; the boatswain is considering it. The prosecution may appeal the dismissed charge.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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FITBURG THE EVIDENCE, BY TIER

A FIRST-INSTANCE CONVICTION, TWO NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS, A CUSTOMS FINDING

The core of the record is a court judgment, reached after an eight-day trial. Finnish and Estonian police investigated together. The full judgment is public only on request from the court registry; this dossier relies on the court's press release.

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ESTABLISHED BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

Helsinki District Court, judgment of 5 Nov 2026 (R 706/2026/11841), unanimous: aggravated sabotage by the captain and the boatswain; anchor dragged about 130 km; nine cables and a pipeline crossed, two telecom cables damaged; deliberate; Finnish jurisdiction; joint liability for repair and investigation costs. Not final. A

Helsinki Court of Appeal, 27 Aug 2026 (Eagle S, reported by ERR and Kaleva): Finland has jurisdiction on the territorial principle; the event is not an incident of navigation that limits it under the Law of the Sea Convention. A

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS (FINLAND, ESTONIA)

Finnish Customs, 1 and 7 Jan 2026: structural steel of Russian origin under EU sectoral sanctions; no criminal inquiry, as the crew did not bring it into Finland intentionally. National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026: Finnish and Estonian work on board complete; ship released. B

Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026: criminal proceedings over two telecom cables; damage site in Estonia's economic zone; a joint investigation team with Finland in preparation. B

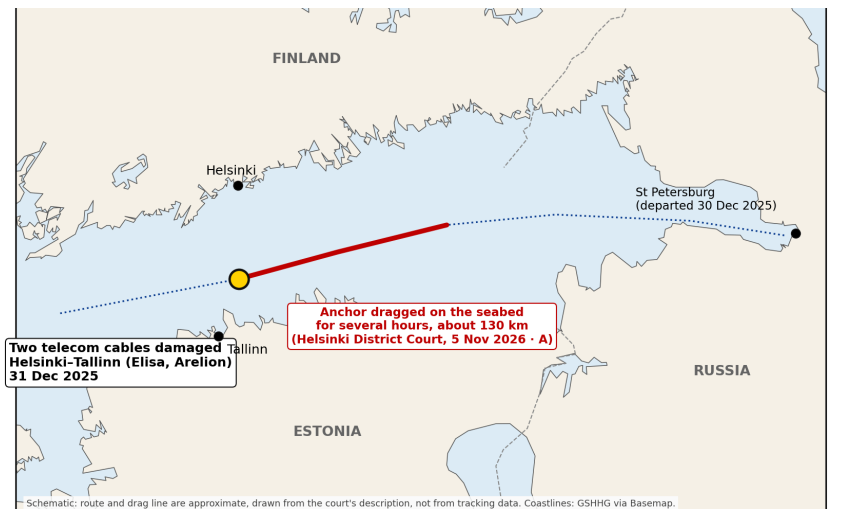
INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Yle, 5 Nov 2026: names and nationalities of the convicted men; reactions of defence and prosecution. ERR, 31 Dec 2025: owner/manager ALBROS Shipping & Trading, Istanbul; flag St Vincent and the Grenadines. C

ERR, 8 Sep 2026: the damage cost 'several hundred thousand euros'; the captain called claims that the crew acted on Russian government orders 'nonsense'. C

THE NUMBERS — EVERY SOURCE, AS PUBLISHED

Figure	What it counts	Source · date · tier
130 km	anchor drag along the seabed, 31 Dec 2025	Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026 · A
9 + 1 · 2	cables and pipeline crossed · telecom cables damaged	Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026 · A
3 y 6 m · 2 y 10 m	sentences: captain · boatswain (not final)	Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026 · A
14	crew detained on 31 Dec 2025; four later suspects, two charged	ERR, 31 Dec 2025; ERR, 6 Jun 2026 · C



Schematic map: the route from St Petersburg and the roughly 130 km the anchor was dragged, drawn from the court's description, not from tracking data. Coastlines: GSHHG.

The court's findings are taken from its press release of 5 November 2026 (Finnish, hub translation); the ruling summary (Ratkaisutiedote PDF) has not been read for this dossier. The amounts of damages awarded were not published. 'Several hundred thousand euros' is a media figure from the trial.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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FITBURG RESPONSIBILITY

TWO MEN CONVICTED; NO PRINCIPAL NAMED

The court ruled on the conduct of two crew members. It did not rule on who lowered the anchor, or on whether anyone ashore ordered the act. The ship's owner and manager were not parties to the criminal case.

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Who	Role in the case	Proceedings	Sanctions · courts
Andrei Maksimenko Captain · Russian national	Approved the ship's course while the anchor was dragging; overall responsibility for command and navigation	Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026: aggravated sabotage, 3 y 6 m; will appeal (not final)	—
Vusal Majidov Boatswain · Azerbaijani national	Took part in continuing the voyage about two hours after first contact; did not ensure the anchor was raised	Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026: aggravated sabotage, 2 y 10 m; considering appeal (not final)	—
Two other officers	Suspects in the pre-trial investigation	Not charged	—
Fitburg Shipping Co Ltd / ALBROS Shipping & Trading Owner and manager (Istanbul)	Ship owner and manager; renamed the ship Finex in March 2026	Not charged; employer companies' cost claims not examined in the criminal case (their legal-cost claims rejected)	Vessel not on EU lists as of Jan 2026 (reported); to be rechecked

CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

The court found two individuals guilty of deliberate sabotage. It made no finding on who, if anyone, directed them, and it did not establish who lowered the anchor. Russian state responsibility is not established by this verdict.

Facts that link the voyage to Russia: it began in St Petersburg on 30 December 2025; the anchor was lowered while the ship was still in Russian territorial waters (court finding); the captain is a Russian national; the cargo was Russian structural steel under EU sanctions (Finnish Customs).

THE RUSSIAN STATE'S OWN ACTS

No act of the Russian state appears in the court's findings as published.

Russia offered assistance to the crew after the detention, Finland's Defence Minister Antti Häkkänen told Iltalehti (via BNS, 2 Jan 2026). No official Russian statement on the verdict was found by 7 Nov 2026.

Sanctions column: a dash means no listing was verified. The vessel's EU/UK listing status after January 2026 has not been rechecked. Ownership: Fitburg Shipping Co Ltd (owner) and Albros Shipping and Trading Ltd (manager), per LSEG data reported by Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; ERR names ALBROS as owner.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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FITBURG FACT-CHECK · WHAT RUSSIA SAYS ABOUT THE BALTIC SEABED

'ABSURD TO BLAME RUSSIA' — AND 'WESTERN PIRATES'

No Russian official statement on the Fitburg case or its verdict was found by 7 November 2026. The closest verifiable official statements concern earlier Baltic cable damage and the boarding of ships at sea. They are checked here against the record.

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DMITRY PESKOV, KREMLIN SPOKESMAN · NEWS BRIEFING · 20 NOV 2024

“It is quite absurd to continue to blame Russia for everything without any reason.”

Reuters (via gCaptain), 20 Nov 2024; TASS, 20 Nov 2024

ACCURATE ON ATTRIBUTION: NO COURT HAS ATTRIBUTED A BALTIC INCIDENT TO RUSSIA

Said of the November 2024 cable damage linked to the Chinese ship Yi Peng 3, more than a year before the Fitburg case. No court has attributed any Baltic seabed incident to Russia; the Fitburg judgment convicts two crew members and makes no finding on who, if anyone, directed them (Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026).

What the claim concedes: Nothing on Fitburg. At the same briefing he pointed to Ukraine's 'sabotage activities' in the context of Nord Stream.

NIKOLAI PATRUSHEV, AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF THE MARITIME BOARD · FEB 2026

“[Forces] capable of cooling the ardour of Western pirates.”

Al Jazeera, 18 Feb 2026 (English translation)

NOT PIRACY IN LAW

Said of seizures of sanctioned tankers, not of the Fitburg. The Fitburg was boarded by Finnish police and the Border Guard on suspicion of a crime, released after 12 days, and its crew tried before three judges (NBI; Helsinki District Court). Piracy under the Law of the Sea Convention (art. 101) is an act for private ends by a private ship — not law enforcement by a state.

What the claim concedes: That Russia treats boardings by coastal states as hostile acts, whatever their legal basis.

FAIR TO SAY

Russian state responsibility for the Fitburg damage, or for any other Baltic seabed incident, has not been established by any court or international body. In January 2026 Finland's Security Intelligence Service told Yle that talk of Russian omnipotence 'benefits Russia' (as reported by BB.LV).

At trial the captain called claims that the crew acted on Russian government orders 'nonsense' (ERR, 8 Sep 2026). The verdict does not contradict or confirm that; it is silent on any principal.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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FITBURG THE LAW AND WHAT WE ASK

A CABLE BEYOND THE TERRITORIAL SEA STILL NEEDS A COURT

The Fitburg judgment is the first conviction in the Baltic cases. It rests on Finnish criminal law and on the place where the consequences were felt. Whether that holds on appeal will shape how coastal states protect cables in their economic zones.

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ESTABLISHED — BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

Helsinki District Court, 5 Nov 2026 (R 706/2026/11841, unanimous, not final): the captain and the boatswain are guilty of aggravated sabotage; deliberate; Finnish jurisdiction because the consequences occurred in Finland; aggravated interference with telecommunications dismissed as included.

Helsinki Court of Appeal, 27 Aug 2026 (Eagle S): Finland has jurisdiction on the territorial principle; the event is not an incident of navigation that limits it under the Convention. A further appeal needs leave of the Supreme Court.

PATTERN — WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

Balticconnector pipeline and cables, Oct 2023: anchor of the Hong Kong-flagged Newnew Polar Bear; China called it a storm accident (Aug 2024). Yi Peng 3, Nov 2024: two cables; China declined a Swedish prosecutor's inquiry on board. Eagle S, Dec 2024: Estlink 2 and telecom cables; Finnish jurisdiction found on appeal, reversing the District Court (27 Aug 2026).

Vezhen, Jan 2025: Latvia–Sweden cable; Swedish prosecutors found an accident caused by weather, technical faults and poor seamanship. Fitburg, Dec 2025: the first conviction. No court has linked these cases to one another or to a state.

POSITION — WHAT GOVERNMENTS AND ALLIANCES SAY

NATO launched Baltic Sentry on 14 Jan 2025 with frigates, patrol aircraft and naval drones; the Secretary-General warned that 'ship captains must understand' threats to infrastructure 'will have consequences'. NATO's statement names no state as responsible.

Estonian leaders on 31 Dec 2025 were cautious: the President hoped it 'was not a deliberate act'. The prosecutor welcomed the verdict, especially that the court accepted jurisdiction (Yle, 5 Nov 2026).

THE RULES THAT APPLY

Criminal Code of Finland, ch. 34: aggravated sabotage (törkeä tuhotyö); ch. 1: scope of Finnish law, including offences whose consequences occur in Finland — as applied by the District Court (section numbers to be confirmed against the judgment).

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 58, 79 and 113 (freedom to lay cables; duty to criminalise wilful or negligent breaking of cables beneath the high seas) and art. 97 (penal jurisdiction in incidents of navigation), argued by the defence.

WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

Who lowered the anchor, and whether anyone ordered it. The prosecution did not allege that either convicted man ordered or carried out the lowering.

The outcome of any appeal; whether the Supreme Court is asked to rule on jurisdiction in the Eagle S case.

The amounts awarded for repair and investigation costs; the current sanctions status of the vessel (now Finex) and its operator.

WHAT WE ASK

Close the protection gap for cables. Support work at the IMO, the ITU and the International Cable Protection Committee, and among States Parties to the Law of the Sea Convention, so that wilful damage to submarine cables in economic zones and on the high seas can always be investigated and tried.

List the carriers of sanctioned goods. EU, UK and partner sanctions authorities: review listings of vessels and operators that carry sanctioned Russian goods, including the vessel in this case and its operator.

Patrol, board and inspect together. Sustain Baltic Sentry-type patrols and coastal-state cooperation on boarding and inspection when undersea infrastructure is damaged, within the law of the sea.

Share the evidence. Prosecutors and investigators: use joint investigation teams and mutual legal assistance, as Finland and Estonia did here, and share seabed and AIS evidence across borders.

Sources: A — Helsinki District Court, press release on judgment R 706/2026/11841, 5 Nov 2026 (tuomioistuimet.fi); Helsinki Court of Appeal, Eagle S, 27 Aug 2026 (as reported by ERR and Kaleva). B — Finnish Customs, press releases of 1 and 7 Jan 2026; National Bureau of Investigation, 12 Jan 2026 (via ERR, The Baltic Times); Estonian Prosecutor's Office, 2 Jan 2026; Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, 31 Dec 2025 (via ERR); NATO, 'NATO launches Baltic Sentry', 14 Jan 2025; Swedish Prosecution Authority on Vezhen (via The Maritime Executive, 14 Oct 2025). C — Yle, 5 Nov 2026; ERR, 31 Dec 2025, 12 Jan, 6 Jun, 27 Aug and 8 Sep 2026; The Moscow Times, 16 Jun 2026; The Maritime Executive, 7 Jan and 9 Sep 2026; The Insider, 15 Jun 2026; Current Time, 5 Jan 2026; MTV Uutiset, 2026; Kaleva, 27 Aug 2026; AFP via Inquirer, 24 Dec 2024; ERR, 12 Aug 2024; BB.LV (BNS), 2 and 18 Jan 2026. RU — D. Peskov, 20 Nov 2024 (Reuters via gCaptain; TASS); N. Patrushev, Feb 2026 (Al Jazeera). All accessed 7 Nov 2026.

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