

Tankers

# Ukraine warns against plans to ‘shield shadow fleet from scrutiny’

It claims Russian warning over ‘criminal’ use of shipping data is a deflection tactic



The UK seized the 107,000-dwt Smyrtos (built 2009) in the English Channel on 14 June while it was hauling Russian oil under a false flag Photo: Scanpix

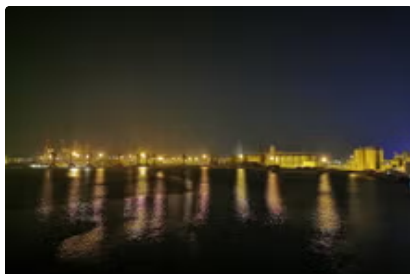
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Ukraine has said it will oppose any efforts to limit access to ship tracking data, to ensure proper scrutiny of unsafe shipping practices.

The comments came after Russia called for limits on ship tracking transparency, warning that seafarers were being targeted using technology that was originally designed to improve safety at sea.



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Moscow claims that ships have become more vulnerable to attack because “criminals” have access to information on cargo, location and ports of destination and departure.

It wants limits on information so it is used only for safe navigation and search and rescue operations, according to a paper submitted to the International Maritime Organization.

But the move has been opposed by Ukraine. Its military forces have targeted Russian ships to try to limit Kremlin revenues, while European allies have seized a handful of tankers flying false flags while hauling Russian oil.

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Ukraine said the Russian proposal was an attempt to divert from Moscow’s own attacks against civilian vessels and port infrastructure.

It said that IMO rules already provided safeguards for limiting data about ships under exceptional security situations.

“These safeguards must not be misused to reduce transparency or shield Russia’s shadow fleet and other high-risk shipping from proper scrutiny,” the Ukraine delegation to the IMO said on Tuesday.

It added: “Ukraine will oppose any attempt to weaken maritime transparency under the pretext of security, especially where such proposals serve to conceal unlawful or unsafe shipping activities.”

The use of AIS, designed as a tool to prevent accidents and help rescue operations, has been adopted and expanded by technology firms to make ship movements more visible to a broader audience.

The IMO is discussing ways to tighten security regulations introduced after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US. The US said improvements were required because of growing threats from shadow fleets, increasingly complex drug smuggling operations and other dangers.

The issue is due to be discussed by the IMO’s council next month.

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