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Seismologists suspect explosions damaged undersea pipelines that carry Russian gas

September 27, 2022 · 3:17 PM ET



GEOFF BRUMFIEL



ROB SCHMITZ



A large disturbance in the sea can be observed Tuesday off the coast of the Danish island of Bornholm following unusual leaks in two natural gas pipelines running from Russia under the Baltic Sea to Germany. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen says she "cannot rule out" sabotage on Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2.

Danish Defence Command via AP

Two undersea leaks that began in the Russian-owned Nord Stream gas pipelines on Monday were likely caused by powerful underwater explosions, according to Swedish and Danish seismographic data.

It is "very clear from the seismic record that these are blasts," Björn Lund, director of the Swedish National Seismic Network at Uppsala University told NPR in a phone interview. "These are not earthquakes; they are not landslides underwater."

**WORLD**

Russia has cut off its natural gas exports to Finland in a symbolic move

German and Danish officials said both the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines showed sudden losses of pressure late Monday, which they said could only be caused by a leak from large holes in the pipelines.

Neither of the pipelines are active, as Russia has cut gas deliveries in them, but both were filled with natural gas when the drop in pressure occurred. Russian energy giant Gazprom, a state entity, owns a controlling interest in both pipelines.

Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said on Tuesday that her government suspected the leaks were deliberate actions.

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Denmark's prime minister says it is "hard to imagine" that the leaks detected on Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines were "accidental."

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8:53 PM · Sep 27, 2022



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Danish authorities reported the location of the Nord Stream 1 leak as northeast of the Baltic Sea island of Bornholm, and the Nord Stream 2 leak as southeast of the island. German media, quoting unnamed security officials, say it's possible the leaks are a result of an act of sabotage, as it's extremely rare for undersea, concrete-coated steel pipes to break on their own. Authorities have halted all shipping in the area around the leaks.

Lund says both the Swedish network and the Danish Seismic Network picked up the explosions on Monday. The first blast occurred at 2:03 a.m. Swedish time, and a second, larger explosion occurred at 7:04 p.m. "Preliminary estimates would say that this is at least equivalent to 100 kilograms of dynamite," he says.

Lund says the seismic data was able to pinpoint the second blast to within just a few kilometers of the location the Swedish Maritime Authority gave as the site of the second leak. "We're not spot on, but we're fairly close to the area of the leakage," he says.

NATIONAL

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Lund says there's no natural event that could have created such unique seismic signatures less than 24 hours apart. "There's nothing I could come up with that would produce this," he says.

Instead, he says that the seismic events closely resembled what the network has detected in the past when the Swedish navy has conducted training exercises using depth charges and undersea mines. Lund says he has notified the Swedish armed forces of his findings; they did not immediately respond to NPR's emailed request for comment.

It remains unclear who might have conducted the possible sabotage. On Twitter, H.I. Sutton, an expert on submarine warfare and a writer for U.S. Naval Institute News, pointed out that the relatively shallow depth at which the explosions took place would be reachable by divers or unmanned underwater vehicles.

H I Sutton  · Sep 27, 2022

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*** NORD STREAM 2 incident ***

/Thread

I am getting a lot of questions re [#Russian](#) underwater sabotage capabilities due to the leak on the [#NordStream2](#) pipeline off Denmark.

I do not have time to respond to media right now (sorry)

So just lay out some background reference.

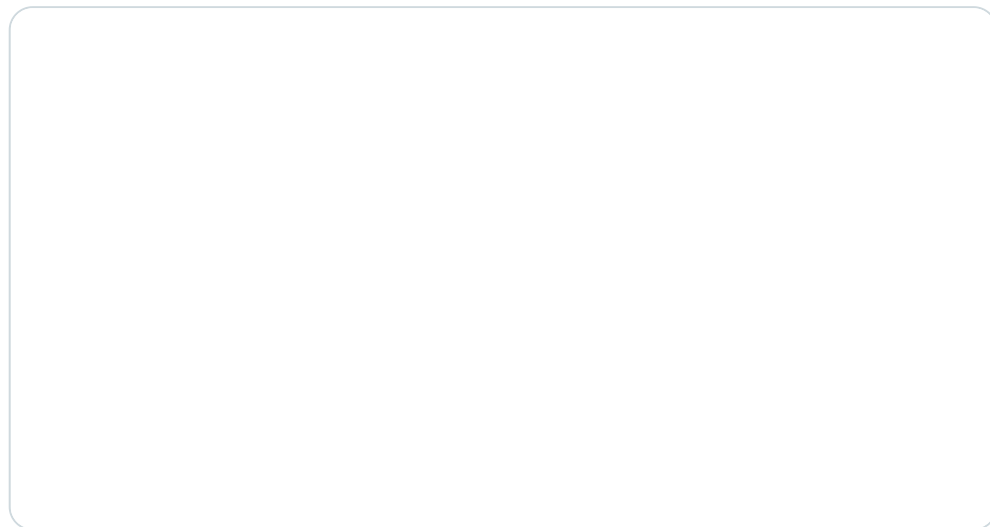
H I Sutton @CovertShores · [Follow](#)

1. Circumstances

The leak is near the Danish island of Bornholm, at 54.8762°, 15.4099° in ~70 meters of water. This would be divisible

2 things do make it suspicious:

- a) It is just over 12 nautical miles from the Island in International waters
- b) the EEZ here is disputed here (?)



9:18 PM · Sep 27, 2022



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Speaking on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken acknowledged the possibility that the damage to the pipelines was deliberate, then added: "If it is confirmed, that's clearly in no one's interest."

NPR diplomacy correspondent Michele Kelemen contributed to this report.

russian natural gas nord stream 2