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Jan 12, 2024 at 12:00 in General by Stephanie Duscha

With heavy hearts and deep sorrow, we announce the passing of Mikhail Voytenko, who dedicated over a decade to shaping the success and essence of our maritime news website.

Mikhail joined FleetMon (acquired by Kpler in 2023) in 2012, a few years after its founding, and from the outset, his passion for maritime incidents and their investigations became the driving force behind our success. He was instrumental in transforming our website into a leading source of maritime news, setting the bar for rapidity and relevance in the field of investigative journalism in shipping.



Mikhail's tireless commitment made him a global beacon in maritime journalism. He fearlessly pursued the truth even when faced with challenges. One of his notable contributions was the groundbreaking reporting on the mysterious disappearance of the timber carrier ARCTIC SEA in 2009. His questioning of the official story released by Russian authorities led to his departure from the country and living in exile in Thailand.

Also, Mikhail provided crucial hints to the MV RHOSUS case, the vessel carrying ammonium nitrate that was later implicated in the tragic explosion in Beirut harbor in 2020. His foresight and dedication to investigative reporting were evident as he uncovered potential dangers six years before the catastrophic event unfolded, showcasing his commitment to the safety and awareness of maritime professionals.

We will remember Mikhail as an inexhaustible journalist and expert within the maritime community.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family during this difficult time.

As we bid farewell to a remarkable colleague and friend, we extend our gratitude to Mikhail for his tireless efforts, unwavering passion, and significant impact on creating transparency about the incidents and accidents that happen on the seven seas day by day.

Fair winds and following seas, Mikhail. Thank you.

Journalist flees Russia over cargo ship piracy story

Luke Harding

A journalist who broke the story of a Russian cargo ship apparently hijacked by pirates announced he had fled [Russia](#), fearing for his life.

Mikhail Voitenko, editor of the online maritime bulletin Sovfracht, said he had left the country after receiving a menacing late-night phone call. Voitenko said an unidentified man called him on the night of 1 September and warned him he was "stepping on the heels of some serious people".

Speaking from Istanbul, where he is now in hiding, Voitenko said he was bluntly informed that these "guys are out for revenge. I was told: 'They are very unhappy with you. But they don't want unpleasantness'." Voitenko said the man urged him to leave Russia as rapidly as possible.

Speaking by phone to the Guardian, he said he was intending to stay out of the country until "things calmed down".

Voitenko was the first person to report on the disappearance of the Arctic Sea, which mysteriously vanished after passing through the Channel on 28 July, carrying a £1.1m cargo of Finnish timber.

Russia says hijackers seized the ship four days earlier in international waters near Sweden. It says its navy recovered the boat on 17 August in the Cape Verde islands, off the west coast of Africa.

Russia has charged eight people, mostly Estonians, with kidnapping and piracy. The story has dominated the Russian press, which has identified most of the kidnappers as ethnic Russians, and has even called in experts to identify the men from their criminal tattoos.

Voitenko, however, has repeatedly cast doubt on the official version of events. The main source of information on the hijacking in the early days of the crisis, he has hinted that the ship may have been carrying a secret shipment of weapons, or, he suggested, "something much more expensive and dangerous".

Sounding distinctly frightened, Voitenko today said he did not know the identity of his mystery caller. But he hinted that the man who spoke with a "chilling voice" may have represented the FSB, Russia's powerful and secretive post-KGB spy agency. He also said that Russia was "deliberately covering up this mystery". Asked what was really hidden on board the Arctic Sea, he replied cryptically: "Half of those involved in this were private individuals. But half were linked with the state."

All 15 Russian sailors involved in the drama were released unharmed. So far, however, they have failed to give a convincing account of what happened, with even Russia's investigative committee head, Alexander Bastrykin, admitting last week that the ship "might have been carrying not only timber".

Adding further intrigue, Russian chief of general staff, Nikolai Makarov, said the vessel would be searched for a possible secret cargo when it returns to Russia later this month.

Last night Voitenko said the fact the Arctic Sea's disappearance has grown into an international scandal was hardly surprising. "This isn't a usual situation. You don't normally get attacks on ships on the Baltic coast," he said.



📷 The Arctic Sea was discovered 300 miles off the Cape Verde islands three weeks after it went missing, triggering speculation of a pirate attack. Photograph: EPA

BABY LEEN

General Cargo Ship, IMO 8912792

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The vessel **BABY LEEN** (IMO 8912792) is a General Cargo Ship built in 1991 (33 years old) and currently sailing under the flag of **Unknown**.

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VESSEL PARTICULARS

Status	Not in Service since 2021	TEU	
IMO number	8912792	Crude Oil (bbl)	-
Vessel Name	BABY LEEN	Gas (m3)	-
Ship type	General Cargo Ship	Grain	
Flag	Panama	Bale	
Homeport		Classification Society	
Gross Tonnage	3988	Registered Owner	
Summer Deadweight (t)	4706	Owner Address	
Length Overall (m)	98	Owner Website	-
Beam (m)	17	Owner Email	-
Draught (m)		Manager	
Year of Build	1991	Manager Address	
Builder		Manager Website	-
Place of Build		Manager Email	-
Yard			

HISTORY

Vessel Name	Registered Owner	Year
BABY LEEN		2018
LTW EXPRESS		2015
SHELLEY EXPRESS		2011
ARCTIC SEA		2005
JOGAILA		2000
TORM SENEGAL		1998
ZIM VENEZUELA		1996
OKHOTSKOE		1992
ALRAI		1988

RHOSUS
 General Cargo Ship, IMO 8630344
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The vessel **RHOSUS** (IMO 8630344) is a General Cargo Ship built in 1986 (38 years old) and currently sailing under the flag of **Unknown**.

[Plans & Prices](#)



Add Photo

VESSEL PARTICULARS			
Status	Not in Service since 2018	TEU	-
IMO number	8630344	Crude Oil (bbl)	-
Vessel Name	RHOSUS	Gas (m3)	-
Ship type	General Cargo Ship	Grain	
Flag	Moldova	Bale	
Homeport		Classification Society	
Gross Tonnage	1900	Registered Owner	
Summer Deadweight (t)	3226	Owner Address	
Length Overall (m)	87	Owner Website	-
Beam (m)	12	Owner Email	-
Draught (m)		Manager	
Year of Build	1986	Manager Address	
Builder		Manager Website	-
Place of Build		Manager Email	-
Yard			

HISTORY		
Vessel Name	Registered Owner	Year
RHOSUS	Briarwood Corp	2008
NEW LEGEND GLORY		2007
ZHENG LONG		2005
SEOKJUNG NO.505		2002
DAIFUKU MARU NO.8		1986