

Suspect in Nord Stream pipeline explosion arrested

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Almost three years after the attacks on the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022, one of the alleged perpetrators has been arrested for the first time. Italian police arrested Ukrainian ex-officer Serhii K., whom the German Federal Prosecutor's Office accuses of coordinating the attacks and, as a member of a group, planting the explosive charges on the bottom of the Baltic Sea. The 49-year-old had been vacationing with his family in the Rimini area, even though there was an international arrest warrant out for him.

For the German government, the arrest comes at a very inopportune time. If the suspect reveals who was behind the attack, it could lead to serious tensions with Kiev and Washington. This comes at a time when Berlin and Kiev are pulling out all the stops to prevent President Trump from striking a deal with Moscow and to persuade him to continue supporting the war.

German Justice Minister Stefanie Hubig (Social Democrats, SPD) called the arrest a “very impressive investigative success.” She said that Germany is a constitutional state and that the bombing of the pipelines must be investigated under criminal law. However, she added that this would not change Germany's stance on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. “We stand firmly by Ukraine's side politically,” she said.

The fact that the German justice minister feels compelled to assure Ukraine of Germany's continued solidarity in connection with the arrest of a suspected terrorist speaks volumes. It has long been known in Berlin that Washington and Kiev were behind the attack on Nord Stream. After all, then-US President Joe Biden had publicly threatened a few months earlier that ways and means would be found to put an end to the project.

But the German government did not want to talk about it publicly. If it had accused its closest allies in the war against Russia of being behind the devastating act of sabotage, the joint war front would have collapsed. At the same time, it could not simply ignore the attack because of its magnitude. Before the attack, half of Germany's annual natural gas demand flowed through Nord Stream 1. Nord Stream 2 was

about to go into operation. Together, the two destroyed pipelines cost around €10 billion.

The Federal Public Prosecutor's Office therefore began investigating and quickly found what it was looking for. The exact sequence of events of the attack and those directly involved are now largely known. Back in June last year, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office already attempted to arrest one of the main suspects, Ukrainian diving instructor Volodymyr Sch., at his then place of residence in Poland. However, the Polish authorities warned him, and a car from the Ukrainian embassy took him across the border to safety.

On November 20, 2024, *Der Spiegel* published an extensive investigation entitled “How a Ukrainian secret commando blew up Nord Stream.” It is based on investigation files, intelligence information, two years of research by its own reporters, interviews with those involved, and on-site investigations. It does not seem to have been too difficult to get those involved to talk, as many of them considered the bombing of the pipelines to be a patriotic heroic deed.

Out of consideration for the safety of those involved, *Der Spiegel* mentioned only a few names, but described the planning, preparation, and execution of the attack in great detail, including technical details such as the construction of the bombs, which were specially made for this purpose.

Compressed air cylinders for divers, which did not attract attention at the border crossing, were converted into pipe bombs. Twenty to thirty-five kilograms of special underwater explosives, arranged as a so-called cutting charge, ensured optimal effect. The bombs were attached to a connecting seam of the pipeline, which is not encased in concrete but in hard foam. A small hole in the outer wall was then sufficient for the gas pressure to do the rest. The bombs were tested in a lake in Ukraine, and the divers practiced installing them at depths of up to 100 meters.

Given the meticulous preparation, a relatively small team of six people was sufficient to bring the equipment to Germany, rent the sailing yacht “Andromeda” under a false identity, and attach the explosive charges over the course of

several days. Well-trained divers were required, as the pipelines at the attack sites run at a depth of about 70 meters. Timed detonators then set off the bombs long after the perpetrators had left.

The movements of the attackers are now well documented based on GPS data, images from surveillance and speed cameras, and witness statements from local residents. Traces of explosives were also found on the “Andromeda,” confirming that the boat was used for the attack.

However, the question of who was behind the attacks remains controversial. Neither the German nor other investigative authorities have shown much interest in pursuing the matter so far. In Denmark and Sweden, where the attacks took place in their territorial waters, the investigations were discontinued after a short time.

However, *Der Spiegel*'s report leaves little doubt that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Ukrainian military were involved and that the highest government circles were informed. The German government was also warned by the Dutch intelligence service, but ignored the warning or did not take it seriously. *Der Spiegel* reports:

There are many indications that those responsible for the largest act of sabotage in European history were, all in all, about a dozen men and one woman from Ukraine. Some are civilians, others are soldiers. They were recruited and trained by a group that had been planning and carrying out secret operations for the Ukrainian security apparatus for years. Some of the perpetrators have long-standing connections to the CIA.

Der Spiegel identified 49-year-old Roman Chervinsky as the probable leader of the operation, with whom its reporters also spoke briefly. He was one of the heads of counterintelligence for the Ukrainian domestic security service SBU and later moved to the military intelligence service HUR. He is said to have been involved in the 2019 kidnapping of Vladimir Zemach, who was charged with shooting down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. According to *Der Spiegel*, Chervinsky

...long belonged to a group within the Ukrainian security services that was considered particularly conspiratorial, set up by US agents. Because the Ukrainian services were infiltrated by former KGB cadres, the Americans had been looking for years for trustworthy people who could be trained away from

Russian informants. The most important goal was to set up capable sabotage units.

According to *Der Spiegel*'s research, the attack had the blessing of General Valery Zaluzhny. The then commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian army is said to have been so enthusiastic that he wanted to use the same methods to destroy the TurkStream pipeline, which connects Russia to Turkey via the Black Sea. However, this failed.

President Zelensky was reportedly not informed at first because Zaluzhny did not trust his entourage. But he knew about it at least three months before the attack, as several Western intelligence agencies learned of the plans and informed Zelensky. The *Wall Street Journal* even reported on August 14, 2024, that Zelensky had personally approved the attack. He subsequently withdrew his approval, but Zaluzhny ignored his order and carried out the attack.

Serhii K., who was the first suspected attacker to be arrested, could shed light on the question of who was behind the Nord Stream attack and who was pulling the strings. However, neither side seems to be particularly interested in this. The Italian authorities are delaying K.'s extradition to Germany. They first want to investigate whether he was also involved in attacks on ships in the Mediterranean, which could take up to two months. And the German government does not want to sour its relationship with the Zelensky regime.

The destruction of Nord Stream also exposed the German government's war propaganda. This war is not about defending “freedom and democracy” in Ukraine, but about raw materials, profits, power, and other imperialist interests. Even supposed partners and allies do not shy away from the worst criminal machinations.

The German government is trying to cover up Kiev's and Washington's responsibility for the attack because continuing the war, weakening Russia, and gaining access to its immense resources are more important to it than solving the crime.



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