# China denies role in suspected sabotage of Finland-Estonia gas link

On October 8, a gas pipeline and a telecoms cable were broken in what Finnish investigators said may have been sabotage.

China has called for an “objective, fair and professional” investigation as Finland investigates suspected sabotage of a subsea gas pipeline that links it to Estonia and wider European Union networks.

China and Finland have begun communication over the damage to the Balticconector gas pipeline, which was reported to be leaking on October 9. Helsinki has said its investigation was focused on the potential role of a Chinese ship.

The European country’s National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) said on Friday it was studying how the NewNew Polar Bear container vessel might have been involved in the incident, which also saw two telecom cables cut.

The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday that Tallinn has contacted Beijing seeking “to encourage cooperation concerning the investigation”.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a press briefing the same day that Beijing hopes that the relevant parties can find the truth as soon as possible, and rejected any suggestion that China was responsible.

“It is understood that the Chinese vessel was normal in the relevant waters at the time of the incident, and no abnormalities were found due to the poor sea conditions at the time,” Mao said.

She added that China had always advocated that the international community strengthen cooperation and jointly safeguard the security of cross-border infrastructure.

**Baltic security concerns on the rise**

According to the Finnish NBI, a “heavy object” was found near the pipeline damage, and they were investigating whether this was linked to the incident.

“The investigation has confirmed that the damage has been caused by an external mechanical force, and based on current knowledge there is no reason to believe the damage has been caused by an explosion,” Detective Superintendent Risto Lohi said in a statement last week.

The incident stoked concern about the security of energy supplies in the wider Nordic region and prompted NATO to increase patrols in the Baltic Sea.

Energy security concerns have risen to new heights in the EU since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The Baltic region is particularly vulnerable due to a limited number of energy links to the rest of the bloc.

Last week, Estonian investigators said they were looking into two ships concerning the incident, including the Chinese vessel and Russia’s Sevmorput.

Russia’s state-controlled energy company Rosatom said its ship had no link to the pipeline damage.

“We categorically reject as groundless any suggestions that a Rosatom-operated ship may have been in any way connected to the Balticconnector pipeline incident in the Gulf of Finland on October 8,” the company said.

However, officials in the Baltic region remain suspicious regarding Moscow and have called for action.

Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics said last week that NATO should close the Baltic Sea to ships if Russia were proven responsible.

On Monday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said threats made towards Russia were unacceptable.