

[Print this Page](#)[Close Window](#)**Russian press allege Mossad connection to 'Arctic Sea' - Summary**

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Moscow- A Russian newspaper claimed Friday that suspected pirates who boarded the freighter Arctic Sea were actually agents of the Israeli secret service trying to stop it smuggling arms to Iran. According to Russian media, the Arctic Sea may have been carrying illegal X-55 cruise missiles destined for Iran hidden among its cargo of lumber.

Men acting on the behalf of the Israeli Mossad secret service commandeered the ship to divert the weapons away from Israel's regional enemy, the daily Novaya Gazeta said.

Citing Moscow publicist Yulia Latynina, the daily pointed to the surprise visit of Israeli President Shimon Peres on August 18, a day after the Arctic Sea, which had been missing for three weeks, had been tracked down and liberated by Russian forces off West Africa.

During his visit, Peres, who according to Latynina had no other business in Russia, requested Moscow refrain from supplying weapons or missile defence systems to Iran.

Russian authorities denied that the Arctic Sea had been smuggling weapons.

Russian ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Dmitri Rogozin, said earlier Friday that such allegations were a "fantasy" and "ridiculous."

The deployment at great expense of Russian Black Sea fleet to liberate the hijacked ship was undertaken for the sake of the 15 Russian seamen on board and not supposed weapons, Rogozin said.

Russian authorities in Moscow on late Friday formally charged the eight alleged hijackers with kidnapping and piracy, the Interfax news agency reported.

The suspects include a Lithuanian, a Russian, three stateless persons, and a Spaniard, the report said, adding that the citizenship of the two remaining suspects had yet to be clarified.

According to official reports, the Arctic Sea was liberated from pirates on Monday off the coast of West Africa. According to the Russian sources, pirates took the freighter on July 24 off the coast of Sweden.

Victor Matveev, director of Solchart Management, the shipping company that owns the Arctic Sea freighter stated Friday that his company "still has not received any official information" about the ship or its crew.

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