

Independent Nord Stream Expedition Discovers Clue Missed by Official Investigators

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The Grayzone participated in what appears to be the first independent expedition investigating the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. Near one of the blast sites, we discovered a diving boot used by US Navy divers. How did Swedish investigators miss this?



Video above by Agnes Andersson, [click here to view](#)

On the evening of May 24, 2023, I stood aboard a small ship called the *Baltic Explorer*. With sun still high overhead in the Baltic Sea, our [boat](#) sat anchored thirty-one nautical miles from the coast of Denmark, and directly above the ruptured Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the

exclusive economic zone of Sweden.

For several minutes, I stared at a live video feed from an underwater drone showing never-before-seen footage of the ruptures in the pipeline. Suddenly, a strange object appeared on the screen. It was a black and orange diver's boot.

The Grayzone has identified a model which closely resembles this boot, and is used by both US Navy and commercial divers. Ukrainian Navy divers have also been seen wearing similar boots.

We have also learned that the boot's presence had been previously reported to investigators, yet they have not collected it or divulged its existence.



Video of the boot filmed by drone from the Baltic Explorer, [click here to view](#)

A new clue on the Baltic Sea floor

What took place on September 26, 2022 shattered the placid atmosphere that usually prevails on the Baltic Sea. On that day, as the war in Ukraine deepened, four explosions ruptured the \$23 billion Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines that carried natural gas from Russia to Europe. It was the most severe act of industrial sabotage in human history, severing the main artery for affordable energy from Russia to Germany – cheap energy that was critical to maintaining Germany's industrial base.

Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 each consist of two pipes. Three of them were ruptured. One line of Nord Stream 2 remains intact.

Sweden, Denmark and Germany have conducted investigations, but with the exception of an early Swedish assessment that the explosions were probably caused by “gross sabotage,” their findings have yet to be publicized.

Now, more than eight months later, a new clue has been revealed in one of the most urgent geopolitical mysteries of the century.

The boot spotted on our expedition bears a striking resemblance to those worn by [US Navy](#) divers.

[Ukraine's](#) US-trained [Navy divers](#) have also been spotted using the same model, or one which is virtually identical. It should be noted, however, that boots of [similar appearance](#) appear to be commercially available as well.

Does this offer a clue about the identity of the perpetrators of the Nord Stream attack? Obviously, further investigation into the boot's provenance is required, but its location and brand appear to be significant.

In late May, Swedish engineer [Erik Andersson](#) obtained access to blast sites along both the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, in both the exclusive economic zones of Sweden and Denmark. In the course of our expedition to the blast sites, The Grayzone has obtained sonar images and underwater drone images and videos that have never been seen by the public before.

Swedish and Danish maritime authorities were notified about the expedition. As a precautionary measure, the organizer of the expedition filed an application with the Swedish Defense Authority for permission to publish the expedition's never-before-seen high-resolution sonar images.

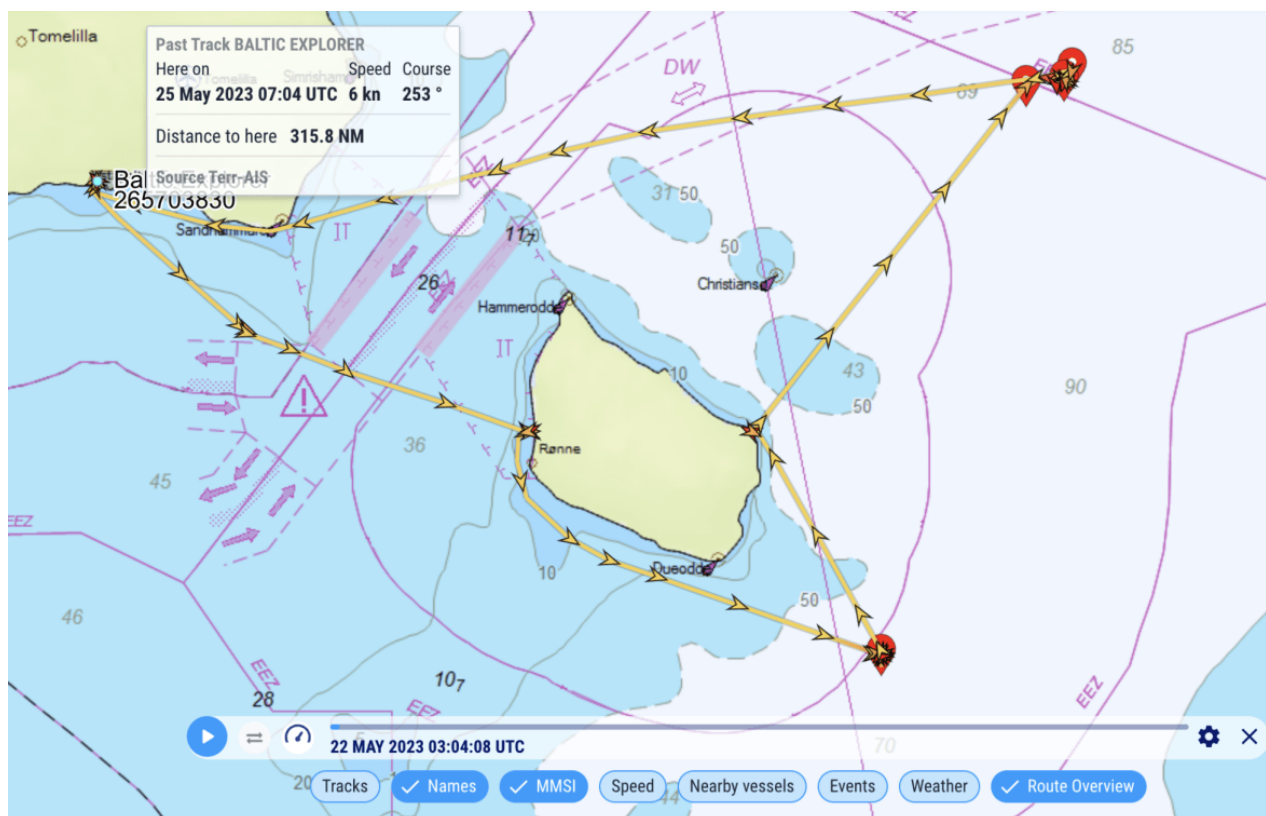


Fig. 1. The path of the Baltic Explorer, the expedition's boat. The red symbols indicate the Nord Stream blast sites. Source: MarineTraffic.

The boot was spotted approximately five meters from the small leak site in the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the Swedish exclusive economic zone. It was a few minutes before 7:00 p.m. on May 24, 2023 when our expedition's underwater drone caught sight of it.



Fig. 2 The boot spotted by the expedition's drone.

It is unknown for how long the boot had been exposed on the seafloor (as seen in Fig. 2). Andersson, the organizer of the expedition, believes it is possible the boot was previously covered by sediment or mud which may have been moved by underwater currents or the blasts. Otherwise, it is unclear how investigators could have missed it.

The boot closely resembles the [Thor diver overboot](#) produced by Northern Diver, a British company whose products are produced in China.

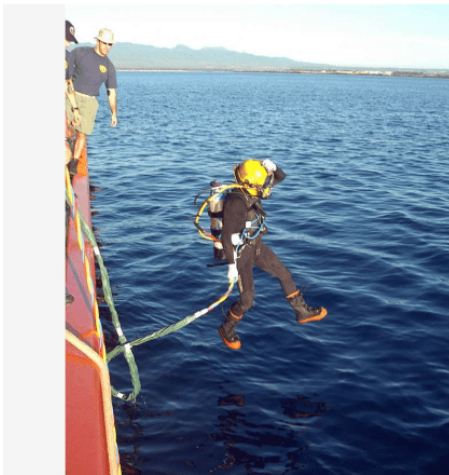
"This looks like a Thor overboot," Neil Tordoff, the military and commercial sales director at Northern Diver, stated after viewing a photo of the boot sent by The Grayzone. "I can't be 100% sure."

Tordoff said Northern Diver no longer manufactures this boot due to disruptions in production brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"If it's the Thor over boot, this was used and is still used in the oil and gas industry for divers. It's part of a dry-diving suit that would normally be used in contaminated water to keep the diver safe," Tordoff explained.

"This item is used worldwide," he added.

The owner of the boot may have been a diver who lost it while planting the bombs. Alternatively, the boot may belong to a diver ordered back to the crime scene to retrieve the unexploded charge meant for the intact line of Nord Stream 2 – a theory [proposed](#) by Seymour Hersh. Or perhaps it belonged to a commercial diver.



Gunner's Mate 1st Class Shannon Hall, assigned to Mobile Diving Salvage Unit One (MDSU-1), steps from the deck.

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Summary

Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (Dec. 01, 2005) Gunners Mate 1st Class Shannon Hall, assigned to Mobile Diving Salvage Unit One (MDSU-1), steps from the deck of C-Command, a support ship for Seal Delivery Vehicle Team One (SDVT-1), to conduct underwater maintenance training. Divers from MDSU-1 were off the coast of Hickam Air force Base, Hawaii conducting routine training. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Justin P. Nesbitt File# 051201-N-6775N-012

Fig. 3. A US Navy diver wearing the boots in a training exercise.

The organizer of the expedition, Andersson, contacted the Nord Stream 2 AG company (NS2 AG) to inquire about the boot. A representative of the company confirmed the presence of the object.

"I had a long conversation [with NS2 AG on May 30]," Andersson explained. They "clearly deny that there had ever been any diving for construction or pipe maintenance in the area."

Andersson was also told by NS2 AG that the company had "discovered the boot in February and reported it to the Swedish investigators."



Fig. 4. A close-up of the US Navy diver boot (left) and the boot spotted on the expedition (right).

The HMS *Belos*, a submarine rescue and diving vessel of the Swedish navy, [scoured](#) the leak sites in October 2022. For more than eight hours, on two separate days, in early and then late October, the ship sat stationary over the location where the boot was spotted.

Why have the Swedish investigators neglected to collect the boot or even mention it in any of their public statements? At the time of publication, The Grayzone has received no response to an email requesting clarification from them.

A source in contact with The Grayzone spoke with a *Belos* diver who denied that the boot had been worn by any of their divers. The diver reportedly said it is possible that its wearer might not have noticed its absence.

A *Belos* diver involved in the Swedish investigation and NS2 AG representatives maintain they played no role in the boot's appearance.

Who bombed Nord Stream?

This February, veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh [cited](#) a “a source with direct knowledge of the operational planning” of a covert operation conducted by the CIA in partnership with Norway, a key NATO partner state, to destroy the Nord Stream pipelines. A handful of self-described open-source intelligence (OSINT) researchers claimed to have “debunked” the revelations in Hersh’s report, but it’s since become apparent that some of the claims initially made by OSINT researchers may have been [exaggerated](#).

Sweden’s *Expressen* [reported](#) in May 2023 that the relevance of the observed Russian vessels had been “dismissed,” and is “no longer considered interesting for the German investigators.” According to *Expressen*, the ships’ “positions have been mapped and the conclusion must be that they have not been in such a place that they could have carried out the deed.”

For now, German investigators seem to be focused on the *Andromeda*, a private yacht which they [suspect](#) was rented by a small team of pro-Ukrainian militants to transport explosives to the Nord Stream pipelines.

Through our expedition to the sites of the Nord Stream pipelines attack, The Grayzone has obtained images and videos that have never been seen by the public. The sonar images and underwater drone videos and images may offer insight into the amount of explosives used in the sabotage and their placement.

For now, we are left to wonder why Swedish investigators have yet to publicly demonstrate any interest in a boot found close to a Nord Stream blast site. It remains to be seen whether the item might offer a clue into the identity of the attack’s perpetrators.

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Jeffrey Brodsky’s writing has appeared in Jacobin, Discourse, In These Times, La Vanguardia (in Spanish and Catalan), El País and The Copperfield Review, among others. He can be found on Twitter [@JeffreyBrodsky5](#).

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