

Why the Media Don't Want to Know the Truth About the Nord Stream Blasts

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No one but the terminally naïve should be surprised that security services lie – and that they are all but certain to cover their tracks when they carry out operations that either violate domestic or international law or that would be near-universally rejected by their own populations.

Which is reason enough why anyone following the fallout from explosions last September that ripped holes in three of the four Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea supplying Russian gas to Europe should be wary of accepting anything Western agencies have to say on the matter.

In fact, the only thing that Western publics should trust is the consensus among “investigators” that the three simultaneous blasts deep underwater on the pipelines – a fourth charge apparently failed to detonate – were sabotage, not some freak coincidental accident.

Someone blew up the Nord Stream pipelines, creating an untold environmental catastrophe as the pipes leaked huge quantities of methane, a supremely active global-warming gas. It was an act of unrivaled industrial and environmental terrorism.

If Washington had been able to pin the explosions on Russia, as it initially hoped, it would have done so with full vigor. There is nothing Western states would like more than to intensify world fury against Moscow, especially in the context of NATO's express efforts to “weaken” Russia through a proxy war waged in Ukraine.

But, after the claim made the rounds of front pages for a week or two, the story of Russia destroying its own pipelines was quietly shelved. That was partly because it seemed too difficult to maintain a narrative in which Moscow chose to destroy a critical part of its own

energy infrastructure.

Not only did the explosions cause Russia great financial harm – the country's gas and oil revenues regularly financed nearly half of its annual budget – but the blasts removed Moscow's chief influence over Germany, which had been until then heavily dependent on Russian gas. The initial media story required the Western public to believe that President Vladimir Putin willingly shot himself in the foot, losing his only leverage over European resolve to impose economic sanctions on his country.

But even more than the complete lack of a Russian motive, Western states knew they would be unable to build a plausible forensic case against Moscow for the Nord Stream blasts.

Instead, with no chance to milk the explosions for propaganda value, official Western interest in explaining what had happened to the Nord Stream pipelines wilted, despite the enormity of the event. That was reflected for months in an almost [complete absence](#) of media coverage.

When the matter was raised, it was to argue that separate investigations by Sweden, Germany and Denmark were all drawing a blank. Sweden even refused to share any of its findings with Germany and Denmark, [arguing](#) that to do so would harm its “national security.”

No one, again including the Western media, raised an eyebrow or showed a flicker of interest in what might be really going on behind the scenes. Western states and their compliant corporate media seemed quite ready to settle for the conclusion that this was a mystery cocooned in an enigma.

Isolated and Friendless

It might have stayed that way forever, except that in February, a journalist – one of the most acclaimed investigative reporters of the past half-century – produced an [account](#) that finally demystified the explosions. Drawing on at least one anonymous, highly placed informant, Seymour Hersh pointed the finger for the explosions directly at the US administration and President Joe Biden himself.

Hersh's detailed retelling of the planning and execution of the Nord Stream blasts had the advantage – at least for those interested in getting to the truth of what took place – that his account fitted the known circumstantial evidence.

At a Senate hearing, top US diplomat Victoria Nuland celebrated the Nord Stream 2 pipeline bombing:

"Senator Cruz, like you, I am, and I think the administration is, very gratified to know that Nord Stream 2 is now, as you like to say, a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea." pic.twitter.com/KS5OM4N165

— Aaron Maté (@aaronjmate) [January 27, 2023](#)

Key Washington figures, from President Biden to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and his senior neoconservative official Victoria Nuland – a [stalwart](#) of the murky U.S., anti-Russia meddling in Ukraine over the past decade – had either called for the destruction of the Nord

Stream pipelines or celebrated the blasts shortly after they took place.

If anyone had a motive for blowing up the Russian pipelines – and a self-declared one at that – it was the Biden administration. They opposed the Nord Stream 1 and 2 projects from the outset – and for exactly the same reason that Moscow so richly prized them.

My latest: If, as seems likely, the US was behind the pipeline blasts, it shows it's ready to turn the whole of Europe into a battlefield – and bully, betray and potentially sacrifice the continent's population as cruelly as it has treated the Global South <https://t.co/cIN1INfiOO>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [October 6, 2022](#)

In particular, the second pair of pipelines, Nord Stream 2, which was completed in September 2021, would double the amount of cheap Russian gas available to Germany and Western Europe. The only obstacle in its path was the hesitancy of German regulators. They delayed approval in November 2021.

Nord Stream meant major European countries, most especially Germany, would be completely dependent for the bulk of their energy supplies on Russia. That deeply conflicted with U.S. interests. For two decades, Washington had been expanding NATO as an anti-Moscow military alliance embracing ever more of Europe, to the point of butting up aggressively against Russia's borders.

The Ukrainian government's covert efforts to become a NATO member – thereby destroying a long-standing mutual and fragile nuclear deterrence between Washington and Moscow – were among the stated reasons why Russia invaded its neighbor in February last year.

Nearly a year into the Ukraine war, the western narrative of an 'unprovoked attack' by Moscow has become impossible to sustain <https://t.co/xTaHEibKax>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [January 10, 2023](#)

Washington wanted Moscow isolated and friendless in Europe. The goal was to turn Russia into Enemy No. 2 – after China – not leave Europeans looking to Moscow for energy salvation.

The Nord Stream explosions achieved precisely that outcome. They severed the main reason European states had for cozying up to Moscow. Instead, the U.S. started shipping its expensive liquified natural gas across the Atlantic to Europe, both forcing Europeans to become more energy dependent on Washington and, at the same time, fleecing them for the privilege.

But even if Hersh's story fitted the circumstantial evidence, could his account stand up to further scrutiny?

Peculiarly Incurious

This is where the real story begins. Because one might have assumed that Western states

would be queuing up to investigate the facts Hersh laid bare, if only to see if they stacked up or to find a more plausible alternative account of what happened.

Dennis Kucinich, a former chair of a U.S. Congressional investigative subcommittee on government oversight, has [noted](#) that it is simply astonishing no one in Congress has been pushing to use its powers to subpoena senior American officials, such as the secretary of the Navy, to test Hersh's version of events. As Kucinich observes, such subpoenas could be issued under Congress's Article One, Section 8, Clause 18, providing "constitutional powers to gather information, including to inquire on the administrative conduct of office."

Similarly, and even more extraordinarily, when a vote was called by Russia at the United Nations Security Council late last month to set up an independent international commission to investigate the blasts, the proposal was [roundly rejected](#).

If adopted, the UN Secretary-General himself would have appointed expert investigators and aided their work with a large secretariat.

Three Security Council members, Russia, China and Brazil, voted in favor of the commission. The other 12 – the U.S. and its allies or small states it could easily pressure – abstained, the safest way to quietly foil the creation of such an investigative commission.

Excuses for rejecting an independent commission failed to pass the sniff test. The claim was that it would interfere with the existing investigations of Denmark, Sweden and Germany. And yet all three have demonstrated that they are in no hurry to reach a conclusion, arguing that they may need years to carry out their work. As previously noted, they have indicated great reluctance to cooperate. And last week, Sweden once again [stated](#) that it may never get to the bottom of the events in the Baltic Sea.

As one European diplomat reportedly [observed](#) of meetings between NATO policymakers, the motto is: "Don't talk about Nord Stream." The diplomat added: "It's like a corpse at a family gathering. It's better not to know."

It may not be so surprising that Western states are devoted to ignorance about who carried out a major act of international terrorism in blowing up the Nord Stream pipelines, considering that the most likely culprit is the world's only superpower and the one state that can make their lives a misery.

But what should be more peculiar is that Western media have shown precisely [no interest](#) in getting to the truth of the matter either. They have remained completely incurious to an event of enormous international significance and consequence.

It is not only that Hersh's account has been [ignored](#) by the Western press as if it did not even exist. It is that none of the media appear to have made any effort to follow up with their own investigations to test his account for plausibility.

"Act of War"

Hersh's investigation is filled with details that could be checked – and verified or rebutted – if anyone wished to do so.

He set out a lengthy planning stage that began in the second half of 2021. He names the

unit responsible for the attack on the pipeline: the U.S. Navy's Diving and Salvage Center, based in Panama City, Florida. And he explains why it was chosen for the task over the U.S. Special Operations Command: because any covert operation by the former would not need to be reported to Congress.

In December 2021, according to his highly placed informant, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan convened a task force of senior administration and Pentagon officials at the request of Biden himself. They agreed that the explosions must not be traceable back to Washington; otherwise, as the source noted: "It's an act of war."

The CIA brought in the Norwegians, stalwarts of NATO and strongly hostile to Russia, to carry out the logistics of where and how to attack the pipelines. Oslo had its own additional commercial interests in play, as the blasts would make Germany more dependent on Norwegian gas, as well as American supplies, to make up the shortfall from Nord Stream.

By March last year, shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the precise site for the attack had been selected: in the Baltic's shallow waters off Denmark's Bornholm Island, where the sea floor was only 260ft below the surface, the four pipelines were close together and there were no strong tidal currents.

A small number of Swedish and Danish officials were given a general briefing about unusual diving activities to avoid the danger that their navies might raise the alarm.

The Norwegians also helped develop a way to disguise the U.S explosive charges so that, after they were laid, they would not be detected by Russian surveillance in the area.

The story no one wanted told. Seymour Hersh reveals how the US blew up the Nordstream gas pipelines, one of the great environmental disasters of our time. I'm guessing Hersh published on Substack because no establishment media outlet dared touch his expose <https://t.co/B2lxQj5kuh>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [February 9, 2023](#)

Next, the U.S. found the ideal cover. For more than two decades, Washington has sponsored an annual NATO naval exercise in the Baltic every June. The U.S. arranged that the 2022 event, Baltops 22, would take place close to Bornholm Island, allowing the divers to plant the charges unnoticed.

The explosives would be detonated through the use of a sonar buoy dropped by plane at the time of President Biden's choosing. Complex arrangements had to be taken to make sure the explosives would not be accidentally triggered by passing ships, underwater drilling, seismic events or sea creatures.

Three months later, on September 26, the sonar buoy was dropped by a Norwegian plane, and a few hours later three of the four pipelines were put out of commission.

Disinformation Campaign

The Western media's response to Hersh's account has perhaps been the most revealing aspect of the entire saga.

It is not just that the establishment media have been so uniformly and remarkably reticent to dig deeper into making sense of this momentous crime – beyond making predictable, unevidenced accusations against Russia. It is that they have so obviously sought to dismiss Hersh's account before making even cursory efforts to confirm or deny its specifics.

The knee-jerk pretext has been that Hersh has only one anonymous source for his claims. Hersh himself has noted that, as with other of his famous investigations, he cannot always refer to additional sources he uses to confirm details because those sources impose a condition of invisibility for agreeing to speak to him.

That should hardly be surprising when informants are drawn from a small, select group of Washington insiders and are at great risk of being identified – at great personal cost to themselves, given the U.S. administration's proven [track record](#) of persecuting whistleblowers.

But the fact that this was indeed just a pretext from the establishment media becomes much clearer when we consider that those same journalists dismissive of Hersh's account happily gave prominence to an alternative, highly implausible, semi-official version of events.

In what looked suspiciously like a coordinated publication in early March, [The New York Times](#) and Germany's [Die Zeit](#) newspapers printed separate accounts promising to solve "one of the central mysteries of the war in Ukraine." The *Times* headline asked a question it implied it was about to answer: "Who Blew Up the Nord Stream Pipelines?"

Instead, both papers offered an account of the Nord Stream attack that lacked detail, and any detail that was supplied was completely implausible. This new version of events was vaguely attributed to anonymous American and German intelligence sources – the very actors, in Hersh's account, responsible both for carrying out and covering up the Nord Stream blasts.

In fact, the story had all the hallmarks of a disinformation campaign to distract from Hersh's investigation. It threw the establishment media a bone: the chief purpose was to lift any pressure from journalists to pursue Hersh's leads. Now they could scurry around, looking like they were doing their job as a "free press" by chasing a complete red herring supplied by U.S. intelligence agencies.

Which is why the story was widely reported, notably far more widely than Hersh's much more credible account.

So what did the *New York Times*' account claim? That a mysterious group of six people had hired a 50ft yacht and sailed off to Bornholm Island, where they had carried out a James Bond-style mission to blow up the pipelines. Those involved, it was [suggested](#), were a group of "pro-Ukrainian saboteurs" – with no apparent ties to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy – who were keen to seek revenge on Russia for its invasion. They had used fake passports.

The *Times* further muddied the waters, reporting sources that claimed some 45 "ghost ships" had passed close to the site of the explosion when their transponders were not working.

The crucial point was that the story shifted attention away from the sole plausible possibility, the one underscored by Hersh's source: that only a state actor could have

carried out the attack on the Nord Stream pipelines. The highly sophisticated, extremely difficult operation needed to be concealed from other states, including Russia that were closely surveilling the area.

Now the establishment media was heading off on a completely different tangent. They were looking not at states – and most especially not the one with the biggest motive, the greatest capability and the proven opportunity.

Instead, they had an excuse to play at being reporters, visiting Danish yachting communities to ask if anyone remembered the implicated yacht, the *Andromeda*, or suspicious characters aboard it, and trying to track down the Polish company that hired the sailing boat. The media had the story they preferred: one that Hollywood would have created, of a crack team of Jason Bournes giving Moscow a good slapping and then disappearing into the night.

Welcome Mystery

A month on, the media discussion is still exclusively about the mysterious yacht crew, though – after reaching a series of dead-ends in a story that was only ever meant to have dead-ends – establishment journalists are asking a few tentative questions. Though, let us note, most determinedly not questions about any possible U.S. involvement in the Nord Stream sabotage.

Britain's *Guardian* newspaper ran a [story](#) last week in which a German “security expert” wondered whether a group of six sailors was really capable of carrying out a highly complex operation to blow up the Nord Stream pipelines. That is something that might have occurred to a less credulous newspaper a month earlier when the *Guardian* simply regurgitated the *Times*' disinformation story.

But despite the security expert's skepticism, the *Guardian* is still not eager to get to the bottom of the story. It conveniently concludes that the “investigation” conducted by the Swedish public prosecutor, Mats Ljungqvist, will be unlikely ever to “yield a conclusive answer”.

Or as Ljungqvist observes: “Our hope is to be able to confirm who has committed this crime, but it should be noted that it likely will be difficult given the circumstances.”

Hersh's account continues to be ignored by the *Guardian* – beyond a dismissive reference to several “theories” and “speculation” other than the laughable yacht story. The *Guardian* does not name Hersh in its report or the fact that his highly placed source fingered the U.S. for the Nord Stream sabotage. Instead, it notes simply that one theory – Hersh's – has been “zeroing on a Nato Baltops 22 wargame two months before” the attack.

It's all still a mystery for the *Guardian* – and a very welcome one by the tenor of its reports.

The Washington Post has been performing a similar service for the Biden administration on the other side of the Atlantic. A month on, it is using the yacht story simply to widen the enigma rather than narrow it down.

The paper [reports](#) that unnamed “law enforcement officials” now believe the *Andromeda* yacht was not the only vessel involved, adding: “The boat may have been a decoy, put to sea to distract from the true perpetrators, who remain at large, according to officials with

knowledge of an investigation led by Germany's attorney general."

The *Washington Post's* uncritical reporting surely proves a boon to Western "investigators". It continues to build an ever more elaborate mystery, or "international whodunnit," as the paper gleefully describes it. Its report argues that unnamed officials "wonder if the explosive traces - collected months after the rented boat was returned to its owners - were meant to falsely lead investigators to the Andromeda as the vessel used in the attack."

The paper then quotes someone with "knowledge of the investigation": "The question is whether the story with the sailboat is something to distract or only part of the picture."

How does the paper respond? By ignoring that very warning and dutifully distracting itself across much of its own report by puzzling whether Poland might have been involved too in the blasts. Remember, a mysterious Polish company hired that red-herring yacht.

Poland, notes the paper, had a motive because it had long warned that the Nord Stream pipelines would make Europe more energy dependent on Russia. Exactly the same motive, we might note - though, of course, the *Washington Post* refuses to do so - that the Biden administration demonstrably had.

The paper does inadvertently offer one clue as to where the mystery yacht story most likely originated. The *Washington Post* quotes a German security official saying that Berlin "first became interested in the [Andromeda] vessel after the country's domestic intelligence agency received a 'very concrete tip' from a Western intelligence service that the boat may have been involved in the sabotage".

The German official "declined to name the country that shared the information" - information that helpfully draws attention away from any US involvement in the pipeline blasts and redirects it to a group of untraceable, rogue Ukraine sympathizers.

The *Washington Post* concludes that Western leaders "would rather not have to deal with the possibility that Ukraine or allies were involved". And, it seems the Western media - our supposed watchdogs on power - feel exactly the same way.

"Parody" Intelligence

In a follow-up [story](#) last week, Hersh revealed that Holger Stark, the journalist behind *Die Zeit's* piece on the mystery yacht and someone Hersh knew when they worked together in Washington, had imparted to him an interesting additional piece of information divulged by his country's intelligence services.

Hersh reports: "Officials in Germany, Sweden, and Denmark had decided shortly after the pipeline bombings to send teams to the site to recover the one mine that has not gone off. [Holger] said they were too late; an American ship had sped to the site within a day or two and recovered the mine and other materials."

Holger, Hersh says, was entirely uninterested in Washington's haste and determination to have exclusive access to this critical piece of evidence: "He answered, with a wave of his hand, 'You know what Americans are like. Always wanting to be first.'" Hersh points out: "There was another very obvious explanation."

Hersh also spoke with an intelligence expert about the plausibility of the mystery yacht

story being advanced by the *New York Times* and *Die Zeit*. He described it as a “parody” of intelligence that only fooled the media because it was exactly the kind of story they wanted to hear. He noted some of the most glaring flaws in the account:

Any serious student of the event would know that you cannot anchor a sailboat in waters that are 260 feet deep’ – the depth at which the four pipelines were destroyed – ‘but the story was not aimed at him but at the press who would not know a parody when presented with one.’”

Further:

You cannot just walk off the street with a fake passport and lease a boat. You either need to accept a captain who was supplied by the leasing agent or owner of the yacht, or have a captain who comes with a certificate of competency as mandated by maritime law. Anyone who’s ever chartered a yacht would know that.’ Similar proof of expertise and competence for deep sea diving involving the use of a specialized mix of gases would be required by the divers and the doctor.”

And:

How does a 49-foot sailboat find the pipelines in the Baltic Sea? The pipelines are not that big and they are not on the charts that come with the lease. Maybe the thought was to put the two divers into the water’ – not very easy to do so from a small yacht – ‘and let the divers look for it. How long can a diver stay down in their suits? Maybe fifteen minutes. Which means it would take the diver four years to search one square mile.’”

The truth is that the Western press has zero interest in determining who blew up the Nord Stream pipelines because, just like Western diplomats and politicians, media corporations don’t want to know the truth if it cannot be weaponized against an official enemy state.

The Western media are not there to help the public monitor the centers of power, keep our governments honest and transparent, or bring to book those who commit state crimes. They are there to keep us ignorant and willing accomplices when such crimes are seen as advancing on the global stage the interests of Western elites – including the very transnational corporations that run our media.

Which is precisely why the Nord Stream blasts took place. The Biden administration knew not only that its allies would be too fearful to expose its unprecedented act of industrial and environmental terrorism but that the media would dutifully line up behind their national governments in turning a blind eye.

The very ease with which Washington has been able to carry out an atrocity – one that has caused a surge in the cost of living for Europeans, leaving them cold and out of pocket during the winter, and added considerably to existing pressures that have been gradually deindustrializing Europe’s economies – will embolden the U.S. to act in equally rogue ways in the future.

In the context of a Ukraine war in which there is the constant threat of a resort to nuclear weapons, where that could ultimately lead should be only too obvious.

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