

## Chinese Ship Suspected of Cable Sabotage May Have Had Two AIS Devices



Xing Shun 39 off Taiwan (CGA)

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The Chinese-owned ship suspected of damaging a subsea cable off the north coast of Taiwan appears to have been using two different AIS transponders at the same time, according to Taiwan's coast guard.

The incident began Friday at about 1240 hours, when Chungwha Telecom notified Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration (CGA) that a subsea communications cable had been severed just off the coast of Keelung. The cable was a component of the Trans-Pacific Express, a high-speed fiber optic cable linking China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and the United States.

At about 1700 hours, a CGA patrol boat intercepted the Hong Kong-owned freighter *Xing Shun 39* (IMO 8358427) at a position near the cable break. The coast guard crew was unable to board the freighter because of rough surface conditions, and instead of heading for a Taiwanese port, the *Xing Shun 39* got under way for Busan, South Korea. It departed Taiwanese jurisdiction later that day.

After the incident, the CGA identified the vessel as the Shunxing-39, a ship that does not exist in IMO records. The authorities now believe that the freighter was using two different AIS devices and two different identities: its legitimate name, *Xing Shun 39*, and a closely-matched fake name, Shunxing-39. By switching back and forth, the ship created an interrupted AIS record.

William Conroy, an analyst with Semaphore Maritime Solutions, told the New York Times that the ship appeared to switch AIS transponders at about the same time that the Taiwan CGA asked it to halt for an inspection. "Shunxing-39" disappeared from AIS tracking at 1651 hours Friday, and *Xing Shun 39* appeared one minute later at a position about 50 feet away.

Though the freighter is now out of reach of Taiwanese authorities, they have asked officials in the port of Busan to help in obtaining evidence from the vessel if it arrives in Korea. The case will be forwarded to the prosecutor's office in Keelung for possible criminal or civil actions against the freighter.

In the meantime, the CGA is launching a comprehensive review of its procedure for responding to potential cable sabotage incidents involving ships, and it is coordinating with other security agencies, officials told state news outlet CNA.