



# No Pirates in the Arctic

**OE Watch Commentary:** Commercial Arctic shipping along the Russian Northeast Passage continues to grow, not as rapidly as Russia desires, but it is growing as the accompanying excerpt from *The Barents Observer* reports. Up to this point, much of the goods in transit were bulk shipments of metals, oil and natural gas. However, cargo ships, and now a container ship have made successful transits. Although there has been no piracy reported in Arctic shipping lanes, the Northern Fleet has conducted several exercises to retake ships from terrorists and saboteurs. As the article from *Xinhua* notes, the Chinese consider the lack of piracy in the Arctic as a real plus. The article believes that the Suez and Malaccan Straits need to clean up their neighborhoods or they are going to lose transit fees.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“In 2016, only 19 ships with 214,500 tons of cargo made the transit from the Bering Strait to the Barents Sea. That was more than in 2015 when goods volumes shipped along the route was only 40,000 tons.”*

**Source:** Atle Staalesen, “First Container Ship successfully breaks through the Ice,” *The Barents Observer*, 12 September 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2018/09/container-ship-makes-it-east-west-russias-arctic-route>

*The Venta Maersk is a brand-new container ship designed for voyages in icy conditions. It set sail in late from Busan, South Korea, and was accompanied by the nuclear icebreaker 50 let Pobedy through the East Siberian Sea and Laptev Sea beginning on 8 September. It is ... the first regular container ship that has crossed the Russian Arctic route. The icebreaker escort was finished once the ships sailed into the Laptev Sea on 11 September...Ice data from the Russian Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute show that there is still more than one-meter of thick ice in major parts of the East Siberian Sea, while the whole Kara Sea and practically all of the Laptev Sea are ice-free.*

*Rosatom Chief of Maritime Operations, Vladimir Artyunyan stated, “The convoy successfully proceeded through the Sannikova Strait, which is the shortest route, with an average speed of 11 knots. There have been no complaints from the ship captain or the shipping company.”*

*The «Venta Maersk» is now continuing its voyage towards its destination of Bremerhaven. It will proceed through the Laptev Sea, and subsequently the Kara Sea and Barents Sea before it enters Norwegian waters. The Danish-registered container ship was built in 2018 and can carry up to 3,600 containers. Several more companies are considering test voyages with container ships across the Northern Sea Route. Among them is the Korean company Hyundai Merchant Marine.*

**Source:** “‘Tian En,’ Chinese Ship on Maiden Arctic Voyage, Docks in Dutch Port,” *Xinhua*, 9 September 2018. [www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/09/c\\_137456629.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/09/c_137456629.htm)

*The Chinese cargo ship Tian En docked in the Dutch port of Eemshaven on 8 September on its maiden voyage across the Arctic region to deliver wind power equipment to France, the Netherlands and Sweden. “The Netherlands is famous for, among other things, the use of clean energy, especially wind power,” Captain Chen Xiangwu said. “We are more than pleased to deliver wind power equipment to this beautiful country via the ‘Polar Silk Road’....The route passing through the Arctic is much shorter than the traditional one passing through the Suez Canal. Besides, the crew doesn’t have to worry about pirates in the Arctic.”*

*In a white paper on its Arctic policy early this year, China said it would intensify cooperation with other countries to jointly build the Polar Silk Road. The Polar Silk Road via the Arctic is regarded as the third arch of the Belt and Road Initiative, adding another sea route in addition to the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, the South Pacific and Oceania.*

*The Tian En, which is owned by COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers Company, crossed the Bering Strait on Aug. 17 and arrived in the French city of Rouen, about 140 kilometers northwest of Paris, on 5 September, to a warm welcome from the local authorities. It is expected to arrive in Sweden on Sept. 15.*



Container ship CSCL Arctic Ocean, Calandkanaal, Rotterdam (2016).

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