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R 706/2025/12270

District Court judgment in the criminal case involving the tanker EAGLE S

The District Court has today issued a judgment dismissing the charge in the case involving the tanker EAGLE S along with the claims for damages arising from the charge, as it was not possible to apply Finnish criminal law to the case. The alleged offences related to the fact that the ship's anchor had fallen into the sea and the ship had dragged it along the seabed, cutting several submarine cables. There was no allegation of the defendants' having intentionally damaged the cables referred to in the charge. According to the charge, they had, however, been aware of the poor state of repair of the anchor windlass and had intentionally neglected their duties and were guilty of lawbreaking on that basis.

The defendants' conduct as described in the charge took place in international waters but within Finland's exclusive economic zone. According to the charge, the acts were subject to the criminal law of Finland because the consequences of the offences as defined by law materialised in Finland. The District Court found that the act did not result in the kinds of consequences to Finland's energy supply or telecommunications that are required to satisfy the statutory definition of criminal mischief or aggravated criminal mischief. The act did, however, cause very serious economic losses within the meaning of the statutory definition of the offence pursued by the alternative charge, i.e. aggravated criminal damage, which were incurred in Finland.

The District Court found that the anchor loss was due to a failure of the anchor securing mechanism. The defendants' alleged negligence related to their duties on board the ship, which is why the Court concluded that the incident should be classified as an incident of navigation within the meaning of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and that it was the courts of the ship's flag state or the defendants' native states that had criminal law competence in the matter.

The District Court's judgment is not final. Copies of the judgment can be requested from the registry of Helsinki District Court (tel. +358 (0)29 564 4273 or email: helsinki.ko@oikeus.fi). Document requests must state the record number of the case: R 706/2025/12270.