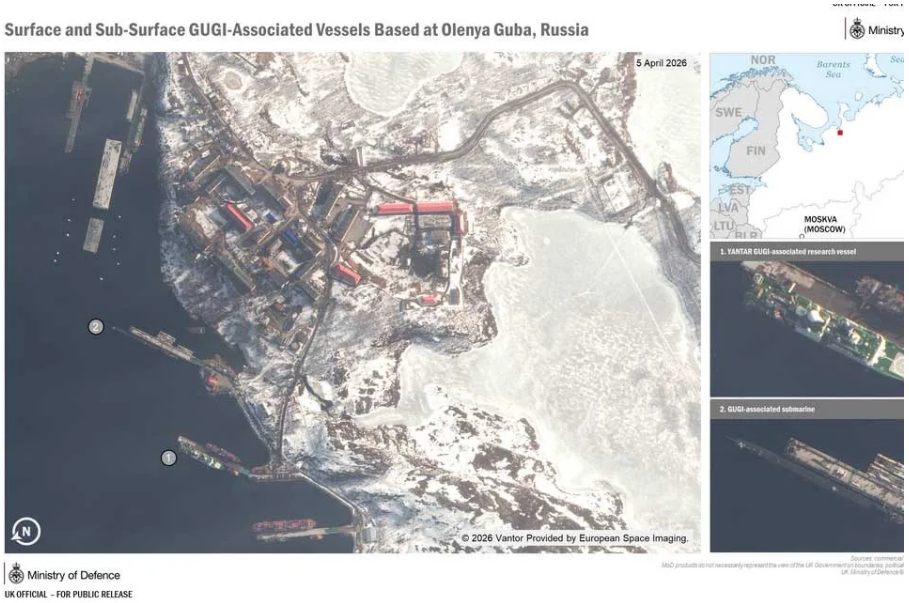

Arctic, new details on NATO-halted April operation: Russians simulating Svalbard undersea cable sabotage

Published on 10/09/2026

A Russian operation conducted in spring 2026 in Arctic waters was stopped by **the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway**.

The matter had been made public in April by the British Ministry of Defence, but a new Reuters reconstruction of **September 10, 2026** reveals previously unknown details: direct U.S. involvement, the operation's location near **Svalbard**, and the alleged use of technology designed to neutralize strategic undersea cables without leaving obvious traces of sabotage.

The case emerged back in April

On **April 9, 2026**, the British Ministry of Defence announced it had identified a Russian attack submarine in the High North and had continuously tracked it with naval and air assets.

According to London, the submarine was to serve a diversionary function, while other Russian units linked to the **GUGI**, the Main Directorate for Deep Water Research, operated near critical submarine infrastructure.

The United Kingdom had also confirmed it worked with allies, explicitly mentioning **Norway**, to identify and monitor the Russian units.

After being identified and openly tracked by Western forces, the GUGI units and the Russian submarine withdrew without managing to complete the operation covertly.

Reuters: U.S. also involved

The update comes now from Reuters today.

According to two Western officials cited by the agency, the operation took place **in waters near Svalbard** and directly involved the **United States** as well as the United Kingdom and Norway.

Allied forces reportedly identified, tracked, and confronted the Russian units at sea, preventing them from completing the exercise.

But the most delicate detail concerns what the Russian assets were doing.

According to Reuters, GUGI used **submarines for deep-water operations** to simulate the deployment of technology capable of **rendering critical undersea cables inoperable without leaving obvious traces attributable to sabotage**.

No cables were damaged.

The strategic value of Svalbard cables

The area is crossed by two fiber optic cables approximately **1,400 kilometers** long, connecting the Svalbard archipelago to mainland Norway.

The cables reach depths of approximately **2,700 meters** and carry large amounts of data, including those from the **SvalSat** satellite station, one of the most important in the world.

Their interruption would therefore have consequences not only on telecommunications but also on Western strategic and satellite capabilities.

"You cannot operate in the shadows"

Already in April, British Defence Secretary **John Healey** had sent a direct message to Moscow, stating that London was monitoring Russian activities near submarine infrastructure and that any attempt to damage it would have **"serious consequences"**.

During the same period, Norwegian Defence Minister **Tore Sandvik** had reiterated the point, explaining that the joint operation was meant to make clear to Russia that it could not act clandestinely and that any attempt to strike critical infrastructure would be detected and would have consequences.

GUGI and warfare on the seabed

The **GUGI** is one of the most secretive structures of the Russian military apparatus.

According to the British Ministry of Defence itself, the program was developed to operate with specialized ships and submarines capable of **mapping submarine infrastructure in peacetime and damaging or destroying it in the event of conflict**.

The Svalbard case thus takes on a particularly delicate significance because it shows how the confrontation between Russia and NATO is extending to the seabed and to the digital infrastructure connecting Europe and North America.

Fear of a possible NATO test

Reuters also reports that some U.S. intelligence analysts are increasingly concerned about the possibility that Moscow could attempt, in the future, to **test NATO's Article 5** through deliberately ambiguous operations.

An attack on submarine infrastructure would be particularly difficult to manage: it could produce enormous strategic damage without immediately presenting itself as a clearly attributable conventional military attack.

It is precisely this gray zone between sabotage, hybrid warfare, and open conflict that makes submarine cables one of the most sensitive targets in the confrontation between Russia and the West.