



WAR IN UKRAINE | ANALYSIS

# West kept quiet about Nord Stream attack to protect Ukraine

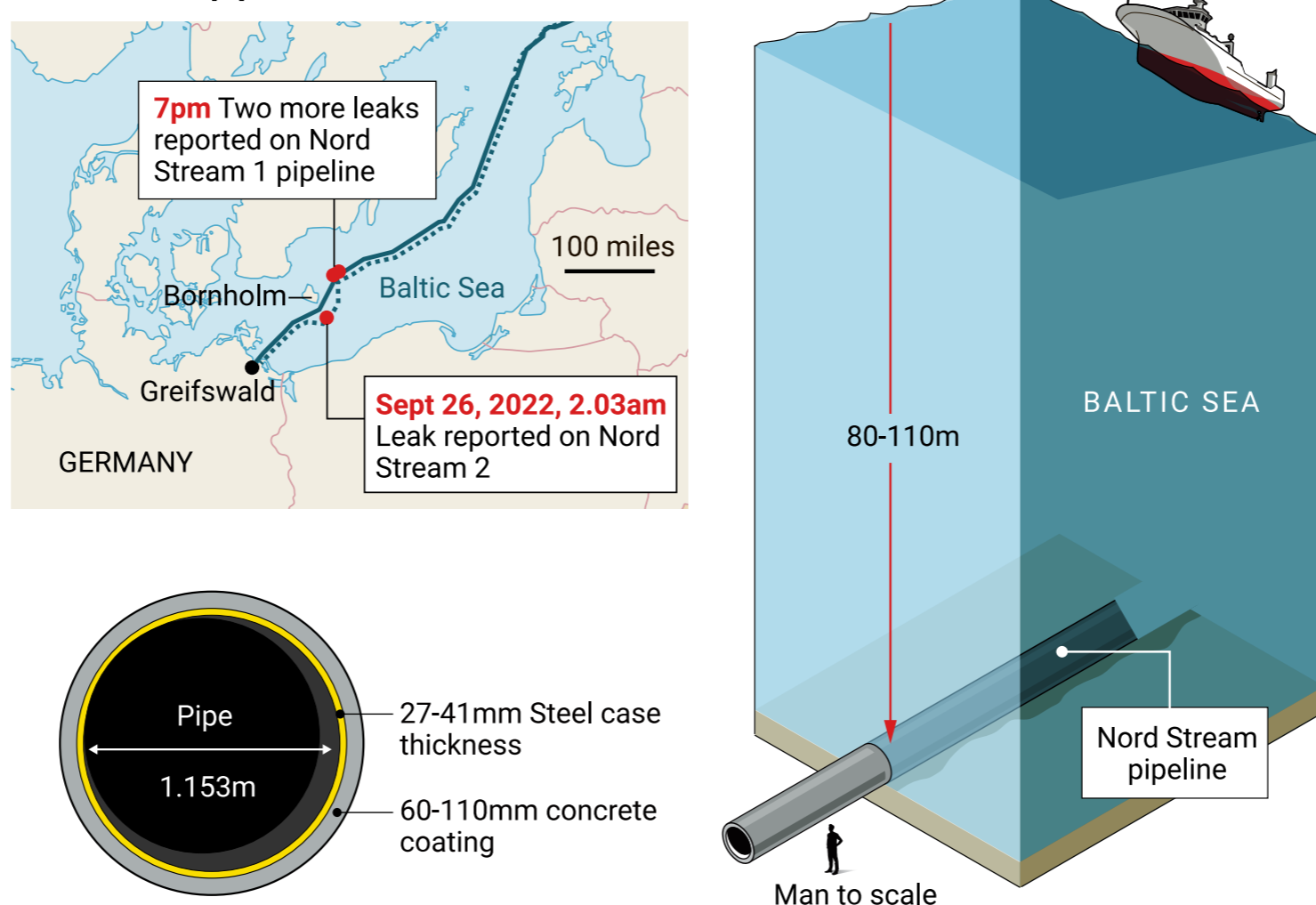
Maxim Tucker, Kyiv | Wednesday March 08 2023, 12.01am GMT, The Times

A week after the Nord Stream pipeline exploded, staff at a Scandinavian delegation in Brussels walked out of their embassy intelligence briefing, impressed by the level of detail they had received so soon after the attack.

It hadn't been carried out by the Americans, the Russians or the Poles, their intelligence service apparently told them, but by a private venture originating in Ukraine. They were told this would not be made public and to deflect any questions about why the official investigation into the destruction of the Russo-German pipeline was moving so slowly.

The name of the suspected private sponsor, a Ukrainian not affiliated with President Zelensky's government, has been circulating in intelligence circles for months but not revealed.

Nord Stream pipeline



Nato officials, it appears, wanted to protect Ukraine from a public spat with Germany, which had been dragging its heels over whether to deliver vital military aid, including Leopard 2 tanks and IRIS-T air defence systems.

This is only fair — they probably knew who was responsible before the presidential administration or the defence ministry in Kyiv, who have been blindsided by the report and furiously deny involvement.

### • Pro-Ukrainian group behind Nord Stream attacks, US believes

Such sympathy bodes well for continued backing from Nato governments to Kyiv as it tries to hold off a relentless Russian offensive in the Donbas and recover lands lost to the invaders. However, public opinion is a more fickle thing, and in Germany support for arming Ukraine is already on a knife edge.

The idea of Ukrainians driving a vehicle laden with explosives through Poland to launch an attack on a German pipeline from German soil will particularly grate on the German public.



Germany has been under intense pressure to send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine

Confusion over the relationship between Zelensky's government and the saboteurs will breed suspicion. It will embolden those in Germany who are pressuring Olaf Scholz, the chancellor, to curtail military aid, and ultimately harm Ukraine.

That is presumably not the intent of the influential figure suspected to have bankrolled such a sophisticated operation from his own pocket — involving a yacht, elite divers, forged passports and the procurement of shaped explosive charges only available to the gas and oil industry with a specific licence and at great cost.

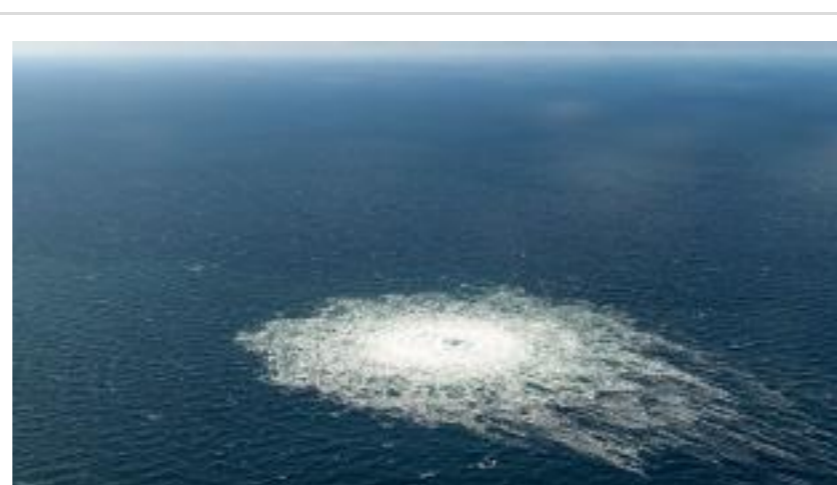
His name will surely appear eventually, particularly given that he appears to have left a peculiar calling card. Ukraine's relationship with its allies will fare better if the individual comes clean.

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