Iran seizes third foreign ship in less than a month

Vessel is suspected of smuggling large volume of fuel, ISNA reports.

Hormuz, at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf, accounts for about a third of the world's seaborne oil flows.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized a foreign oil tanker in the Arabian Gulf on July 31, the semi-official Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) reported, compounding already deep concerns about the safety of shipping in a region crucial to oil exports.

The vessel – the third foreign ship seized by the guards in the Gulf since July 14 – is suspected of smuggling a large volume of fuel, ISNA reported, without giving any details about the flag or nationality of the ship or its operator. The agency cited the public affairs office of the IRGC's second naval division.

The ship was carrying 700,000 liters (4,403 barrels) of smuggled fuel when it was seized near Farsi Island in the western part of the Arabian Gulf, off Iran's southwestern coast near the Iraq border, ISNA reported, citing the guards' public affairs office. That's about 400 miles (640 kilometers) from the Strait of Hormuz, which has been at the centre of Iran's standoff with the West in recent weeks.

Tensions have flared in the strait as Iran resists US sanctions that are crippling its all-important oil exports and lashed out after the July 4 seizure of one of its ships near Gibraltar. Iran impounded a British tanker, the Stena Impero, in the passageway 15 days later and continues to hold it.

Hormuz, at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf, accounts for about a third of the world's seaborne oil flows. To reduce the risks of navigating the waterway, a growing number of ships have been turning off their transponders to avoid signaling their positions.

The vessel seized last week was taken to Bushehr port on Iran's southwest coast,

and its cargo was confiscated and handed over to the National Oil Distribution Company of Iran's local branch, ISNA said.

The announcement of the ship's capture coincides with a joint meeting between the Iranian and Qatari coastguards in Tehran aimed at improving and developing maritime cooperation between the Gulf neighbors, state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported earlier Sunday. That gathering follows a rare meeting between the coastguards of Iran and the UAE last week.

Following the capture of the Stena Impero, the Royal Navy has started to escort British ships, and a plan for a European naval mission has been endorsed by Denmark, France, and Italy. The US has embarked on a parallel operation that the Europeans are wary of joining for fear of being identified with President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure campaign" against Iran.

The campaign began with the US withdrawal from the multi-power nuclear deal a year ago and has mounted with widening sanctions meant to force Iran to negotiate a broader accord addressing its ballistic missile program and support for regional militant groups.

In response to the crippling of its economy and oil exports, Iran has abandoned restrictions on uranium enrichment, downed a US drone and test-fired a ballistic missile. It's also been accused of carrying out a number of attacks on oil tankers near Hormuz.

For all the latest transport news from the UAE and Gulf countries, follow us on Twitter and Linkedin, like us on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube page, which is updated daily.

Source:
https://www.arabianbusiness.com/transport/425260-iran-seizes-another-foreign-tanker

[Disclaimer]