



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on May 28, 2022

Iran Seizes Greek Tankers as Tensions With the West Escalate in Persian Gulf

The paramilitary Revolutionary Guard of Iran [seized two Greek oil tankers](#) on Friday as part of helicopter-launched raids in the Persian Gulf. The action was taken to be a response to Greece's role in the earlier U.S. seizure of crude oil from an Iranian-flagged tanker in the Mediterranean Sea.

Tensions are high following the first major incident at sea in months. Tehran continues to enrich Uranium, bringing it closer to weapons-grade levels.

The Guard issued a statement announcing the seizures of the Greek vessels, leveling unspecified accusations at the tankers.

Shortly before the seizures took place, Nour News, a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, warned that Tehran planned to take "punitive action" against Greece.

Greece's Foreign Ministry said it made a strong demarche to the Iranian ambassador in Athens over the "violent taking over of two Greek-flagged ships" in the Persian Gulf. "These acts effectively amount to acts of piracy," a ministry statement said.

The ministry demanded the immediate release of the vessels and their crews, warning that the seizure would have "particularly negative consequences" not only in bilateral relations, but in Iran's relations with the European Union, of which Greece is a member.

According to reports, an Iranian helicopter landed on the Greek-flagged Delta Poseidon in international waters approximately 22 nautical miles off Iran's coast.

"Armed men then took the crew captive," the ministry said, stating that two Greek nationals were among the crew.

"A similar incident has been reported on another Greek-flagged vessel, that was carrying seven Greek citizens, close to the coast of Iran," the ministry added.

AP reports:

A Greek official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the attack with a journalist, identified the second ship as the Prudent Warrior. Its manager, Polembros Shipping in Greece, earlier said the company was "cooperating with the authorities and making every possible effort to address the situation effectively."

... Both vessels had come from Iraq's Basra oil terminal, loaded with crude, according to



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tracking data from MarineTraffic.com.

... A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said it appeared the two ships had come close to — but not into — Iranian territorial waters Friday. After the hijacking, they drifted into Iranian waters. The ships also had turned off their tracking devices, another red flag, the official said. However, neither had issued a mayday or a call for help, the official said.

The latest incident is part of a series of hijackings and explosions that have taken place in the region as Iran lashes out under sanctions even as it remains committed to its program of uranium enrichment.

In 2019, the U.S. Navy blamed Iran for various limpet mine attacks that damaged tankers, as well as for a fatal drone strike that left two European crew members dead in 2021.

Also in 2019, Iran seized the British-flagged Stena Impero after the United Kingdom detained an Iranian oil tanker off Gibraltar.

And last year, Iranian hijackers briefly captured a Panama-flagged asphalt tanker off the coast of United Arab Emirates. Iranian hijackers also briefly seized and held a Vietnamese tanker in November.

Amid a dispute over billions of dollars of frozen assets Seoul holds, Iran last year seized and held a South Korean-flagged tanker for months.

Tehran denies carrying out the attacks, and thus the seizures have become a shadow war between Iran and the West.

“[The most recent incident] is assessed to be a retaliatory action in line with a history of Iranian forces detaining vessels in a tit-for-tat manner,” maritime intelligence firm Dryad Global warned. “As a result, Greek-flagged vessels operating within the vicinity of Iran in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman are currently assessed to be at a heightened risk of interception and it is advised to avoid this area until further notice.”

Iran’s semiofficial Tasnim news agency warned in a tweet: “There are still 17 other Greek ships in the Persian Gulf that could be seized.”

Meanwhile, the Guard is in the process of constructing a major new support ship near the Strait of Hormuz as it seeks to expand its naval presence in waters that are crucial to international energy supplies and beyond, per satellite photos obtained by The Associated Press.



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