

Tanker loading crude damaged by floating mine in Yemen



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians Attach demolition materials to a simulated floating mine in order to dispose of the mine in this 2019 photo taken during exercises in the Arabian Gulf. A similar floating mine is thought to have damaged the Maltese-flagged tanker MV Syra. U.S. Army / Staff Sgt. Sidney Weston

A Maltese-flagged tanker has reportedly been damaged by a mine while taking on crude on October 3 outside the Yemeni port of Bir Ali. MV Syra reportedly suffered significant damage, resulting in a oil spill.

The Iranian Press News Agency (IP) reported on Oct. 6 that “An oil tanker of the United Arab Emirates was exploded and sunk in Yemen’s Al-Nashimah oil port. The Emirati oil tanker Syra carrying 500,000 barrels of oil was exploded and sunk in Al-Nashimah oil port, due to a collision with marine mines.”

Other sources report that Syra was damaged, but not sunk. In fact, as of 8:30 a.m. EDT, the vessel was underway on its own power and preparing to arrive at the Port of Khor Fakkan in the UAE.

According to maritime website *Splash*, “A number of suspicious floating objects were reported to have drifted towards the tanker as it was loading its cargo. One or two of these objects – assessed as likely to have been floating IEDs or sea mines – later exploded in proximity to the tanker.”

Splash reported that significant pollution has been spotted in satellite images in the wake of the Syra. “*Splash* understands the tanker suffered damage to its forward ballast tanks, but has been able to move on its own power and is due to arrive in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates later today where its

cargo will be transferred and then the ship will head for repairs.

A listing of maritime casualties on *vesseltracer.com* stated that "Syra was targeted by a marine mine which caused an explosion at the Rudhum/Al-Nashimah terminal, Yemen, on Oct 3, 2020, at 8 p.m. The mine was planted by the Southern Transitional Council militias, while the tanker was in the process of loading oil at the terminal. The Syra immediately halted the pumping process after the explosion, which caused minor damage. She departed the terminal on Oct. 4 at 7 a.m. headed to Khor Fakkan, United Arab Emirates, where further damage evaluation was to take place after the arrival on Oct 9. One ballast tank was reportedly damaged."

Yemen has been devastated since 2014 by a civil war between the Saudi-backed government forces and Iranian-supported Houthi rebels.

Mines, both on land and at sea, have been employed by the Houthis. Three Egyptian fishermen were killed in International waters by sea mines near Yemen in February of this year. A Saudi Press Agency (SPA) report said that Houthis indiscriminately planted 137 mines in the south of the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which were located and destroyed.

"Houthi militia's continued planting and deploying naval mines is a serious threat to maritime navigation and international trade in the south of the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb strait," an SPA spokesman said.