

U.S. Prevents Iran from Seizing Two Merchant Tankers in Gulf of Oman



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GULF OF OMAN – On July 5, U.S. forces prevented two attempted commercial tanker seizures by the Iranian Navy after the Iranians had opened fire in one of the incidents near the coast of Oman.

Both of these incidents occurred in international waters.

At 1 a.m. local time, one Iranian naval vessel approached the Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker TRF Moss in international waters in the Gulf of Oman. The Iranian vessel departed the scene when U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS McFaul (DDG 74) arrived on station. Additionally, the U.S. Navy deployed surveillance assets, including MQ-9 Reaper and P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

Approximately three hours later, the U.S. Navy received a distress call from Bahamian-flagged oil tanker Richmond Voyager while the ship was more than 20 miles off the coast of Muscat, Oman, and transiting international waters toward the Arabian Sea. Another Iranian naval vessel had closed within one mile of Richmond Voyager while hailing the commercial tanker to stop.

McFaul directed course toward Richmond Voyager at maximum speed as the merchant tanker continued its transit. Prior to

McFaul's arrival on scene, Iranian personnel fired multiple, long bursts from both small arms and crew-served weapons. Richmond Voyager sustained no casualties or significant damage. However, several rounds hit the ship's hull near crew living spaces. The Iranian navy vessel departed when McFaul arrived.

In May, the United States increased the rotation of ships and aircraft patrolling the Strait of Hormuz with partners following an uptick in Iranian merchant vessel seizures. The increased force presence supports multinational efforts under the International Maritime Security Construct and bilaterally with partner nations to deter threats to commercial shipping and reassure regional mariners.

"I couldn't be prouder of the entire [U.S. Naval Forces Central Command] team, especially the exceptional effort by the McFaul crew, for immediately responding and preventing another seizure," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "We remain vigilant and ready to protect navigational rights in these critical waters."

Since 2021, Iran has harassed, attacked or seized nearly 20 internationally flagged merchant vessels, presenting a clear threat to regional maritime security and the global economy.

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