

Israel-linked oil tanker ‘seized’ in Gulf of Aden

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Attackers seized a tanker linked to Israel off the coast of Aden, Yemen, yesterday, authorities said.

While no group immediately claimed responsibility, it comes as at least two other maritime attacks in recent days have been linked to the Israel-Hamas war, reports ABC News online.

The attackers seized the Central Park, managed by Zodiac Maritime, in the Gulf of Aden, the company and private intelligence firm Ambrey said.

An American defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, also confirmed the attack took place. Zodiac called the attack “a suspected piracy incident.”

“Our priority is the safety of our 22 crew onboard. The Turkish-captioned vessel has a multinational crew,” it said in a statement.

PNEUMONIA CASES
China seeks more fever clinics to combat surge

REUTERS, Beijing

China’s health ministry yesterday urged local authorities to increase the number of fever clinics as the country grapples with a surge in respiratory illnesses in its first full winter since easing Covid-19 restrictions.

The spike become a global issue last week when the WHO asked China for more information, citing a report on clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children by the Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases.

National Health Commission spokesperson Mi Feng said yesterday the surge in acute respiratory illnesses was linked to the simultaneous circulation of several kinds of pathogens, most prominently influenza.

“Efforts should be made to increase the number of relevant clinics and treatment areas, appropriately extend service hours and strengthen guarantees of drug supplies,” Mi said.

“It is necessary to do a good job in epidemic prevention and control in key crowded places such as schools, childcare institutions and nursing homes,” Mi added.

INDIA’S UTTAR PRADESH
2 suspects working for Pakistan’s ISI arrested: police

TNN, Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (UPATS) police arrested two individuals, Amrit Gill, 25, and Riazuddin, 36, who are suspected of collaborating with Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency.

UPATS identified the two suspects based on information obtained during the interrogation of cyber hacker Wasiullah Khan (25), a B’Tech graduate who was also in contact with ISI and was apprehended in Lucknow.

Khan’s name surfaced during the interrogation of Shailendra Pratap Singh Chauhan, who was arrested in September 2023 for allegedly spying for ISI and transmitting sensitive information related to the Indian Army across the border.

Special DG, Law and Order, Prashant Kumar, stated that Gill was apprehended from Bhatinda in Punjab and was brought to Lucknow after obtaining a transit remand. Riazuddin, on the other hand, was summoned from Ghaziabad and arrested at UPATS headquarters in Lucknow.

SDG Kumar revealed that Gill was in direct contact with Pakistani ISI agents and was responsible for passing on sensitive and restricted information related to the Indian Army to ISI. In exchange for his services, Gill received financial assistance from Pakistani handlers through Riazuddin and Izahrul.

Additional DG Mohit Agarwal said an analysis of Riazuddin’s bank accounts revealed that approximately Rs 70 lakh had been deposited into his account from unknown sources between March 2022 and April 2022.



A child carries a bag of humanitarian aid on his back as another uses a bicycle, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Trucks carrying aid, including fuel, food and medicine, began moving into Gaza through the Rafah crossing from Egypt since the Israel-Hamas truce began Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

OCCUPIED WEST BANK
Israeli settlers steal Palestinian farmers’ land

AGENCIES

Farmers in the occupied West Bank face near daily incursions and violence from Israeli settlers, to the point that they live in fear of having their homes and land stolen, they say.

Added to that is the violence they witness in nearby urban areas, like Jenin city and refugee camp that the Israeli army stepped up raids on, killing 10 people and wounding 20 in just one week.

According to the Ministry of Health, at least 237 Palestinians have been killed and about 2,850 others injured by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank since October 7.

Farmer Ayman Assad, 45, and his family can clearly hear the attacks from their home just 2km (1.2 miles) from the camp and they have made the past few weeks a nightmare for him, his wife and five children.

“The children are constantly scared, and they don’t play outside any more, it’s too dangerous,” he told Al Jazeera. “We can hear the attacks on the refugee camp, explosions and gunshots.”

Assad said his children are no longer going to school because even if they were to brave the route there, the Israeli army is blocking many of the roads in the area. All classes have gone online.

The greatest worry right now is that his chicken farm, which is further away in Area C of the West Bank, will be attacked by Israeli settlers while he is unable to defend it. “I’m scared my land will



be stolen.”

Palestine is known for its olives, olive oil and vegetables, which are exported far and wide. The olive trees, in particular, are an important symbol of Palestinians’ attachment to their land.

The West Bank has been occupied by Israel since 1967. Since then, about 700,000 Israeli settlers have illegally settled in the Palestinian territory, and have been stealing from, attacking and destroying olive groves, farmland

and property there for years.

But these incursions have stepped up in recent weeks, as Israeli forces and settlers mount armed raids while Palestinians are confined to their homes under curfew, Abbas Milhem, director of the Palestinian Farmers’ Union (PAFU) in Ramallah said. His own family’s farm was among those targeted.

Just over two weeks ago, armed Israeli settlers invaded the Milhem

ARMOURY ATTACK
Sierra Leone declares nationwide curfew

REUTERS, Freetown

Sierra Leone has declared a nationwide curfew after unidentified gunmen attacked a military barracks and attempted to break into an armoury in the capital, Freetown, the government said yesterday.

A government statement said the security forces were in control of the situation. “In the early hours of Sunday, some unidentified individuals attempted to break into the military armoury at the Wilberforce barracks. The have been rebuffed,” information minister Chernor Bah said in the statement.

“A nationwide curfew has been declared with immediate effect ... We strongly advise citizens to stay indoors,” the statement added.

A senior official told Reuters that the central prison in Freetown was open and some inmates had escaped. The prison, designed to hold 324 inmates, held over 2,000 in 2019, according to a US State Department report.

It was not clear how many had broken out of the facility, but videos shared on social media showed several people fleeing from the area of the prison.

Two Chinese jets ‘orbit’ Philippine patrol aircraft
Says Manila

REUTERS, Manila

Two Chinese fighter jets were monitored “orbiting” a Philippine aircraft participating in patrols with Australia in the South China Sea but did not cause any untoward incident, Manila said yesterday. The militaries of the Philippines and Australia carried out a second day of sea and air exercises in the Southeast Asian country’s exclusive economic zone, days after Manila held patrols with the US as Pacific nations warily eye an increasingly assertive China. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China’s claims had no legal basis. The Philippines is ramping up efforts to counter what it describes as China’s “aggressive activities” in the South China Sea, which has also become a flashpoint for Chinese and US tensions around naval operations. China has accused the Philippines of enlisting “foreign forces” to patrol the South China Sea and stirring up trouble. “It was confirmed as per reports received that two Chinese fighter jets were monitored orbiting the Philippines’ A 29B Super Tucano at the vicinity of Hubo Reef in the West Philippine Sea,” Xerxes Trinidad, chief of the Philippine military’s public affairs office said.

Cargo ship sinks off Greek island
13 crew members missing; rescue ops underway

AFP, Athens

A Comoros-flagged cargo ship with 14 people on board has sunk off the island of Lesbos in gale-force winds, the Greek coastguard said yesterday, prompting a major rescue operation. A navy helicopter picked up one crew member of the RAPTOR cargo ship, according to the coastguard, who has been taken to Lesbos General Hospital. Five cargo ships, three coast guard vessels, air force and navy helicopters as well as a navy frigate have joined the rescue effort. Authorities said the cargo ship, which was carrying 14 crew members and was loaded with salt, went down 4.5 nautical miles (8.3 kilometres) southwest of Lesbos early yesterday.

The ship had sailed from Dekheila, Egypt, heading for Istanbul. The Athens News Agency (ANA), quoting the operating company of the ship based in Lebanon, said that crew members included two Syrian nationals, one Indian and 11 Egyptians. An earlier coastguard statement had suggested there were four Indians and eight Egyptians on board. According to the authorities, the ship first reported a mechanical failure at 7:00 am local time (0500 GMT). At 8:20 am, the captain reported that the ship was tilting, and activated the “mayday” distress signal before disappearing from the radar. According to ANA, the ship is believed to have taken on water in its hold due to the strong waves, causing the ship to list due to its heavy load and sink. Ships remained docked across several parts of Greece over the weekend, with wind speeds reaching 9-10 on the Beaufort scale, meaning a strong gale to storm force.



A member of Colombia Migration gives instructions to Venezuelan migrants lining up to process the Special Stay Permit (PEP) in Cucuta, Colombia on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia puts Meta spokesman on wanted list

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday put Meta Platforms spokesperson Andy Stone on a wanted list on unspecified charges as the US social media giant – which owns Facebook – is classed as “extremist” by Moscow.

Russia has hugely cracked down on media and social media freedom since launching its Ukraine offensive last year and banning criticism of it.

Stone is listed on Russia’s interior ministry’s list of wanted people, without further detail.

In October 2022, Russia listed Meta as a “terrorist and extremist” organisation, opening possible criminal investigations and fines for users in the country.

Facebook and Instagram have been blocked in Russia since the start of the Ukraine offensive and are only accessible via VPN.