

Middle East war**US hits commercial tanker in Gulf of Oman as tensions flare**

Ship tried to break through American naval blockade of Iranian ports, Central Command says of its first attack in a month

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US forces disable a commercial cargo vessel in the Gulf of Oman © Centcom/X

The US military struck a commercial ship in the Gulf of Oman it said had tried to pierce its naval blockade of Iranian ports, in its first attack in more than a month near the Islamic republic.

The Pentagon's action came as tensions flared in the region, with 12 people killed and 300 injured in a [missile strike](#) at Riyadh's airport days after Iran-backed Houthis attacked the same hub. Iran has also increased its attacks on commercial ships trying to transit the Strait of Hormuz in recent days.

Washington's strike came two days after President Donald Trump said American forces [would not attack Iran before the US midterm elections](#), which will take place in less than a month's time.

An American fighter jet struck the Panama-flagged M/V Ocean Molica with a precision munition and disabled the vessel's propulsion, US Central Command, which oversees Washington's military operations in the [Middle East](#), said on Saturday.

"The large cargo vessel was attempting to transit regional waters after having previously departed an Iranian port" and was hit after the ship's crew ignored warnings, Centcom added.

A video released by Centcom showed an explosion at the rear of the Ocean Molica, also known as the Arika Sun. Centcom said the crew was unharmed.

The Pentagon last acknowledged strikes on Iranian targets in early September, when it struck five crude oil tankers it said belonged to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in retaliation for the regime's forces targeting a US Navy ship.

Trump's war on Iran is deeply unpopular with the US electorate, having created a global energy crisis and triggered an inflation shock that is hitting American voters' ability to afford everyday costs.

"We will not be attacking Iran at any time prior to the Midterm Elections to be held in the United States on November 3rd," the US president posted on Truth Social on Thursday.

Trump's statement was a tacit acknowledgment that further strikes against Iran could undermine Republican candidates on the campaign a few weeks out from the midterms.

Iran has expanded its attacks on commercial ships beyond the strait in recent days, creating some of the most deadly conditions for tanker operators since the war began, as Tehran and Washington's forces vie for control of the vital waterway.

The IRGC said on Saturday that a crude oil supertanker attempting to exit the strait had “suffered a powerful explosion after striking a naval mine in the high-risk route” not authorised by Iran.

The elite force said the vessel, which it did not identify, had switched off its navigation and positioning systems. It added that the blaze was so intense that it was visible to people living along the coast.

On Sunday, the IRGC said another supertanker carrying crude oil struck a naval mine in the southern area of the strait, resulting in an explosion and a fire in its engine room. The vessel had switched off its navigation systems as “it was travelling along an unauthorised route”, it added.

The force warned that all vessels in the strait that switch off their navigation and identification systems will be classified as “hostile and dealt with firmly and decisively”.

Iran has been trying to stem Gulf oil exports after they hit prewar levels. Commodities platform Kpler said on Friday that flows had recovered to prewar levels in September, but that “intensified attacks on tankers” had driven exports “sharply lower” this week.

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