

Iran Detains two Greek-flagged Vessels (30 May 2022)



Summary

Iran's state maritime body reported on 28 May that the crew of two Greek tankers seized by its Revolutionary Guards on 27 May had not been detained, adding that they were in good health and were being cared for on board their vessels. This comes after Iranian forces seized two Greek tankers in the Gulf of Friday 27 May. The move came shortly after Tehran warned that it would take "punitive action" against Athens over the confiscation of Iranian oil by the United States from a tanker held off the Greek coast.



Incident

A statement released by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), and carried by state media, disclosed that "the crew of the two Greek tankers have not been arrested, and all crew members...are in good health and are being protected, and provided with necessary services while on board, in accordance with international law." The PMO disclosed that the two vessels had been stopped over unspecified "maritime violations." On Friday, Greece reported that an Iranian navy helicopter had landed on the Greek-flagged vessel *DELTA POSEIDON* in international waters, and took the crew hostage. It further disclosed that a similar incident took place on another Greek-flagged vessel near Iran, without naming the ship. Polembros Shipping later posted a brief statement confirming that its vessel, the *MV PRUDENT WARRIOR*, had been "intercepted by an Iranian team." Athens has said that both actions violated international law.

Both vessels had loaded cargos at Basrah, Iraq and were outbound in the Persian Gulf. The *MV PRUDENT WARRIOR* was reportedly heading to the US while the *MV DELTA POSEIDON* was heading to Greece. Polembros Shipping has reported that the tanker had turned off its AIS signal and that it was not possible to contact the vessel. The *MV PRUDENT WARRIOR* was reportedly first approached approximately 90 minutes after the *MV DELTA POSEIDON*, based on when each vessel stopped transmitting their positions. One vessel was reported to be near Assuluyeh and the other near Bandar Lengeh. Iranian warships directed each vessel towards the shore. The *MV PRUDENT WARRIOR* has 24 crewmembers on board while the *MV DELTA POSEIDON* has 25.

It is believed that the detention of these two vessels is retaliatory action for the seizure of the Iranian crude oil tanker off the Greek island of Evia in the Aegean Sea on 26 May. The tanker, registered as Lana, and formerly known as Pegas, had been operating under the Iranian flag as of 1 May 2022. It was previously owned by a Russian company. The vessel had been temporarily seized by Greek authorities on 15 April when it anchored off Karystos. At the time, it was flying a Russian flag. Greece's coast guard reported that it was seized due to suspicions it had breached EU sanctions imposed against Russia due to the war in Ukraine. The tanker was sanctioned by Greek authorities for carrying sanctioned Iranian oil. On 26 May, a Greek official reported that the crude oil cargo on board the tanker had been seized and was being transferred to another vessel following a request from the US. Greek media have reported that the tanker was believed to be carrying more than 100,000 tons of Iranian crude, in breach of US and European Union sanctions on Iran.

Advisory

MS Risk is closely monitoring the situation and will issue further information as it becomes available. We currently advise that all Greek-flagged vessels operating in the vicinity of Iran, including in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, are assessed to be at a heightened risk of interception due to the tensions between Iran and Greece.



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