

# Four Iran-linked container ships defy US naval blockade

## Economy Desk

Four Iran-linked container ships have slipped through a US naval blockade after departing Iranian ports, maritime tracking data shows, even as Washington vows to continue enforcing restrictions on vessels tied to Iranian trade.

All four vessels are container ships; three operate under the Iranian flag, while the fourth, named "Tava 4," is registered in the Comoros.

According to Marine Traffic data, the ships have moved as follows since the blockade began on Monday: "Azargoun" departed Iran's Shahid Rajaee port, crossed the blockade line around 16:00, and is heading to Kandla port in northwest India; "Ashkan 3" left Chabahar in southeastern Iran and is currently registered in Karachi, Pakistan; "Shabdis" also departed Chabahar, crossed the line around 21:00, and is now near the southwest Indian coast around Kerala, having declared Zhuhai, China, as its destination; and "Tava 4" left Imam Khomeini Port in southern Iran, crossed the blockade line around 13:00, and is en route to Jawaharlal Nehru port near Mumbai, India.

The assessment is based on positions reported by the vessels themselves. However, some ships may turn off their tracking systems

or transmit false information — a practice known as "spoofing."

US Joint Chiefs Chairman General Dan Caine has emphasized that the United States "continues to enforce the blockade." In response to inquiries, US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated it had "nothing beyond previous statements" to add.

## More ships crossing strait

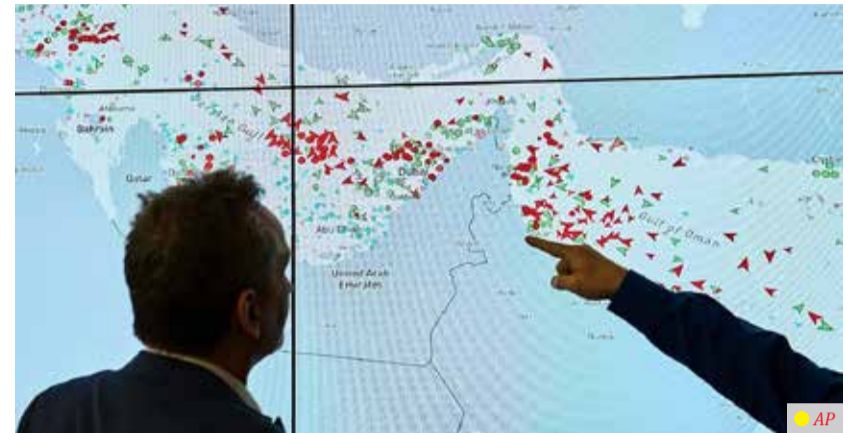
The developments come as shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime corridor for oil and gas exports, has shown signs of increased vessel movement in recent days despite ongoing military tensions and the US naval blockade targeting Iranian ports, gulfnews.com reported.

Maritime tracking data and reporting indicate that a growing number of commercial vessels have continued to transit the narrow waterway, which saw dramatic declines in activity earlier in the American-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28.

On Thursday, data compiled by monitoring firm Marine Insight showed that more than 20 vessels transited the strait within a 24-hour period amid the blockade, even as some ships were ordered to turn back or reroute. The United States announced a naval blockade allowing "zero ships" in and out of Iranian ports starting 6 p.m. on Mon-

day. The blockade was ordered by US President Donald Trump after talks with Iran in Pakistan failed to make progress and Iran had kept the Hormuz closure for "the hostile states." However, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday that passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz remained open for the remainder of the ceasefire period, which ends on April 22, in line with the arrangement in Lebanon. On Thursday, General Caine announced the blockade's "expansion" to pursue and intercept Iran-linked vessels globally, including "dark fleet" tankers in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, regardless of nationality. The move follows stalled ceasefire talks, with Trump claiming Iran agreed to hand over enriched uranium — amid rising US oil prices. CENTCOM clarified that vessels sailing to and from non-Iranian destinations remain free to pass through the strategic waterway. Reuters tracking data has also noted that at least eight merchant vessels — including three tankers linked to Iran — made transit attempts in the days following the US blockade announcement.

Independent counts reported that 279 vessels have passed through the strait since the war began in late February, though the total includes a period of heavily reduced traffic due to security risks. Most of the recent



crossings, however, appear to involve ships bound for or departing from non-Iranian ports.

Some maritime analysts have also noted shifts in vessel routing, with ships using designated corridors along the Iranian and Omani coasts amid security concerns and alternative transit advisories.

The Wall Street Journal, citing two US officials, reported over 20 ships crossed the strait in the past 24 hours, with some halted. Kpler data also confirmed at least three

vessels transited post-blockade, including the Liberia-flagged bulk carrier Christianna — which discharged cargo at Iran's Bandar Imam Khomeini and passed near Larak Island shortly after restrictions took effect. Before the escalation of conflict, roughly 100 or more commercial ships a day moved through the Strait of Hormuz. Continued transit, however, reflects resilient commercial efforts to maintain critical supply chains even as geopolitical tensions persist in the region.

## Indian refiners pay for Iran oil in yuan via ICICI Bank: Report



95% of the cargo's value against the supplier's notice of readiness, which indicates that the loaded tanker had entered Indian waters, two of the sources said. One of them said this was an unusual arrangement.

Typically, Indian state-owned refiners settle payments upon delivery or discharge for oil from countries that are sanctioned by Western nations, the two sources said. India has been among the top buyers of Russian oil since Moscow's 2022 war on Ukraine resulted in widespread Western sanctions on Russia.

The sources declined to be named as they were not authorized to speak to the media. Indian refiners have also used China's currency to settle some of their Russian oil purchases. IOC does not plan to make further Iranian oil purchases, one of the sources said.

Until the US waiver, India had shunned the purchase of Iranian oil since 2019, under pressure from American sanctions. Chinese independent refiners, known as teapots, have been the main buyers of Iranian oil exports since then.

## Economy Desk

Indian refiners are settling payments for rare cargoes of Iranian oil purchased under a temporary US sanctions waiver using Chinese yuan through Mumbai-based ICICI Bank, four sources with knowledge of the matter said. Last month, Washington unveiled 30-day waivers on US sanctions for the purchase of Russian and Iranian oil at sea in an attempt to ease prices that were driven up by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the US would not renew the waivers, with the exemption on Iranian oil set to lapse on Sunday, Reuters reported.

Difficulties over arranging payment for such cargoes given longstanding sanctions on Tehran have deterred some would-be buyers of Iranian crude under the waiver, traders have said. Earlier this month, state-run Indian Oil Corp, opens new

tab (IOC), the country's largest refiner, bought 2 million barrels of Iranian oil onboard the very large crude carrier Jaya in the country's first purchase of Iranian crude in seven years, Reuters reported, a cargo worth roughly \$200 million. India has also allowed four vessels carrying Iranian oil to berth for privately-run refiner Reliance Industries, sources said last week. A vessel, the MT Felicity, has discharged thus far, according to LSEG data and a shipping source. Both refiners are settling the trade through ICICI, which is routing funds in Chinese yuan via its Shanghai branch to seller accounts in yuan. The identity of the sellers could not be determined. ICICI, IOC, Reliance and India's Foreign Ministry did not respond to emails seeking comment. Details on how the cargoes are being paid for have not been previously reported. IOC paid about

## Aref vows full compensation for war damage as preliminary losses hit \$270b

## Economy Desk

Iran's First Vice President said the government has plans for both defense and reconstruction, vowing to support citizens and compensate all damages from the recent US-Israeli military aggression with full capacity.

Mohammad-Reza Aref, continuing regular meetings of cabinet members with the ministers of oil, industry, mines and trade, roads and urban development, and the head of the Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), received the latest reports on damages caused by the military aggression by the Israeli regime and the United States, and issued necessary orders to meet public needs.

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani has said the country's preliminary assessment of the damage caused by the unprovoked US-Israeli aggression has reached \$270 billion, stressing that the figure may change. Last Friday, the president of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said more than 125,000 civilian structures had been either destroyed or severely damaged because of the aggression. Pir-Hosseini Koulivand identified 100,000 of the structures as residential properties and 23,500 as commercial centers.

## 2,000 points hit in power sector

Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, deputy minister for electricity and energy at the Ministry of Energy, said damage to the country's power infrastructure from the attacks amounted to 35 trillion tomans (\$225.8 million). He thanked the public for their power-saving efforts "during this sensitive period." Rajabi-Mashhadi told IRNA that the Zionist-American regime's attacks, which he described as a direct assault



An Iranian flag is planted in the rubble of a police station, damaged in airstrikes on March 3, 2026 in Tehran, Iran. MAJID SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

on the people, targeted 2,000 points in the power sector, all of which have been restored through round-the-clock efforts by staff in the field.

## Bridges, tunnels repaired within 48 hours

Houshang Bazvand, deputy minister of roads and urban development and managing director of the Transportation Infrastructure Development Company, told IRNA that vehicle and train traffic has been restored on all routes, adding that bridges and tunnels bombed in the recent imposed war were reopened within a maximum of 48 hours. Bazvand said that during this round of US-Israeli attacks on the country's infrastructure, four operational railway bridges, three railway tunnels under construction, four freeway tunnels under construction, and five bridge spans on freeways in Lorestan, Khuzestan, the Zanjan-Tabriz route, and the Mianeh-Tabriz road were hit by enemy projectiles.

He added that these structures were immediately subjected to temporary repairs and reconstruction after the damage, so that traffic is now flowing through these bridges and tunnels with no disruption to movement. Regarding the bridges, temporary vehicle passage was enabled through variant operations, and currently there are no blockages on railway, freeway, or high-

way bridges.

"The most prominent project attacked during these 40 days was the B1 Karaj bridge, which was considered an engineering masterpiece," Bazvand said.

"Damage to this bridge is under study; relevant surveying must be completed to determine whether twists and bends have occurred in its columns."

"Consultants are preparing debris removal plans and technical inspection schemes, and there is even a possibility that it may need to be completely demolished."

Bazvand noted that the bridge was 99% complete and scheduled to become operational by mid-April, adding, "Construction of this bridge had taken more than 10 years, and now, with what has happened, there is a 50% probability that it must be demolished for safety reasons."

## 50 aircraft damaged, 10 destroyed

Regarding damage to the aviation industry infrastructure, Mohammad-Reza Rezaei Koochi, head of the Parliament's Construction Committee, said about 50 aircraft were damaged in the war, of which approximately 10 were destroyed by direct attacks.

"Upon the end of the war, domestic and international flights will resume without delay," Koochi told ILNA, adding that some damaged aircraft

can be repaired and returned to flight operations.

According to Iranian media reports, seven Iranian airports were targeted during the 40-day military conflict that began on February 28, with attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities. Based on estimates and a report published in The Wall Street Journal, Mehrabad Airport in Tehran, as well as airports in Tabriz, Kashan, Urmia, Khorramabad, and the Bahram and Azmayesh facilities in Tehran, were repeatedly targeted by air strikes and bombings during the conflict. The attacks damaged infrastructure including runways, air traffic control towers and hangars, while dozens of Iranian passenger aircraft used for tourism and travel were either completely destroyed or removed from flight operations due to shrapnel hits and collateral damage.

Inquiries by ILNA from some aviation industry activists and the country's airline offices revealed that the largest wave of attacks has been directed at Iranian passenger aircraft. Maqsood Asadi Samani, secretary of Iran's Airlines Association, told ILNA, "The damages incurred include opportunity costs for airlines given that we were in the Nowruz holidays (began on March 20), as well as damages to aircraft and subsequently damages that have been inflicted on the country's airports." He stated that estimates of opportunity cost losses for travel companies that had planned to transport Nowruz passengers exceed 700 billion tomans (\$4.52 million) per day, and even excluding the Nowruz travel situation, total damages inflicted on the country's airline offices during the 40 days of imposed war against Iran amount to about 30 trillion tomans (\$193.5 million).