

## List of vessel seizures and direct attacks on vessels by Iran

Updated 22 April 2024

Iran has been seizing and holding vessels for years as a means of dealing with commercial disputes, typically related to US and EU sanctions against oil exports. Seizures and detentions are often given a veneer of legality with Iran claiming violations of maritime law as a pretext. Iranian courts will often issue 'orders' related to the respective dispute which are then 'enforced' by the military.

This veneer of legality covers commercial disputes that are highly politicized and typically leave the ship owner or operator caught in the middle of a larger political issue that needs to be resolved at governmental levels. Some notable examples are shown in the table below.

Month / year	Ship(s) involved	Iranian claim	Motivation
July 2019	Liberia-flagged, UK-owned MESDAR and UK-flagged, Sweden-owned STENA IMPERO	Navigational violations	Likely Iranian response to the detention of the tanker GRACE 1 in Gibraltar by the UK which was suspected of carrying Iranian crude oil to Syria.
January 2021	South Korea-flagged HANKUK CHEMI (detained until April 2021)	Pollution	Iran's government rejected allegations that it had seized the tanker as leverage over oil revenue held in South Korean banks due to US sanctions. However, official statements about the funds were made. The ship was eventually released following a deal on the seized funds.
May 2022	Greece-flagged tankers DELTA POSEIDON and PRUDENT WARRIOR (detained until November 2022)	'Maritime violations' (both ships were outside Iranian territorial waters)	Likely in response to US-led actions against an Iran-flagged tanker on a Russian charter in Greek waters that was carrying sanctioned oil.
April 2023	Marshall Islands-flagged ADVANTAGE SWEET (currently detained)	Collision with an Iranian military craft.	Likely response for the apparent seizure of the tanker SUEZ RAJAN for carrying sanctioned Iranian crude; ADVANTAGE SWEET was carrying Kuwaiti crude to Houston. The cargo,

			<i>valued at around \$50 million, was unloaded by Iran in March 2024 to be sold.</i>
<i>May 2023</i>	<i>Panama-flagged, Greece-owned tanker NIOVI (currently detained)</i>	<i>Judicial order, following a complaint by a plaintiff.</i>	<i>Likely related to a commercial dispute over trading to China with several parties involved in the dispute over the cargo</i>
<i>January 2024</i>	<i>Marshall Islands-flagged tanker ST NIKOLAS (currently detained)</i>	<i>Judicial order</i>	<i>The tanker was formerly the SUEZ RAJAN, seized by the US and at the centre of the Iran/US dispute in 2023 over its cargo of sanctioned crude. Likely seized in an attempt for further restitution by Iran</i>

*The MSC ARIES boarding and subsequent detention followed a similar pattern. "The vessel was diverted into Iran's territorial waters as a result of violating maritime laws and not answering calls made by Iranian authorities," stated a spokesperson for the Iranian government.*

*Iran has conducted several direct attacks against Israel-linked merchant ships since 2021. Two companies in particular have been targeted. Their vessels have likely been chosen based on their direct links to Israeli commercial interests. Previous cases are noted below.*

- HELIOS RAY – hit by an Iranian mine or drone in the Gulf of Oman (February 2021)*
- LORI – hit by a drone in the Arabian Sea (March 2021)*
- HYPERION RAY – approached by two small craft off Fujairah, initially reported as attacked and incident may have been an aborted attack (April 2021)*
- MERCER STREET – hit by a drone in the Gulf of Oman (July 2021)*
- CAMPO SQUARE – hit by a drone in the Arabian Sea (February 2023)*
- CMA CGM SYMI – hit by a drone in the Arabian Sea (November 2023)*
- CHEM PLUTO – hit by a drone in the Arabian Sea (December 2023)*

*Source: Risk Intelligence*