

Tehran Condemns UK's Abidance by US' Anti-Iran Policies

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TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi one again denounced the UK's seizure of an oil tanker of his country in the Strait of Gibraltar, adding that the move showed that London is following Washington's policies of increasing tension against Tehran.

Mousavi said that the UK's seizure of Iran-operated oil tanker in the strait of Gibraltar on July 4 was in line with the hostile policies of the US against the Islamic Republic.

"We have told the British authorities that their move would increase tensions and is in line with those hostile policies of the US," he said.

"From the first day the oil tanker was seized, Iran started taking legal and diplomatic measures. We summoned the UK ambassador twice and he appeared at the Iranian foreign ministry for several other meetings to provide some explanations," he added.

"We have given the case to a lawyer who is currently taking legal and judiciary procedures," Mousavi informed.

"Signatories to the JCPOA as well as other countries have done their best to preserve the deal," Mousavi said, regarding the Iran nuclear deal of 2015, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "Iran's next step, within the two-month deadline to Europe, is planned and will be implemented."

On Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif dismissed the western officials'

"worthless" claims that the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy attempted to seize a British oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

Zarif said that the claims were aimed at creating tensions, adding that the British government's claim is "worthless", and such claims were nothing new.

Zarif also pointed to the IRGC statement which dismissed the claim, saying that "they are seeking to cover up their weaknesses with such claims".

The IRGC Navy deployed in the Persian Gulf rejected Pentagon's claims that its forces attempted to seize a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC naval forces responsible for controlling the Fifth Naval Zone in the Persian Gulf rejected the Western media claims citing the US Department of Defense (Pentagon) that five Iranian fast boats attempted to capture a British oil tanker in the Persian Gulf but they failed as the British Royal Navy frigate (HMS Montrose) interfered.

"Naval patrols of the Guards Corps in the Persian Gulf continue vigilantly, precisely and strongly based on regular procedures and missions, and during the last 24 hours, there have been no encounters with foreign vessels, including the British ones," a statement by the IRGC Fifth Zone said on Thursday.

"If an order to seize foreign vessels is received, the IRGC naval forces controlling the Fifth Naval Zone in the Persian Gulf are able to carry out their mission in its geographical zone immediately, firmly and rapidly," it added.

Analysts believe that the US claims are aimed at counteracts criticism of Britain for the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Last Thursday morning, British Royal Marines in Gibraltar stormed an Iran-operated supertanker off the coast of Gibraltar, seizing the 300,000-tonne Grace 1 based on the accusation that it was carrying oil to Syria in possible violation of the European Union's sanctions on the war-torn Arab country.

According to Gibraltar authorities, the 28 crewmembers, who are nationals of India, Pakistan and Ukraine, are currently staying aboard the tanker, along with local police and customs officers boarding the vessel for a period of a probe.

Iran has condemned the move as "maritime piracy" and summoned Britain's ambassador in protest. It has vowed to employ all its political and legal capacities to secure the release of the vessel and uphold its rights.

Spain's acting Foreign Minister Josep Borrell stated on Friday that Madrid was planning to lodge a formal complaint against the UK and was studying the circumstances and looking at how the incident is affecting its sovereignty.

Spain, which challenges the British ownership of Gibraltar, has announced the seizure was prompted by a US request to Britain and appeared to have taken place in Spanish waters.

However, the British-claimed overseas territory rejected the claim, saying that Gibraltar had acted independently.

Gibraltar's position comes as a British foreign office spokesman had welcomed the move on Thursday, describing it as a "firm action by the Gibraltarian authorities, acting to enforce the EU Syria Sanctions regime".

The seizure of the Panama-registered Grace 1 came as the US pledged to cut Iran's oil exports to "zero" as part of the sanctions that it has reinstated after leaving a landmark multilateral 2015 nuclear deal with Iran in May last year, and many analysts take London's move as an indicator that the UK is not committed to the nuclear agreement and is much on the side of Washington in Trump anti-Iran maximum pressure campaign.

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