

Video: British Marines Seized Iranian Oil Tanker

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Global Research, July 06, 2019
[South Front](#) 5 July 2019

Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

On July 4, a detachment of Royal Marines and the authorities in Gibraltar seized a supertanker suspected of carrying oil to Syria on the belief it was breaching EU sanctions. 30 Royal Marines from 42 Commando were involved in the operation targeting Grace 1 that had sailed from Iran. The operation was made upon request from the US and the UK. If the oil on board is confirmed to be Iranian, the tanker would also be violating a US ban on Iranian oil exports.

Later, Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador in Tehran, **Rob Macaire**, over the incident describing it as an "illegal seizure". Nonetheless, it's unlikely that the tanker will be released soon. Such operations mark the start of a new round of pressure campaign on the government of the Bashar al-Assad as well as Iranian oil exports in the region.

On July 3 and July 4, a fighting broke out between the Turkish-backed militant group known as the National Syrian Army and joint forces of the Syrian Army and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) near the town of Hazwan in northern Aleppo. Turkish-backed militants admitted that at least 2 of their fighters were killed.

The army and the YPG jointly control an area between Afrin and the eastern countryside of al-Bab. Some Russian Military Police units are also deployed in key positions there. Tensions at the contact line between this area and the Turkish-occupied part of Syria grow after every successful attack of Kurdish rebels on Turkish targets in Afrin.

Several senior commanders of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) have inspected the frontlines with the Syrian Army in northwestern Hama. The TIP released photos of the visit on July 2. Their faces of the commanders are blurred but they may have been Abu Rida al-Turkistani and Ibrahim Mansour, the top commanders of the TIP.

The interesting fact is that the visit took place in the area near to the Turkish military observation post in Shir Mughar. It confirms the freedom of movement that terrorist groups have under the nose of Turkish troops that allegedly deployed there to prevent such developments. Under the demilitarized zone agreement radicals like the TIP and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham have to be withdrawn from the contact line. Nonetheless, this has never happened.

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