

The Hull Has a Name

A week of strikes at sea, and what honest reporting owes the crew.

By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

For days the reports from the Strait of Hormuz read like weather. A tanker struck. An engine-room fire. Crew fighting it. No name given, because UKMTO, the Royal Navy office that logs attacks on merchant ships, does not release names in its first notices.

On Tuesday the hull got a name, and so did the cost. The Panama-flagged tanker *On Peace* (IMO 9893204) was hit by a projectile about nine nautical miles northeast of Limah, on Oman's Musandam coast, and caught fire. Oman's Defence Ministry said its air force airlifted ten crew members to hospital in Khasab. India's Ministry of External Affairs said the ship carried 19 crew, 17 of them Indian, and that 12 were injured, 11 of them Indian. New Delhi condemned the attack. Oman did not say who fired.

On Wednesday evening UKMTO logged another: a tanker struck by multiple projectiles about 51 nautical miles north of Madinat ash Shamal, Qatar, with casualties reported. That is the middle of the Gulf, far west of the strait. Authorities are investigating, and the ship has not been named.

Farther south, the second gate is contested. Yemeni government forces, with Saudi-led air cover, opened a counter-offensive this week around Dhubab and the Bab el-Mandeb. On Monday the government said it had reached Mokha; Yemeni officials on the ground and analysts told Reuters the claim was premature. On Wednesday the Houthis fired ballistic missiles and drones at Aden's international airport. One missile landed near the runway minutes before a flight from Cairo was due, and the plane was sent on to Jeddah.

Three things follow, and none of them is a headline about victory.

First, a ship is people. "Unnamed tanker" is a reporting convention, not a description. Eleven Indian sailors in a hospital in Khasab are the reason the convention exists. We should not mistake it for an absence.

Second, distance is not safety. A war fought at a chokepoint does not stay at the chokepoint. Wednesday's strike came hundreds of kilometres from the narrows that most of us have learned to watch.

Third, a claim is not a line. A city "reached" on Monday and still contested on Wednesday is a front, not a fact. The Torah demands honest weights of the merchant (Devarim 25:15). The same rule binds anyone who reports a war.

This morning's portion of Bereishit (4:19–22) lists the first craftsmen. Yaval is the father of those who live in tents and keep herds. Yuval is the father of harp and flute. Tuval-Kayin sharpens every tool of copper and iron, and Rashi, following the Midrash, says he "refined the craft of Kayin" by making weapons for killers. The same forge makes the plow and the blade. The same sea lane that carries a nation's fuel can carry a projectile to a crew of nineteen.

The prophet promised a day when swords become plowshares (Yeshayahu 2:4). Until then our task is smaller and harder: to say plainly what was done, and to whom, and to refuse to call it anything else.

May G-d heal the wounded sailors of the On Peace, and guard all who go down to the sea in ships.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI

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