Tensions over oil-tanker attacks in Gulf of Oman

16th June, 2019

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Tensions are rising in the Middle East over the latest attacks on oil tankers. The USA is blaming Iran for the attacks on two tankers in the Gulf of Oman on Thursday. The tankers are owned by Japan and Norway. They were hit by blasts while navigating waters close to the strategically important Strait of Hormuz between Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Around a fifth of the world's oil passes through the Strait, which is just 68km at its narrowest point. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Iran was behind the "blatant assault" on the vessels. He said the U.S. would defend itself and its allies against "Iranian aggression" in the region. However, he provided no evidence that Iran was behind the attacks.

The attacks are the second such incidents carried out against tankers in the past month. Two Saudi tankers were sabotaged in the UAE port of Fujairah last month. The U.S. says the latest tankers were hit by mines and posted a video online of supposed Iranian forces removing an unexploded mine off the hull of one of the ships. Iran's Foreign Minister described the attacks as "suspicious". He said Iran's navy was investigating them. Iran called the U.S. accusations "unfounded," "inflammatory" and "Iranophobic". The Japanese owner of one of the tankers said his vessel was struck by some kind of missile and not by a mine. The United Nations cautioned that the truth needed to be "clearly established".

Sources:
washingtonpost.com / aljazeera.com / tehrantimes.co

Writing

It is easy to reduce tensions over the oil tanker attacks. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

tensions / Middle East / attacks / tanker / oil / assault / aggression / region / evidence / incident / sabotage / mine / foreign minister / suspicious / Iranophobia / navy / truth

True / False

a) The attacked tankers were from Norway and Japan. T / F

b) The Strait or Hormuz is 68 miles at its narrowest point. T / F

c) The USA said it would defend its allies against Iran. T / F

d) Mike Pompeo provided lots of evidence that Iran attacked the tankers. T / F

e) Three tankers were attacked in the UAE earlier this month. T / F

f) Iran said it is investigating the "suspicious" attacks. T / F

g) A Japanese tanker owner said his ship hit a mine. T / F

h) The United Nations said it had clearly established the facts. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**rising**	a.	alleged
2.	**blaming**	b.	flagrant
3.	**blasts**	c.	proof
4.	**blatant**	d.	found
5.	**evidence**	e.	accusing
6.	**carried out**	f.	provocative
7.	**supposed**	g.	conducted
8.	**suspicious**	h.	escalating
9.	**inflammatory**	i.	questionable
10.	**established**	j.	explosions

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you know about the Oman Gulf crisis?

b) Who do you think is behind the attacks?

c) How high are tensions rising?

d) Why would Iran attack oil tankers close to its coast?

e) What might further attacks do to relations in the region?

f) Why did Mike Pompeo blame Iran without any evidence?

g) What might the USA do to defend its allies in the region?

h) How worried are you about what is going on?

Phrase Match

1. The USA is blaming
2. close to the strategically important
3. just 68km at
4. the U.S. would defend itself
5. no evidence that Iran was behind
6. Two Saudi tankers were
7. removing an unexploded
8. He said Iran's navy was
9. his vessel was struck by some
10. the truth needed to be

a. the attacks
b. mine
c. clearly established
d. investigating them
e. Strait of Hormuz
f. Iran for the attacks
g. kind of missile
h. and its allies
i. sabotaged
j. its narrowest point

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think about what you read?
b) How likely is a third Gulf War in the Middle East?
c) Do you believe the USA or Iran?
d) Do you think U.S. leaders are 'Iranophobic'?
e) What would be the outcome of a conflict in the Gulf?
f) How do you think events will develop?
g) What can be done to reduce tensions in the Gulf region?
h) What questions would you like to ask Iran's leaders?

Spelling

1. while <u>navgigatni</u> waters
2. the <u>ctalgeyatirls</u> important Strait of Hormuz
3. 68km at its <u>sronrweat</u> point
4. the <u>lnaattb</u> assault on the vessels
5. defend itself and its <u>elsila</u>
6. he provided no <u>eevdince</u>
7. the second such <u>cstiinned</u> carried out
8. Saudi tankers were <u>ogtbasead</u>
9. removing an <u>euodenpxld</u> mine
10. described the attacks as <u>isscsuiupo</u>
11. Iran called the U.S. <u>natuaoscics</u> unfounded
12. be clearly <u>iaseeldhbts</u>

Role Play

Role A – Donald Trump
You think Donald Trump is the most likely to de-escalate the crisis. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their people would't de-escalate the situation. Also, tell the others who is the least likely of these to do so (and why): Hassan Rouhani, Dalai Lama or Shinzo Abe.

Role B – Hassan Rouhani
You think Hassan Rouhani is the most likely to de-escalate the crisis. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their people would't de-escalate the situation. Also, tell the others who is the least likely of these to do so (and why): Donald Trump, Dalai Lama or Shinzo Abe.

Role C – Dalai Lama
You think the Dalai Lama is the most likely to de-escalate the crisis. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their people would't de-escalate the situation. Also, tell the others who is the least likely of these to do so (and why): Hassan Rouhani, Donald Trump or Shinzo Abe.

Role D – Shinzo Abe
You think Shinzo Abe is the most likely to de-escalate the crisis. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their people would't de-escalate the situation. Also, tell the others who is the least likely of these to do so (and why): Hassan Rouhani, Dalai Lama or Donald Trump .

Speaking – De-escalation

Rank these with your partner. Put the person who is most likely to de-escalate the situation at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Shinzo Abe
- Dalai Lama
- the UAE leader
- Xi Jinping
- Donald Trump
- Hassan Rouhani
- António Guterres
- Saudi's Crown Prince

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. c
6. g	7. a	8. i	9. f	10. d