Tension in Hormuz: Ship Security and India's Interests



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12 November 2026 update: two more tankers attacked in Hormuz, Indian seafarers safe

NCC FAJR (11 November): Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the Saudi Arabia-flagged oil tanker NCC FAJR was involved in a possible attack on 11 November while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. All three Indian seafarers on board, along with the entire crew, are safe; the ministry remains in regular contact with the ship management company.

MT FUJAIRAH ENERGY (10 November): A day earlier, the Liberia-flagged VLCC MT FUJAIRAH ENERGY, travelling from Al Ruwais (UAE) to Dubai, was hit by a projectile in the Persian Gulf. The vessel carried 6 Indian seafarers; four crew members were injured, including one Indian national (minor injuries, taken ashore for medical examination). The remaining 18 crew are safe and accounted for.

Context: Last month, the Panama-flagged tanker MT Louise 1 (with 27 Indian seafarers aboard) was hit by limpet mines about 25 nautical miles northeast of Oman's Khasab, causing a fire - all Indians were safe. Since the Iran-US war began in February 2026, commercial vessels on the Hormuz and Persian Gulf routes have faced repeated attacks. About 20% of the world's petroleum passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

The Hindu - Saudi-flagged tanker hit in Strait of Hormuz, 3 Indian seafarers aboard: Sonowal

Times of India - Indian seafarer injured as projectile hits Liberia-flagged oil tanker in Persian Gulf

Why in News

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on 7 November 2026 that its forces had disabled a commercial cargo vessel named M/V Huda in the Gulf of Oman. According to it, the ship, flying the flag of St Kitts, was leaving the area after going to an Iranian port and was trying to violate the American blockade despite repeated warnings.

This is the official American account, not the final finding of any independent investigation. Around the same time, the Iranian side claimed that two tankers struck naval mines near Hormuz. These events should not be read as one ship, one location, or an independently verified combined sequence of events.

What Was Said, What Remains Unclear

American account on the Huda: According to CENTCOM, it asked the crew to vacate the targeted parts of the ship, then a military aircraft fired precision-guided weapons at the rear section. 'Disabled' here is described as stopping the ship's ability to move forward; it does not establish that it sank. The statement does not lead to any independent conclusion that all sailors are safe, or about the full damage or environmental impact.

Iranian claim on the tankers: According to a report published on 8 November, the navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said two tankers were caught in mines on an 'unauthorised' route and caught fire. The wording of the claiming side does not by itself settle the international legal status of any route. The available reports contained no independent confirmation of these claims.

Maritime safety notice: A separate 7 November report said UKMTO reported an incident involving a bulk carrier and military forces in the Gulf of Oman, about 18 nautical miles east of Khor Fakkan in the UAE. The crew, damage and environmental impact were then unknown. That brief notice did not name the ship; therefore, do not treat it as independent identification-confirmation of the Huda merely from the proximity of place and time.

Where Is Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow sea route located between Iran and Oman. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and further to the Arabian Sea. Such a narrow route of maritime trade, whose disruption affects large flows, is called a chokepoint.

Khor Fakkan is on the eastern coast of the UAE. Calling an incident in the Gulf of Oman an incident inside the strait without a location check would be a geographical error. Similarly, Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb are different chokepoints; the latter is connected to the southern entrance of the Red Sea.

The Energy Route, Not Only Oil

According to the EIA, in the first half of 2025 an average of about 20.9 million barrels of oil passed through Hormuz per day, equal to about 20% of global consumption of petroleum liquids at that time. This is a reference to a past period, not the current flow of November 2026.

In a separate EIA energy-security table published in August 2026, the oil flow for the second quarter of 2026 was estimated at about 4.9 million barrels per day and the LNG flow at about 0.8 billion cubic feet per day. The EIA warned that because ships' AIS signals in the region have

become unreliable, the 2026 estimates are being revised. This should not be treated as a measure of actual daily traffic on 8 November.

AIS is a system for broadcasting signals such as a ship's identity and position. Signals being switched off or altered can make tracking difficult, but the mere absence of a signal is not by itself proof of any specific offence or attack. LNG is natural gas made liquid by cooling it to extremely low temperatures; it is different from petroleum products and from the LPG used in household cylinders.

How the Risk Reaches India

Supply: Ships stopping, routes changing or delays in cargo can affect the timetable of imports. It would be wrong to assume that all Indian imports come by a single route.

Cost: War-risk insurance, freight rates and the cost of late arrival can rise. Every incident does not lead to the conclusion of an immediate equal increase in India's retail fuel price.

Sailors: Arrangements for warnings, safe evacuation, medical help, communication and informing families are as important as commercial interests. No claim has been made here about the presence of an Indian crew in this incident.

Environment: Damaged tankers can create the risk of an oil spill. There being a risk and confirmation of an actual spill are different things.

The Limits of Alternatives

Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's pipelines can carry some oil to ports outside Hormuz. But a pipeline's total capacity, the spare capacity available at that time and the oil actually exported are different figures. An oil pipeline cannot be considered a complete alternative to LNG ships.

Similarly, strategic reserves can provide support for some time, not take the place of permanent supply. There is also a difference between the announced capacity of reserves and the quantity actually filled. For India, diversity of import sources and routes, adequate storage and flexible arrangements between buyers and sellers are together useful.

The Question of Maritime Law

Part III of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has the framework of the right of transit passage for designated straits used for international navigation. Article 38 clarifies the meaning of continuous and expeditious transit; Article 39 sets out the duties of ships and aircraft and Article 44 the duties of coastal states.

But this does not by itself settle the legality of any wartime blockade or of any particular attack. The ship's actual activity, location, the circumstances of the conflict and other applicable international rules will also have to be examined. A side saying it is 'enforcing a blockade' is not independent legal confirmation of its every use of force.

Way Forward

Priority should go to the safety of sailors, verified maritime warnings, crisis communication and diplomacy to reduce tension. In energy-security decisions, the normal trade share of a past period should not be made proof of a currently closed or open route. It is necessary to check separately the actual flow, the alternative capacity and the independent confirmation of each incident.

Related Study

To understand the limits of supply and route changes, read Ship-to-ship LPG Transfers near Hormuz; for the diplomatic background, read Iran-US Talks and the Clash of Conditions.

Mains Practice Question

Maritime tension around Hormuz is a question not only of India's energy security but also of the safety of sailors and diplomatic balance. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)

Answer Outline

Introduction: Clarify the geographical position of Hormuz and its role in the Gulf's energy route.

Main body: Add the supply, insurance, freight, sailor and environmental risks. Explain the limits of alternatives for oil and LNG, the difference between pipeline capacity and spare availability, and the need for independent confirmation of claims. Add the importance of maritime transit and crisis communication.

Conclusion: Suggest a balanced policy based on diverse supply, limited-period reserves, safe maritime movement and dialogue.

Sources

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- 8 November 2026: Report on the Iranian tanker claims and the US statement
- Reuters report published on The Times of Israel, 7 November 2026: UKMTO limited incident notice
- EIA: Chokepoint geography and comparative figures for the first half of 2025
- EIA: Second-quarter 2026 estimates and the AIS limitation
- United Nations: Convention on the Law of the Sea, Part III

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