Iran seizes vessel in Gulf for allegedly smuggling diesel fuel

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Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have seized a vessel in the Gulf for allegedly smuggling 250,000 litres of diesel fuel to the United Arab Emirates, Iran’s semi-official Students News agency ISNA reported on Monday.

“It was detained near Iran’s Greater Tunb island in the Persian Gulf...the crew have been handed over to legal authorities in the southern Hormozgan province,” ISNA said, without elaborating on the nationalities of the crewmen.

The reported seizure coincided with raised international tensions following a weekend attack on a major oil installation in Saudi Arabia, Tehran’s longtime regional foe.

Responsibility for the strike was claimed by Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthi movement, while the United States has blamed Iran itself for the strike. Iran denies the accusation.

Iran, which has some of the world’s cheapest fuel prices due to heavy subsidies and the fall of its national currency, has been fighting rampant fuel smuggling by land to neighbouring countries and by sea to Gulf Arab states.

Iran stepped up its fight against smuggling fuel earlier this month when its coast guards seized a vessel for smuggling fuel in the Gulf and detained its 12 Filipino crew members.

In July, Iran seized a British oil tanker near the Strait of Hormuz for alleged marine violations, two weeks after British forces detained an Iranian tanker near Gibraltar accused of taking oil to

Syria in violation of European Union sanctions.

Iran's Adrian Darya 1, formerly Grace 1, was released last month. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that the British-flagged Steno Impero oil tanker will be released soon.

The latest reported ship seizure by Iran follows a series of incidents involving shipping in and near the Gulf after U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil exports took full effect in May.

The incidents coincided with stepped up attacks by the Houthis on targets in Saudi Arabia.