

The Grayzone visits the Strait of Hormuz

Days before Trump launched his failed "Project Freedom" to open up the Strait of Hormuz, The Grayzone's Wyatt Reed visited the waterway and explained the historical significance of Iran's economic standoff with the US and its fight for sovereignty. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

And so you're, I think, the second American reporter to be able to get to the Strait of Hormuz. Here's your report.

#Wyatt Reed

I'm here reporting from the Strait of Hormuz, where the naval standoff between Iran and the U.S. continues two months to the day after the U.S. and Israel launched a sneak attack on Iran mid-negotiations. Now, on Sunday, CENTCOM announced that it had intercepted another Iranian vessel as it attempted to transit the strait, bringing the total number of vessels intercepted by the U.S. to 38. Now, last week, when the U.S. Attorney General, Jeanine Pirro, boasted that the U.S. government had taken two Iranian oil tankers by force, they said they did so on the basis of so-called seizure warrants based on their own unilateral and internationally unrecognized sanctions regime. A spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry says the move by the U.S. represents, quote, the outright legalization of piracy and armed robbery on the high seas. And he warned it would lead to, quote, the return of pirates. Only now, he said, they operate with government-issued warrants.

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So, yeah, I mean, it's a slightly longer report. I forgot Jeanine Pirro was the U.S. attorney. That's pretty... I mean, speaking of like a pirate ship, that's what the Trump administration is. But I mean, what kind of insight did you get there in the Strait of Hormuz? Just seeing the physical landscape and the discussions you had, you spoke to the governor of Bandar Abbas. You had an in-depth interview down there. What kind of insights did you get heading into what Trump calls Project Freedom, this announcement of the U.S. Navy escorting ships through the strait but not actually escorting them? There have been reports since our conversation began of Iranian strikes on Emirati oil facilities. So it looks like the conflict is reigniting thanks to Trump's show of force. Iran is redirecting shipping towards Dubai — in other words, ordering tankers to head towards the Emirates and away from the Strait of Hormuz. But what kind of insights did you gather down there?

#Wyatt Reed

Well, first of all, Iran has a huge fleet of various types of tankers, cargo ships, vessels. There were dozens and dozens and dozens of ships just kind of parked, waiting for things to cool off. And given that they are in Bandar Abbas—most of them are Iranian-flagged—or outside of Bandar Abbas, I should say. Most of them are Iranian-flagged. Most of them are attempting to trade goods on behalf of Iranian consumers. Other insights: it's very, very narrow. It's very quick. You know, it takes only a handful of minutes. I think really, you know, you could cross it in less than an hour if you were on a quick enough boat. And you can see the other side. You can see straight through to Oman pretty quickly after you leave the shore of Bandar Abbas.

So it just kind of reminds you how difficult it would be for vessels trying to operate under the so-called Operation Freedom to successfully transit. There's nowhere there to hide. It's also relatively shallow. We saw a shipwreck, you know, of one of the ships that had been taken out by the Iranian side for refusing their orders, and you can see parts of the ship above water. It's, again, you know, it's a very narrow, very shallow strait. So the idea that they're going to sneak ships through there is just kind of farcical to me. It's not a body of water that's conducive to any kind of subversive sort of activities there. So that was my main takeaway — it's just this is not going to be a challenge for the Iranians to control.

The Navy can make its way back and forth very quickly. They could mine it very effectively. They could do all sorts of things. They could send underwater drones. They could send fast boats in a matter of minutes to intercept any boats that they saw going through there, and it's not hard to track them either. So, again, with that in mind, I would say the claim today by CENTCOM that two ships had been guided through by the U.S. military, that two U.S.-flagged ships have been guided through, I would say the same thing I said about these airmen: show them to us. What were their names? Who are they? How did they do this? Show us a picture, you know, prove to us that this did indeed happen, show us a path of a transponder. None of that has been forthcoming, and I don't think it will be.