

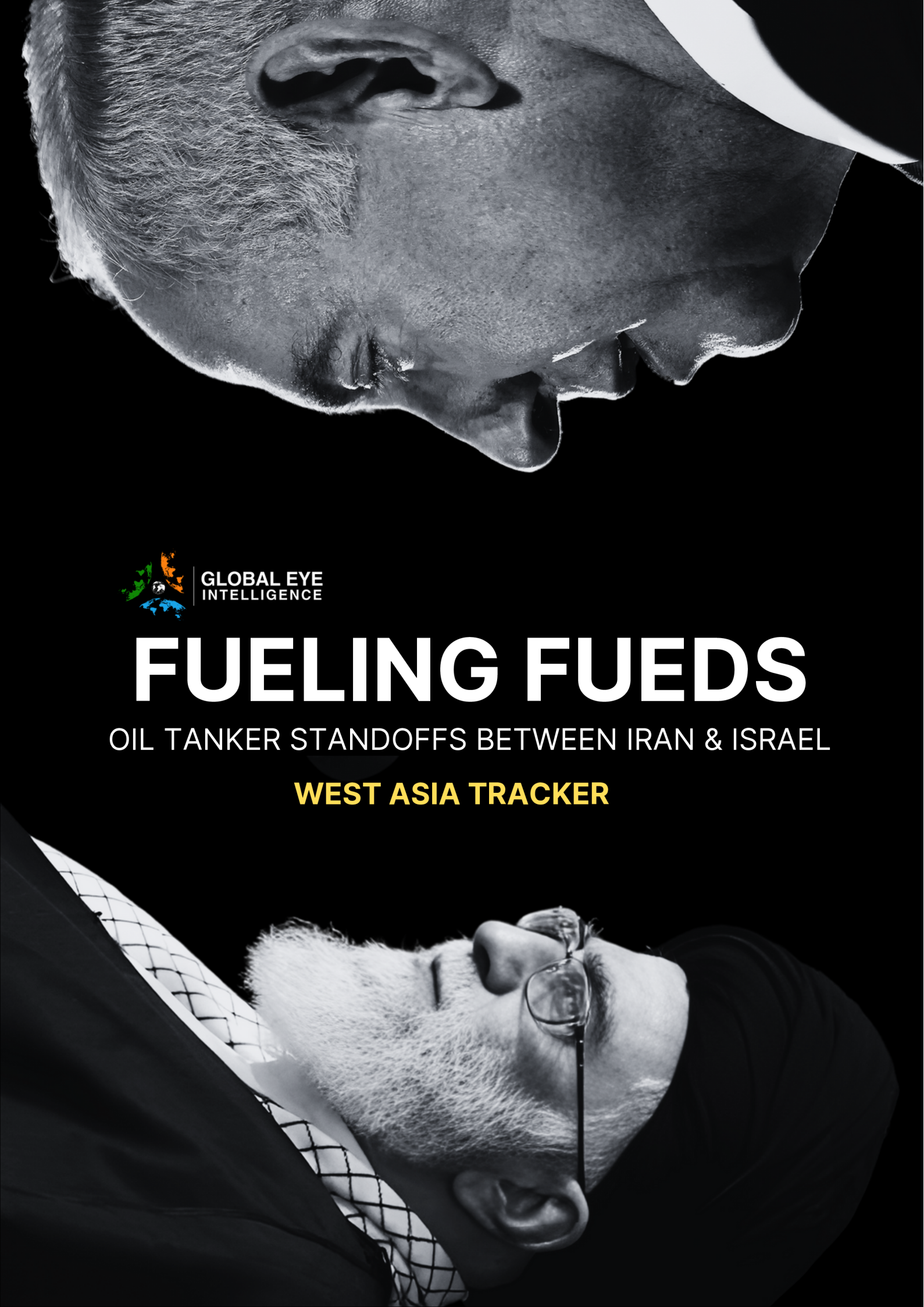


GLOBAL EYE  
INTELLIGENCE

# FUELING FUEDS

OIL TANKER STANDOFFS BETWEEN IRAN & ISRAEL

**WEST ASIA TRACKER**



# Executive Summary

This report analyses the recent maritime impasse between Iran and Israel. On September 7, a statement came from the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Lieutenant General Hossein Salami accusing Israel of having attacked a total of 14 ships that belonged to Tehran. 12 Israeli ships were hit by Iran, Tel Aviv requested to end this conflict at sea after the fifth tanker was hit. These confrontations have mainly transpired in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. In this report we untangle the gordian knot by going through the brief context to the current conflicts. Routes taken by some of the ships and probable cause for targeting them are discussed to get a better understanding of the geopolitical scenario in the region. Military bases of Iran in Syria that are of significance are analyzed.





# Background

Some of the ships involved in the conflict over the years:

·**Emerald-** registered to a company in Beirut, Lebanon; this ship operated under the flag of Panama and was seen going towards Baniyas in Syria.

·**Helios Ray-** registered under the Isle of Man; bearing the Bahamian flag in the Gulf of Oman.

·**Shahr-e Kord-** an Iranian flag bearing ship owned by a Tehran based company. It was headed to the Syrian port of Latakia.

·**Lori-** Israeli container ship owned by a company registered in Hong Kong.

·**Saviz-** Iranian cargo ship that had remained between Eretria and Yemen for several years. It is believed to be IRGC's base in the region to support the Houthis.

·**Hyperion ray-** Israeli vehicle carrier under the Bahamian flag, the ship was registered in the Isle of Man.

·**Wisdom-** Panamanian flagged tanker based in Beirut targeted near Baniyas in Syria.

It is interesting to note that most of the Iranian ships that were targeted were going towards Baniyas or the port of Latakia in Syria or aiding the Houthis. On the other hand, few of the Israeli ships that were targeted were associated to or in parts were owned by Mr. Ungar or Mr. Udi Angel; both of whom have been known to have connections with the Israeli Prime Minister and the Senior Members of MOSSAD.



Baniyas and the port of Latakia are of strategic importance and close to each other geographically. The port of Latakia becomes the end point of Iran's Land Bridge or Land Corridor that starts from Iran and passes through Iraq and Syria to reach Lebanon in order to maintain a robust and steady supply chain of weapons and military personnel from Iran to the Hezbollah in Lebanon through the proxies in Syria and Iraq. Baniyas accommodates Iran's military base. Baniyas takes the Iranian oil tankers who regularly deliver oil and gasoline to Syria in defiance of the Cesar Law and other US sanctions.



Limpet Mine: Both Iran and Israel have used Limpet mine while attacking each other. Limpet mines are a magnetic explosive device which is usually attached to the hull of the target vessel. These are not meant to sink the ship rather they aim to bring the functioning of the ship to a standstill via time delay either through chemical processes or mechanical means.

Besides the above-mentioned ships, Iran has targeted ships owned by the UK and the US. In 2019 Iran confiscated a UK based ship called Stena Impero when UK targeted an Iranian ship near the Strait of Gibraltar. In 2022, the US seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Greece. In July 2019, the Iranian supertanker Grace 1 was boarded by UK marines and local police off the coast of Gibraltar, with London claiming that the transport of oil violated European Union sanctions. Iran retaliated by seizing the UK-flagged, Swedish-owned Stena Impero tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, and the Grace 1 or the Adrian Darya 1 was released after seven weeks.





# Strategic Analysis

Syria- Russia give the access of Syrian ports and land routes to Lebanon and Lebanon based Iranian proxies like the Hezbollah rather than giving it up to US/NATO alliance. Iranian ships deliver weapons for the Syrian troops and Iran backed militias so as to expand Iran's military power in Syria. The Baniyas Port is near the Russian Tartus Naval Base, a logistics hub for Syria in the Mediterranean.



Iran has a web of military bases in Syria. The ones that are of significance to this report are –

- The compound created by the Iranian military which is used by the Syrian army outside El- Kiswah which is 14 kilometres south of Damascus. The images show low-rise buildings housing people and vehicles. Iran has also been building a scud missile factory in Baniyas, south to Latakia in Syria.

The base lies about 50 kilometres from the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory occupied and then annexed by Israel and where it now has a significant military presence.

Jabal ash Sharki is a suspected Iranian base in Syria located approximately 12 kilometres northwest of Damascus which is believed to be operated by the Quds Force, the special operations arm of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

# Recommendations

Iran and Israel could use the framework of regional organizations such as the Arab League or the Gulf Cooperation Council to curb nefarious activities in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Regional powers need to collaborate and create a comprehensive security structure for the West Asian region. Arms control agreements doesn't seem like a plan that would sustain for long in this turbulent region. Perhaps a treaty of non-aggression at the sea could be brought to the table of discussion by mediator countries because loss of cargo and tension at the sea has global and colossal repercussions that disrupt the supply chain and lessens the efficiency of businesses around the world.





# Conclusion

Iran and Israel have had a long history of disputes. The countries used to be friendly to each other in the beginning, they have come a long way and have grown ideologically apart from each other. Israel is a Jewish majority state and Iran is a Shia majority. The countries challenge each other aiming to emerge as the sole political and cultural influencer in the region. They have sworn to eliminate each other, given this, the notion that peace will prevail and there would be a visible and effective de-escalation of the current conflict is fundamentally flawed.







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