

Casualties

Marco Rubio: If ships are being threatened, 'that's a violation of the agreement' with Iran

Secretary of state says stopping IMO passage plan would be a problem



Secretary Marco Rubio meets with the press in Manama, Bahrain, on Thursday. Photo: Freddie Everett/State Department

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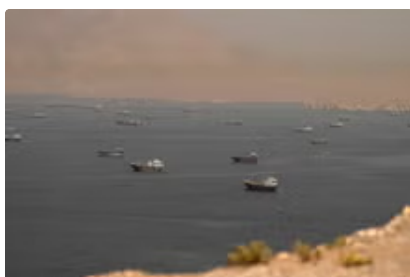
TradeWinds US bureau chief

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The top US diplomat said that Iranian threats on ships in the Strait of Hormuz would constitute a violation of Washington's agreement with Tehran.

The comments by US secretary of state Marco Rubio came on the same day that an [Evergreen Marine vessel came under fire](#), and it followed Tehran's warning against using an International Maritime Organization route for transiting the waterway.

Asked about safe passage through the strait, Rubio told reporters that the Trump administration is not paying attention to Iran's "maximalist rhetoric" but rather to whether ships are using the waterway.



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IMO halts Strait of Hormuz exodus after Evergreen container ship attacked

"If ships are moving, as they should be moving, then that's what we're going to judge and what we're going to react to," he said in a clip broadcast by Fox News.

"If on the other hand this rhetoric is backed up by actual ships being threatened and ships are not moving, that's a violation of the agreement, and we're going to have a problem with it."

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Rubio, who also serves as national security advisor to US President Donald Trump, said the use of a route set up by the International Maritime Organization "must" continue.

'We're going to have a problem'

"If that stops, then we're going to have a problem," the official said.

The comments, made while Rubio was in Bahrain to speak with Gulf states, came just before the IMO-organised route did come to a halt.

The United Nations shipping regulator put its plan on hold on Thursday after an attack on Evergreen's 8,508-teu Ever Lovely (built 2015) off the coast of Oman.



President Donald Trump delivers remarks after signing an Executive Order on quantum computing in the Oval Office on Monday. Photo: Joyce Boghosian/White House

IMO secretary general Arsenio Dominguez announced a "temporary pause" even though he said the Taiwanese-controlled ship was not using the programme.

Rubio was in Bahrain as the US continues to negotiate a final agreement just over a week after Trump signed a memorandum of understanding with Tehran.

The official told reporters that Gulf states were “very clear” that they do not support a toll on the Strait of Hormuz.

“The president’s made it clear: that’s not going to happen,” Rubio said.

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