

TERRORIST ATTACK PROFILE

Japanese Oil Tanker Explosion

OVERVIEW

Al-Qaida (AQ) claimed their militant group known as Abdullah Azzam Brigades was responsible for the explosion on Japanese M. Star oil super-tanker. ¹ Japanese authorities were confused for several days as to what the cause of the explosion could be before AQ finally accounted for the incident six days after the fact.

INCIDENT:

Upon leaving the Gulf entering into the Strait of Humuz, Mitsui shipping company's O.S.K. Lines tanker experienced an explosion,^{2,4} later to be identified as a suicide attack by Abdullah Azzam Brigades militant group.

DATE:

Shortly after midnight, Wednesday 28 July 2010

LOCATION:

Persian Gulf - Strait of Hurmuz between Iran and Oman

PERPETRATED BY:

Ayyub al-Taishan of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, associated with AQ ²



TARGET:

- Interior hull compartment of the Japanese M. Star Super-tanker travelling from Qatar to Japan
- Global economy and oil market

TACTIC:

Suicide Attack in hull compartment of the tanker

¹ 'Qaeda Linked group claims attack on Japan Tanker,' Reuters, 4 August 2010

² 'Brigades of Abdullah Azzam Claims Strike on Japanese Tanker,' SITE Intelligence Group, 3 August 2010

IMPACT and VISUAL AIDS:

Side of the ship's hull received a large square-shaped dent and the interior^{3,4,5}



WITNESS ACCOUNTS:

One crewmember witnessed a bright flash just before the impact occurred.^{1,6}

³ 'UAE Official: Japanese tanker was in collision', *Associated Press*, 29 July 2010

⁴ 'Militants claim bomb attack on Japan tanker,' *Associated Press*, 04 August 2010

⁵ 'Supertanker Damage Raises Alarm in the Persian Gulf,' *Associated Press*, 28 July 2010

⁶ 'Explosion Rocks Japanese Tanker in Persian Gulf,' *ONN TV*, 28 July 2010

ATTACK ANALYSIS:

TARGET ASSESSMENT:

Abdullah Azzam Brigades' choice to attack of the Japanese oil tanker was likely a convenient one to achieve the desired goal of threatening the global oil industry.

TACTIC ASSESSMENT:

This strategy to conduct suicide missions on sea versus land opens up new avenues for AQ and its militant group to threaten the international industry as well as economy. While the approach was presumed to be AQ before claims affirmed it and considering it reflects not the method of pirates threatening the seas, the capability of the militant brigade continues to prove a failure to do great damage on both humanity and economy. However, their failure heightens the danger for international industries transporting goods by sea, as this attempt may actually be a prelude to new manoeuvres to come.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

The Japanese M. Star has sustained the damage and will likely return to relatively normal function upon repairs. The impact of the blast likely did not accomplish the desired damage considering the ship did not undergo any fatalities, oil loss, or even puncture the side of the tanker's exterior.

GROUP ASSESSMENT:

With little success, the militant group predictably celebrates the damage accomplished as the damage inevitably impacts the international economy and as the group foresees potential options to do greater damage in the future.

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS:

This calamity raises concerns as yet another realm is under target and will hopefully encourage the implementing of security measures commonly practiced by other high targeted entities. This attack and its motives only proves the endless opportunities militancy is ready to exploit.

ATTACK INVESTIGATION:

INCIDENT:

The bomb damaged the interior of the hull and aside from the death of the suicide-bomber only one crew-member was reported injured from the blast. The tanker dropped anchor just after the attack in the United Arab Emirates port for inspection. Inspectors avoided providing details until the second day following incident at which point the simple explanation of a “collision” was the supposed cause. Iran, UAE, and Oman denied igniting any attack and further suggested it was a collision.

POST-INCIDENT:

Most presumed at first it was not an (Terrorist) attack and suggestions on 29 July implied a collision. Speculations raised included:

- Director General of al-Fujirah port, Captain Musa Murad, indicated that investigations of the ship’s hull and interior show signs of a crash ⁷
- Captain Murad and Iranian shipping official Ataollah Sadr suggested that a tremor wave collided into the ship’s hull (however US Geological survey had no reports of earthquakes in the area)⁸. Murad later dismissed the option ⁹
- Locals officials suggested natural causes ¹⁰
- Mitsui spokeswoman and Japanese Officials indicated firm belief it was an attack ^{6 8 11}
- Some investigators implied the ship may have collided into a submarine as US nuclear subs have in the past experience collisions¹²

CASE FINDINGS:

According to SITE Intelligence, the attack was conducted in the name of Umar `abd-al-Rahman, the Egyptian known as “Blind Sheikh” imprisoned by and in the United States for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bomb attack in New York. SITE quotes militant perpetrators as claiming the strike was to debilitate “the infidel global order which is thrust unto Muslim lands and which loots its resources” and they “delayed the publication of the statement until our heroes returned safely to their bases.” ¹³ The group was also noted to have taken pride in the weakening of the global economy and oil market. ¹⁴

The exterior dent on the ship, lead investigators to believe the explosion was a collision.

Remains of a homemade bomb were found ¹⁵

⁷ ‘Explosion Rocks Japanese Tanker in Persian Gulf,’ Associated Press, 28 July 2010

⁸ ‘Explosion Rocks Japanese Tanker in Persian Gulf,’ ONN TV, 28 July 2010

⁹ ‘UAE Official: Japanese tanker was in collision,’ Associated Press, 29 July 2010

¹⁰ ‘Supertanker Damage Raises Alarm in Persian Gulf,’ Associated Press, 28 July 2010

¹¹ ‘Japanese oil tanker damaged at mouth of Persian Gulf; cause unclear, shipper suspects attack,’ Fox News, 28 July 2010

¹² ‘Japanese Tanker May have Hit Submarine,’ Global Times, 29 July 2010

¹³ ‘Militants claim bomb attack on Japan tanker,’ Associated Press, 4 August 2010

¹⁴ ‘Al Qaida Group Claim Attack on Japan Tanker,’ Reuters, 4 August 2010

¹⁵ ‘Japan tanker was damaged in a terror attack, UAE says,’ BBC, 06 August 2010

ATTACK RESPONSE:

Investigation Response included:

- Director General of al-Fujirah port, Captain Musa Murad, oversaw the investigation
- Dubai-based marine repair firm divers were sent to inspect the ship. ¹⁶
- The US Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the region, in response monitored the situation to help with investigations. ¹⁷
- The company hired a Dubai-based specialist last week to investigate what had damaged the 333 meter-long M.Star ¹⁸

GOVERNMENT:

The M. Star Tanker's owner has yet to respond to the incident ¹⁹

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

Oil market allegedly has ignored the potential threat this poses to international oil industry as oil inventories in the US have risen. ²⁰

PRIVATE BUSINESS:

No reports found

SOCIETY:

No reports found

¹⁶ 'Japanese Tanker May have Hit Submarine', *Global Times*, 29 July 2010

¹⁷ 'Collision Blamed for Damage to Japanese Tanker,' *Associated Press*, 29 July 2010

¹⁸ 'Qaeda Linked Group Claims Attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010

¹⁹ 'Qaeda Linked Group Claims Attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010

²⁰ 'Qaeda Linked Group Claims Attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010

REFERENCES:

- 'Qaeda Linked group claims attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010
- 'Brigades of Abdullah Azzam Claims Strike on Japanese Tanker,' *SITE Intelligence Group*, 3 August 2010
- 'Explosion Rocks Japanese Tanker in Persian Gulf,' *ONN TV*, 28 July 2010
- 'UAE Official: Japanese tanker was in collision', *Associated Press*, 29 July 2010
- 'Militants claim bomb attack on Japan tanker,' *Associated Press*, 4 August 2010
- 'Supertanker Damage Raises Alarm in the Persian Gulf,' *Associated Press*, 28 July 2010
- 'Explosion Rocks Japanese Tanker in Persian Gulf,' *Associated Press*, 28 July 2010
- 'UAE Official: Japanese tanker was in collision', *Associated Press*, 29 July 2010
- 'Japanese oil tanker damaged at mouth of Persian Gulf; cause unclear, shipper suspects attack,' *Fox News*, 28 July 2010
- 'Al Qaida Group Claim Attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010
- 'Militants claim bomb attack on Japan tanker,' *Associated Press*, 4 August 2010
- 'Japanese Tanker May have Hit Submarine', *Global Times*, 29 July 2010
- 'Qaeda Linked Group Claims Attack on Japan Tanker,' *Reuters*, 4 August 2010
- 'Collision Blamed for Damage to Japanese Tanker,' *Associated Press*, 29 July 2010

<http://www.startribune.com/business/99537164.html>

http://www.salon.com/wires/allwires/2010/07/28/D9H81BH80_ml_tanker_explosion/index.html

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/collision-blamed-for-damage-to-japanese-tanker/388523>

<http://world.globaltimes.cn/asia-pacific/2010-07/557674.html>

<http://www.onn.tv/news-feed/associated-press/explosion-rocks-japanese-tanker-in-persian-gulf/>

<http://www.localnews8.com/news/24419234/detail.html>

<http://world.globaltimes.cn/asia-pacific/2010-07/557674.html>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6730IB20100804>

<http://www.france24.com/en/20100804-militants-claim-suicide-bomb-attack-japan-tanker>