



## Caught With Our Pants Down in the Persian Gulf. US Navy Personnel Arrested by Iran

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*Your bullshit-ometer should be making an awful racket in response to the shifting explanations given for the twenty-four-hour Iranian hostage scare involving two US Navy boats intercepted in the Gulf.*

First they told us “at least one of the boats” had experienced a “[mechanical failure](#).” Then they said the boats had [run out of fuel](#), although it wasn’t clear if they meant both boats. Then they said “there was no mechanical problem.” *Then* they claimed that the two crews had somehow not communicated with the military command, although “they could not explain how the military had lost contact with not one but both of the boats.” As the *New York Times* reported:

“Even as Mr. Kerry was describing the release on Wednesday morning, American military officials were offering new explanations about how the two 49-foot patrol boats, formally called riverine command boats, had ended up in Iranian territorial waters while cruising from Kuwait to Bahrain.”

And they still haven’t explained it – or any of the other distinctly odd circumstances surrounding this incident.

The best they could do was have an anonymous Navy officer aver “When you’re navigating in those waters, the space around it gets pretty tight.” However, as the *Times* put it:

“But that is hardly a new problem, and the boats’ crews would almost surely have mapped out their course in advance, paying close attention to the Iranian boundary waters. And each boat has radio equipment on board, so it was unclear how the crews suddenly lost communication with their base unless they were surrounded by Iranian vessels before they could alert their superiors.”

We are told they were on a “training mission” – but what kind of mission? The *Washington Post* adds a helpful detail by [telling us](#) that “The vessels, known as riverine command boats, are agile and often carry Special Operations forces into smaller bodies of water.”

Ah, now we’re getting somewhere.

Amid all the faux outrage coming from the neocons and their enablers in the media over the

alleged “[humiliation](#)” of the US – Iran “paraded” the sailors in their media! They made one of the sailors apologize! The Geneva Conventions were violated! – hardly anyone in this country is asking the hard questions, first and foremost: what in heck were those two boats doing in Iranian waters?

And if you believe they somehow “drifted” within a few miles of Farsi Island, where a highly sensitive Iranian military base is located, then you probably think there’s a lot of money just waiting for you in a Nigerian bank account.

Anyone who thinks the adversarial relationship between Washington and Tehran has turned into “détente” due to the nuclear deal is living in Never-Never Land. Our close ally, Saudi Arabia, has all but declared war on the Iranians and that means we are being dragged into the rapidly escalating conflict. In this context, two US military boats coming a mile and a half away from a major Iranian base in the Gulf isn’t an accident. This ‘training mission” was a military incursion, and although we have no way of knowing what mission the US hoped to accomplish, suffice to say that it wasn’t meant to be a kumbaya moment.

[Rachel Maddow](#) is also [raising questions](#) about this: after a load of nonsense about how showing the sailors on Iranian media violated the Geneva Conventions – they didn’t: we aren’t at war with Iran yet – she pointed out the suspicious nature of the Pentagon’s shifting story during her January 13 broadcast.

To add another layer to the mystery, the Iranian government released the sailors after holding them for less than twenty-four hours – which isn’t the sort of behavior one might expect if those sailors were on a spy mission. And the Iranians issued an [Emily Litella](#)-ish statement, [as reported](#) by the *Los Angeles Times*:

“After explanations the U.S. gave and the assurances they made, we determined that [the] violation of Iranian territorial waters was not deliberate, so we guided the boats out of Iranian waters,’ said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.”

So if those two boats were “[snooping](#),” as the Fars News Agency originally claimed, why would Tehran come out with this all-is-forgiven statement?

None of it makes any sense, at least not until one realizes that the Iranian government is [hardly a monolith](#): power is divided up between various agencies and factions, with only the loosest sort of unity being enforced by the Supreme Leader. Farsi Island is controlled by the hard-line [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC), the hard-line faction of the ruling elite, which wields enormous political and economic power within the multi-polar Iranian state apparatus. It was the hard-liners who released the video and photos of the American sailors with their hands in the air, and their spokesmen demanded an apology from the US. It was the diplomats, however – the moderates, who negotiated the Iran deal – whose contacts with the US facilitated the sailors’ quick release.

But it isn’t just the Iranians who are riven with factions and conflicting lines of authority: the American empire is overseen by a vast national security bureaucracy involving both military and civilians, and it isn’t monolithic, either. Although, in theory, civilians are in the drivers’ seat and the military just follows orders, in reality the Pentagon is an independent power that can obstruct or even effectively veto whatever diplomatic or military plans the White House has in mind. And while opposition to the nuke deal was centered in Congress, the

[Pentagon insisted](#) at the last moment that sanctions on conventional arms and particularly those related to ballistic missiles remain in place. Iran's [recent testing](#) of medium range ballistic missiles must have the generals in an uproar, and it could well be that this "training mission" in the Gulf was related – as either a spying mission, or an outright provocation designed to imperil relations. Or perhaps both.

We'll probably never know for sure: but what we certainly can know is that the official explanation for this latest incident stinks to high heaven. There's no denying we were caught by the Iranians with our pants down. The only question is – how were we trying to f—k them over?

I [warned](#) after the signing of the Iran deal that we are in for a long series of provocations in the Gulf, and this is only the beginning. In order to keep all this in perspective, just remember that the long dance between Washington and Tehran involves at least four partners, including their hard-liners and ours.

You can check out Justin Raimondo's Twitter feed by going [here](#).

Raimondo has written a couple of books, which you might want to peruse. [Here](#) is the link for buying the second edition of his 1993 book, [Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement](#), with an Introduction by Prof. [George W. Carey](#), a [Foreword](#) by Patrick J. Buchanan, and critical essays by [Scott Richert](#) and [David Gordon](#) (ISI Books, 2008).

You can buy [An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard](#) (Prometheus Books, 2000), his biography of the great libertarian thinker, [here](#).

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