

PRESS RELEASE

INDIAN COAST GUARD BUSTS INTERNATIONAL OIL CARGO SMUGGLING SYNDICATE IN A DARING MID SEA OPERATION

07 Feb 26, New Delhi : Indian Coast Guard busted an international oil smuggling racket on 06 Feb 26 through an intricate sea-air network centred operation. The vessels involved devised a method to smuggle large volumes of cheap oil and oil based cargo from conflict ridden countries and profit by mid sea transfer to motor tankers in International waters. The syndicate consist of a network of handlers operating from various countries, coordinating the sale and transfer between sea going vessels. Three vessels were intercepted by ICG ships, about 100 nautical miles west off Mumbai on 05 Feb 26, and through sustained rummaging, corroboration of electronic data onboard the suspect vessels and verification documents and interrogation of crew, ICG specialist boarding team established the chain of incidents and the modus-operandi of the criminals.

ICG tech-inclusive systems detected a Motor Tanker, conducting suspicious activity in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zones, prompting a digital investigation into the actions of the vessel. ICG further undertook data pattern analysis of other vessels closing in on the vessel, and identified two other vessels as possible suspects, involved in illicit transfer of oil based cargo at sea, evading significant duties owed to the coastal states, including India.

On 05 Feb 26, ICG specialist teams boarded the vessels and confirmed the accuracy of the digital evidence, leading to the apprehension of the vessels. The vessels are likely to be escorted to Mumbai for further investigation & handing over to Indian Customs and law enforcement agencies for further actions. The vessels were found to frequently change identity to evade law enforcement actions by coastal states. The vessel owners are based in other countries, as per initial investigations.

The operation, initiated through digital surveillance and enforced through the ever-expanding maritime presence of the Indian Coast Guard, once again establishes India as a net provider of maritime safety and enforcer of the international rules based order.

Commandant Amit Uniyal
Public Relations Officer
Indian Coast Guard Headquarters



