

Warning flare fired at Iranian patrol boat

By SANDEEP SINGH GREWAL

A US warship has fired a warning flare towards an Iranian patrol boat in the Gulf, in the latest naval encounter between the two countries.

In the incident on Monday, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps vessel tried to draw closer to the guided-missile destroyer *USS Mahan*, said Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet spokesman Lieutenant Ian McConnaughey.

"The *USS Mahan* had an unprofessional interaction with an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy vessel while transiting the international waters of the Arabian Gulf," he said.

"The Iranian vessel came within 1,000 metres of *Mahan*, closing the distance despite *Mahan* manoeuvring to open the distance between the two vessels.

"*Mahan* made several at-



■ The US Navy guided-missile destroyer

tempts to contact the Iranian vessel by bridge-to-bridge radio, issuing warning messages and twice sounding the internationally-recognised danger signal of five short blasts with the ship's whistle, as well as deploying a flare to determine the Iranian vessel's intentions."

Eventually the Iranian vessel opened the distance, steering a course away from the US warship.

US Navy officials in Bahrain said this is the seventh encounter this year with Iranian vessel.

Incidentally, in January *Mahan* fired warning shots at four incoming armed Iranian boats near the Strait of Hormuz.

Lt McConnaughey said with the latest incident the total number of encounters with Iranian naval forces this year reached seven.

"There were 35 unsafe and unprofessional interactions between US naval forces and Iranian naval forces last year and 23 in 2015."

The *GDN* reported in January that US Navy seized weap-

ons destined for Houthi rebels in Yemen on four separate occasions between September 2015 and March last year.

Among the weapons confiscated were rocket launchers, anti-tank missiles and other military grade equipment seized from vessels that set sail from Iran.

During a visit to Bahrain last year, US Secretary of State John Kerry warned that vessels smuggling Iranian weapons through Arabian waters were stoking tensions.

Firms urged to take risks

By LAALA KASHEF ALGHATA

RELUCTANCE of transport and logistics companies to take risks is "the root of all problems" facing the sector in Bahrain, according to a top adviser.

Despite government entities making "dramatic changes" in the past three years, private companies have not taken advantage or risks, said Economic Development Board (EDB) transport and logistics adviser Ralf Jahncke.

He added there were not enough calculated risks taken in the sector, which leads to stagnation.

"Reluctance of the private sector is the root of all problems," said Mr Jahncke, who is also TransCare president and chief executive.

"They are risk-averse – they want and hope for guarantees.

Logistics

"The entrepreneurship spirit, to take risk to do something, that's very under-developed.

"There are some people, but a very small number – the big majority hope that the money will come to them."

He was speaking to the *GDN* on the sidelines of the second annual GCC Logistics Conference, which is being held at The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain under the patronage of Transportation and Telecommunications Minister Kamal Ahmed and the German Embassy.

"It seems to be both the older and younger generation, I think it's a Bahraini culture thing," said Mr Jahncke.

"This is why the country loses opportunities.

"When I did an audit a few years ago, people told me that the government institutions do nothing, they don't provide the right climate, and they talked about the causeway troubles.

"Now we have the liberalised market, solved most of the causeway problems and are working on the rest.

"We have the fastest through-put of containers in the port; within three hours.

"Now, when I sit with the private sector, I say: guys, do something – this is your chance.

"But a lot of people still want to do it through the state and they want a monopoly.

"I realised that the problems they told me about a few years ago was simply finger-pointing."

He urged companies to push harder to improve the sector in the country.

"The state has done its task – it's not finished, but it's started to do what it needed to," said Mr Jahncke.

"The whole team, from us to the minister, the under-secretaries, and the staff – we pulled together.

"I'm the one who now says that the state has done 50 to 70 per cent of its work and as a Western European, I can tell you this has happened surprisingly fast.

"Now it's the time to take (that effort) and do something with it, to be an entrepreneur.

"We did a lot of initiation and yet people will still say they need things, all from the state.

"The private sector should take their responsibility and move forward, both in transport and logistics."

Since 2014 Bahrain has climbed more than 30 places on the world logistics list, from 68 to 31.

"However, we want to be in the top 20 in the worldwide logistics list," said Mr Jahncke.

"I want Mumtalakat to invest more in transport and logistics, too.

Alternative

"We have a lot of companies who are interested in Bahrain at the moment, and it takes time, but the fruits are beginning to show.

"We want to bring people in and have their headquarters here in Bahrain, not in Dubai.

"I don't mean to compete with Dubai, but to provide an alternative so that people aren't just depending on one place."

The conference, which will continue today, also discussed trends in contract logistics, global shipping trends and the impact on the GCC.

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