

## US and UK call for immediate release of MSC Aries seized by Iran



Official portrait of Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

**The US and UK have called for the immediate release of the container ship MSC Aries seized by Iran.**

Marcus Hand | Apr 14, 2024

Iranian Revolutionary Guards took control of the [MSC](#) chartered vessel in the Straits of Hormuz on 13 April. The ship was targeted for its Israeli links and is owned by Gortal Shipping, a finance company associated with Zodiac Maritime, controlled by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer.

UK Secretary of Defence Grant Shapps posted on social media platform X: "The seizure of the cargo ship MSC Aries by Iran is unacceptable and a blatant violation of international law. We call for the unconditional release of the ship and its crew without delay."

**Related:** [Iran seizes large container ship MSC Aries in Strait of Hormuz](#)

“We are working with partners to prevent escalation in the Middle East. Iran must cease their destabilising behaviour immediately.”

The seizure of the 15,000 teu MSC Aries came hours before Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in retaliation for an attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria on 1 April that killed seven revolutionary guards.

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Also posting on X White House National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson described the vessel seizure as an act of “piracy” by Iran and a “blatant violation of international law”.

“We strongly condemn the Iranian seizure of the Portuguese flagged, British-owned MSC Aries in international waters. The crew is comprised of Indian, Filipino, Pakistani, Russian & Estonian nationals.

“We call on Iran to release the vessel & its international crew immediately.”

The seizing of the container ship by Iranian forces was also condemned by the industry. Guy Platten, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping commented: “Iran’s seizure of the MSC Aries is a flagrant breach of international law and an assault on freedom of navigation. This reprehensible attack against a merchant ship once again places innocent seafarers on the front lines of geopolitical conflict.

“Our thoughts are with the 25 Seafarers who are now captives of Iran, and with the families who are now in fear of their loved ones’ safety. Iran must release the ship as a matter of urgency,” he added.

The seizure of the MSC Aries and the ratcheting up of tensions in the Middle East could see further disruption to shipping. The industry has already faced over six

months of attacks in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden from Houthi militia in Yemen resulting in the widescale rerouting of vessels via the Cape of Good Hope.

Xeneta Chief Analyst Peter Sand described the incident as 'extremely concerning' and threatened to put trade lanes in the Middle East at risk.

"We don't yet know the full details of the incident in the Strait of Hormuz, but any widening of the conflict which has already resulted in huge disruption to ocean freight services in the Red Sea region would be extremely concerning," Sand said.

"For example, Dubai is a regional hub for imports as well as sea-air corridors, with containers arriving by ocean via the Strait of Hormuz for onward travel by air to Europe and North America. If ships are impacted from sailing into the Arabian Gulf then the disruption would be considerable."

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