

# Splash

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### Hacker group claims to have knocked out comms on 116 Iranian vessels

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IRISL

Lab Dookhtegan, a hacker group, has claimed this week it has disrupted the communication networks of 116 ships belonging to Iran's top two shipping firms.

"In an unprecedented move, we successfully disrupted the communication network of two Iranian companies that, among various terrorist activities, are responsible for supplying munitions to Houthis," the group wrote on Telegram.

The attack, which the group says was timed to coincide with US military operations against the Iran-backed Yemeni Houthis, severed the ships' connections to each other, their ports, and external communication channels.

Fifty ships belonging to National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) and 66 ships belonging to Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) were targeted.

Lab Dookhtegan said full restoration of the affected systems could take weeks.

The hackers said the attack was the “tip of the iceberg,” with further operations planned.

“Communication devices are the bottleneck of maritime vessels,” commented Cydome, a maritime security specialist analysing this week’s fleet-wide attacks on Iranian ships. “This makes the ship’s communication device a single point of failure, and if a malicious actor hacks the communication device (VSAT or other), it can take complete control over all communications of the vessel and even spread out to the IT and OT systems.”

Cydome said the fact that malware or malicious commands were delivered to 116 vessels simultaneously indicates a high degree of automation and coordination in the attack.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre reported many vessels experiencing GPS interference in the Strait of Hormuz last week, with disruptions lasting several hours, affecting navigation systems and requiring vessels to rely on backup methods.

Yesterday saw a fourth round of sanctions announced in Washington DC targeting Iranian oil sales since Donald Trump returned to power, ordering a campaign of maximum pressure on Iran.

Iran exports are estimated to have declined to 1.35m barrels per day on average during January and February, as compared to their 2024 average of 1.70m barrels per day. There are increasing reports of volumes lifting from Iran but facing extended storage time in Southeast Asia as the pool of buyers and ships available has tightened.