

Crew of hijacked tanker safe, no word on cargo, says navy chief
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All crew on board the hijacked petrol tanker MT Orkim Harmony, which was reported missing on June 12, are alive and unharmed, said navy chief Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Jaafar today, after the navy managed to establish contact with the ship's captain.

Aziz said Malaysian navy vessel KD Terengganu was now in communication with the ship, which was earlier detected in Cambodian waters.

"The crew are all safe and unharmed. KD Terengganu is in communication with the ship's captain," said Abdul Aziz in a text message to The Malaysian Insider.

However, he said it was too early to tell if the cargo of 6,000 tonnes of RON95 petrol was intact, as the navy had yet to approach the tanker.

It is learnt that the Malaysian navy has contacted the authorities in Thailand and Cambodia to get the green light to approach the tanker.

Online portal Astro Awani earlier today reported that the tanker was spotted at 3.45pm yesterday by Australian's anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft P-3C Orion at the 210 nautical miles off Pulau Redang in the Siamese Bay (Teluk Siam).

It quoted Naval Region 1 Commander Rear Admiral Datuk Azhari AbdulRashid as saying that the vessel had been repainted and its name changed from Orkim Harmony to Kim Harmon to avoid detection.

The tanker was reported missing at 8.57 pm last Thursday while on its way to Kuantan Port from Malacca.

MT Orkim Harmony, owned by Magna Meridian Sdn Bhd, was carrying 6,000 tonnes of petrol worth RM21 million and a crew of 22 comprising 16 Malaysians, five Indonesians and a Myanmar, when it lost contact.

The South China Sea is deemed a hotbed for piracy, and the International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre has issued warnings to vessels sailing the area. – June 18, 2015.

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