

Gibraltar releases Iran-operated tanker despite U.S. pressure



London, August 16 (RHC)-- Gibraltar's government has reportedly released an Iranian-operated supertanker, which was seized by British marines in the Strait of Gibraltar on July 4, despite pressure from the United States for the vessel's continued detainment.

"Authorities in Gibraltar have released the Iranian supertanker Grace 1, which was seized on July 4 on suspicion it was shipping 2.1 million barrels of crude oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions," Reuters quoted the Gibraltar Chronicle as reporting on Thursday.

According to the report, the chief justice of Gibraltar's supreme court, Anthony Dudley, said there was no U.S. application currently before the court. The Gibraltar Chronicle also claimed that the decision to release the Grace 1 tanker came after receiving formal written assurances from the Iranian government that it would not discharge its cargo in Syria. Iran has strictly rejected claims that the vessel was ever carrying crude to the Arab country.

Spain's Foreign Ministry reported after the incident that the UK had seized the vessel at the request of the US, which has been trying to trouble Iran's international oil vessels as part of its campaign of economic pressure against the Islamic Republic.

Earlier on Thursday, Gibraltar said that the U.S. had applied to seize the Iranian-operated oil tanker after British media reported that the vessel's release was imminent following a set of diplomatic exchanges

between Tehran and London.

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