

National Press Club unaware that Iranian aid ship bound for Gaza off-loaded cargo in Beirut

NPC and the U.S. State Department caught off guard believing that Iranian aid ship bound for Gaza, which off-loaded its cargo in Beirut, transferring it to the Lebanese Red Crescent Society, was in Cyprus

By Edward Campbell

Missoula, Feb. 5 (Al-Masakin)—Members to the National Press Club, along with the State Department, at the morning press conference Feb. 4, mistakenly believed that the aid ship sent by Iran to Gaza was detained in Cyprus when the Associated Press along with Iran's Press TV reported Jan. 29 that the ship had docked in Beirut.

“Admiral Mullen last week said yes, they kind of pulled over this ship, they let it go cause they didn't think it had legal – that it had legal rights, but it's still being basically held in Cyprus,” a member of the press was quoted as inquiring Feb. 4.

“Well, look, in terms of the ship and where it is and all of that, I really just don't have that kind of information available at this point,” acting press secretary Robert Wood replied.

Admiral Mike Mullen said Jan. 27 that an Iranian ship bearing a Cypriot flag was



intercepted in the Red Sea and that that ship was carrying arms to Gaza. That it was turned away and was expected to dock in Syria.



Thu Jan 29, 1:53 PM ET An Iranian ship loaded with medicine, food and clothing for Gaza, is seen preparing to dock at Beirut's sea port, Lebanon, on Thursday Jan. 29, 2009. The ship failed to go to Gaza directly. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

Al-Masakin News Agency published Jan. 29 photographs taken by the recipient of Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) 2008 Press Freedom Award Bilal Hussein (AP), one of five honored with that award in 2008, and Press TV's detailed account indicating that the same ship, with great fanfare, had actually docked at the port of Beirut.

Moreover, the Iranian state news agency Fars reported today that the Iranian ship off-loaded in Beirut and transferred its cargo to the Lebanese Red Crescent Society which has accepted the responsibility to deliver the aid to Gaza.

Al-Masakin News Agency finds it rather unusual that an organization which prides itself on accuracy in media, and with such prestige, as the National Press Club could simply lose track not only of where this ship was, but evidently neglected to undertake any sort of journalistic investigation as to its true contents.

The assertion made by Admiral Mullen that the ship contained arms was not seriously

disputed in the western press even after the State Department made it clear Feb. 4 that they knew neither whether the ship contained aid or arms, nor where the ship went.

Evidently the National Press Club is not particularly interested in the fact that a humanitarian aid package was turned away in international waters by an American warship which had no lawful authority to do so. The fact that the State Department did not know where a ship alleged to have been laden with Iranian arms had gone to is absurd, that the State Department made no serious inquiry into the ships contents tends to signify that the ship was simply turned away because it was Iranian, not because it was laden with arms.

The fact that Fars News Agency has claimed that the ship was intercepted not by an American warship but by an Israeli ship of war adds interest to this puzzle. Either the facts as reported in the media are at a great variance with the facts on the ground, or there was more than one ship.

Indeed there have been several humanitarian aid ships bound for Gaza including the SS Dignity which was rammed by an Israeli ship Dec. 30, 2008, the Spirit of Humanity turned away by Israel Jan. 15, the Lebanese 'Brotherhood' ship diverted to Ashdod today. In addition to these vessels there have been at least seven other attempts to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza in recent weeks, three of them successful. Israel began blockading humanitarian vessels bound for Gaza on Nov. 8, 2008.

EHC/EHC

Al-Masakin News Agency
<http://almasakinnewsagency.wordpress.com/>