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DONT GIVE UP THE SHIP

Tue, Jan 19, 2016

So; What REALLY did happen?

The account of two U. S. Navy vessels being seized by the Iranian navy earlier this week seems completely implausible.

No part of it makes any sense.

The story is that two river patrol boats – bristling modern-day incarnations of the Vietnam swift boats – were navigating south from Kuwait to Bahrain. At some point, via some means, the two boats, with their contingent of five sailors each, surrendered to the Iranians.

Two accounts have been offered as to how that happened. The first was that one of the vessels lost its engine and that they both then drifted into Iranian waters. The other was that the two boats had been operating fine, but inadvertently navigated into Iranian territory.

Simply put, they got lost.

Neither account seems possible.

First off, if one of the boats broke down, and the sailor aboard trained to tend the engine couldn't fix it, the other boat would merely take it in tow and they would proceed on their way. That is not a novel maritime undertaking.

The second scenario – oops, we got lost – is even less likely. It turns out that navigation and navigation equipment are kind of a high priority for the Navy. Boats don't get lost. Highly technical navigation equipment on both boats would have told crew members exactly where they were.

And in the unlikely event that both boats lost all electronic navigational equipment, and the compasses lost track of magnetic north, there is the simple fact that sailing from Kuwait to Bahrain pretty much involves nothing more complex than keeping the shore on your starboard side. And should you lose sight of shore, and can remember that the map has safety to the west and danger to the east, you'd think that the position of the sun in the sky or the fact that prevailing winds in the Persian Gulf in the winter are northwesterly, would somehow have allowed our sailors to find the Saudi shoreline instead of Iranian waters.

And all of that presumes that these two boats were operating alone in the open seas, which they presumably were not. There is, in fact, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier battle group operating in the Persian Gulf.

The USS Harry S Truman owns the Persian Gulf these days, and the significant American military presence in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – lands immediately proximate to the waters where our sailors were operating – makes us the biggest dog on the block.

And we've got radar and helicopters and airplanes and stuff like that.

And if an American vessel breaks down at sea, or strays from course, under those operational conditions, there are a lot of American assets that would both notice the problem and be able to offer relief.

Yet no one did.

We're supposed to believe nobody radioed a couple of inexplicably lost boats to ask where they were going? When one of them supposedly broke down, a carrier battle group had no means to come to their assistance?

That makes no sense.

It's completely unbelievable.

So is the apparent conduct of the sailors in the face of a supposed challenge by the Iranian military.

If one of the vessels was disabled, as is claimed, and hostile craft are approaching, bringing with them the prospect of capture and captivity, don't you put all 10 sailors on the able boat, sink the disabled boat, and race the bad guys back to international waters?

From the Iranian video, it looks like two or three bass boats and four guys in mismatched uniforms, with a couple of AK's, captured two far-larger and better-armed American boats, both of which were bristling with mounted machine guns.

Here's a fact: When you're kneeling on the deck of your own boat, with your hands clasped behind your head, and some guy's shouting at you in terrorist language, things didn't go right.

And yet, that's exactly what supposedly happened here. Ten American sailors, successors to Captain James Lawrence, are on their knees next to their unfired guns, in the face of a smaller and less well-armed opponent – with little American flags snapping in the breeze.

This is not the stuff of Commodore Perry and Admiral Farragut.

And you wonder whose call it was.

How far up the chain of command did they have to go to find the cowardly lion who ordered this genuflection before a bunch of savages? Did this get bounced all the way to the Pentagon, or the Situation Room? Which secretary of what made the decision not to put a squadron of naval aviators above those two boats to keep the camel jockeys at bay?

It is shameful, a worldwide embarrassment for the nation and the Navy.

And it is topped off by an obsequious videotaped apology, and pictures of our sailors, captive in hostile hands, the female with a towel over her head.

The President can ignore this.

But we can't.

We got pantsed. We got humiliated. We showed either weakness or incompetence. And unfortunately either one only invites aggression against us.

It is inconceivable that you could find 10 Americans willing to surrender themselves and their equipment without a fight. It is not plausible that any young man or woman entering into the naval service would willingly kneel on the deck of a combat-capable ship.

Somebody told them to give up.

And that somebody, and the philosophy he represents, will be the death of us.