U.S. Suspends Tanker Escort Operation

OW200034 Beijing XINHUA in English 0007 GMT 20 Apr 88

[Text] Cairo, April 19 (XINHUA)—U.S. Navy has temporarily suspended escort operations for American-flagged Kuwaiti tankers as Iran continued today its attacks on commercial ships and more mines have been spotted in the Gulf.

According to reports from Manama, Bahrain, quoting sources close to the Kuwait oil tanker company today, the U.S. Navy has stopped the escorts until further notice.

Meanwhile, Iranian gunboats today attacked two tankers entering the Strait of Hormuz, although U.S. President Ronald Reagan announced that the situation in the Gulf was quieter today following U.S. warships destroying two Iranian oil platforms in the Gulf Monday.

According to Gulf shipping sources, one of the ships attacked today was the 12,215-ton "FAL-5" of the United Arab Emirates which was set ablaze in the attack and the crew members were rescued by Omani coast-guard patrol boats.

Another ship attacked was "Meltem" which flew the Bahamas flag.

A French warship today spotted three mines in the central part of the Gulf where shipping had previously been believed to be safe from mines.

Commericial ships have been advised not to sail in the troubled waters in the Gulf in view of the latest clashes between U.S. and Iranian warships, Gulf shipping sources said.