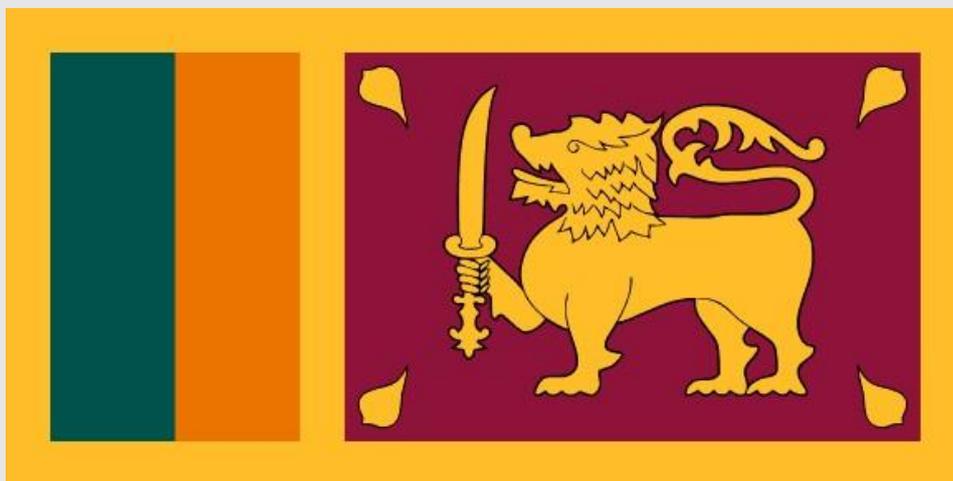


**THREAT LEVEL: HIGH**

# GSOC Situational Update

Event:	Sri Lanka - Iranian vessel targeted by US as GCC conflict widens – 04 March 2026		
Location:	40 nautical miles (70km) off Galle, southern Sri Lanka		
Date:	04 March 2026	Time:	0600hrs – 0700hrs GMT



## Information

- According to United States (US) Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, a US submarine has sunk the Iranian warship IRIS Dena with a torpedo in international waters off Sri Lanka's coast.
- The incident occurred just outside of the country's territorial waters, approximately 40 nautical miles off Galle, between 0600hrs and 0700hrs GMT.
- The Sri Lankan government has confirmed that it has recovered several bodies and rescued 32 wounded sailors as part of a search and rescue operation. Ships and air force planes were involved in the rescue mission. The ship had completely sunk by the time a rescue ship reached the area within an hour, leaving only an oil patch on the surface.
- At least 80 people are believed to have been killed in the strike out of a total of 180 crew members on board.
- The Iranian frigate was returning after participating in the 2026 International Fleet Review between 18 and 25 February 2026 in eastern India's coastal city of Vishakapatnam.
- An Iranian embassy official in Colombo has said that two officers have been sent to Galle to speak with survivors to get a sense of what happened on the ship. Iran has not yet commented on the sinking.

**THREAT LEVEL: HIGH**

# GSOC Situational Update

- Both Sri Lanka's navy and air force have said that they will not release footage of the rescue because it involved the military of another state. However, declassified footage released by the US Department of War has shown the moment the torpedo exploded into the ship, lifting part of the vessel out of the water.
- Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies have increased security measures outside Galle hospital, where the wounded Iranians are being treated.
- A senior Sri Lankan defence source has said that it appeared the vessel's defence and counterattack capabilities were disabled by electromagnetic means before the attack.

## Assessment

- The warship's sinking occurred as the US and Israel conducted airstrikes on Iran for a fifth day after killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and nearly 800 other people.
- The incident demonstrates Washington's preparedness to target Iranian assets outside of the Middle East, broadening the scale of the conflict as far as the Indian Ocean.
- Sri Lanka's response demonstrated the country's commitment to honour its maritime obligations as a signatory to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue. The country has remained neutral and repeatedly urged dialogue to resolve the conflict.
- The attack constitutes another strategic blow for Iran, as well as an escalation in hostilities. It is the first attack to take place outside the Middle East since the war began on 28 February 2026.
- The IRIS Dena was the newest frigate in the Iranian naval fleet and was equipped with surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles, cannons, machine guns, and torpedo launchers. Its loss will weaken Tehran's naval capabilities and is likely to increase concerns regarding its other remaining vessels, which could be targeted regardless of their location.
- Sri Lankan Navy Spokesperson Buddhika Sampath has said that rescue efforts were ongoing and that the main focus of the operation was to "help survivors". As such, more bodies and wounded individuals may be recovered.
- The apparent use of electromagnetic disruptions by the US submarine is illustrative of the technological superiority of US naval assets compared with those of Iran. This advantage is likely to prove key in determining the outcome of the war.
- It is possible that Tehran will launch another barrage of attacks against targets across the Middle East in retaliation for the incident, potentially leading to even further escalation.
- The US military claims to have destroyed 17 Iranian vessels, outlining its objective of sinking "the entire navy". Hesgeth has said: "The Iranian air force is no more. The Iranian navy rests at the bottom of the Persian Gulf". While his comments are hyperbolic, the impact of the war on Iran's military must not be underestimated.





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