



Shadow Fleet of Oil Tankers

Published On: 24-01-2026

In News: The United States has intensified a **military-led crackdown** on the global “**shadow fleet**” transporting sanctioned crude from **Russia, Iran, and Venezuela**.

Shadow Fleet: A network of **3,000+ vessels** that evade Western sanctions using:

- o **AIS switch-off** (Automatic Identification System)
- o **GNSS spoofing**
- o **False flags & frequent re-flagging**
- o **Opaque ownership / shell companies**

Dark Fleet:

- o Highest-risk vessels
- o Deliberately conceal activity (AIS-off, GNSS spoofing)
- o Use **covert ship-to-ship transfers**
- o Often directly sanctioned

Grey Fleet:

- o Not necessarily sanctioned
- o Shows risk indicators: **irregular routes, rapid ownership changes**
- o Designed to **appear compliant**
- o Emerged post **Russia–Ukraine war**

Regulatory Loopholes: Many vessels registered in **lax-oversight jurisdictions** such as:

- o Panama, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Gabon, Cook Islands
- o **Mongolia (landlocked)**

Risks:

- o Undermines **international sanctions regime**
- o High **environmental & maritime safety risks** due to old, poorly insured vessels

India Link:

- oGatik Ship Management (Mumbai-based) was a major transporter of Russian crude (2022–23)
- oManaged a fleet worth ~**USD 1.5 billion** before restructuring under scrutiny