

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20231127			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 27/11/2023				



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Source:

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A. Situation

On the 25th of November, a Liberia-flagged, chemicals/products tanker, CENTRAL PARK, was threatened offshore Hodeida, Yemen. The vessel's group owner and manager were listed as Zodiac Maritime, a UK-based Israeli-affiliated company. The vessel was transiting southbound through the southern Red Sea at the time and was instructed by Ansar Allah ("the Houthis") to head for Hodeida, where the Houthis are holding the seized Israeli-affiliated GALAXY LEADER. If they did not divert to Hodeida, the Houthis threatened to "attack" the vessel. The US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, USS THOMAS HUDNER, advised the tanker to ignore the Houthi instructions and to continue its voyage southbound. The tanker was subsequently boarded by five suspects southwest of Aden, Yemen. The assailants departed after naval intervention by the US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, USS MASON, and other international maritime and aerial assets. The crew was able to retreat to the citadel, remaining safe, and it appeared the suspects were unable to take full control of the tanker. After disembarking the vessel, the five suspects were detained by the US Navy. Shortly after, the US Central Command reported that the tanker and destroyer were targeted by two ballistic missiles launched by the Houthis in Yemen. The US Navy stated the missiles fell short and did not impede the two vessels.

B. Threat Update

Israel-affiliated merchant shipping is at heightened risk. Israel-affiliated means vessels that are flagged Israeli or owned/managed by an Israel-owned or -based company. This definition extends to vessels flagged, owned, or managed as defined above within the past year. This is because Iran has mistakenly targeted vessels before.

Following the outbreak of conflict in Israel/Gaza, the Houthis launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and ballistic missiles towards Israeli territory. On the 14th of November, the leader of the Houthis stated that they would target Israeli shipping in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. On the 19th of November, a Bahamas-flagged, Israeli-linked, vehicle carrier was seized on its voyage to India in the southern Red Sea offshore Hodeida. Ambrey assesses that boarding of the CENTRAL PARK was preceded by an approach on a South Korean-owned bulk carrier southwest of Aden. Two skiffs with eight people aboard closed to within 0.5M and the occupants were wearing military fatigues. The bulk carrier's hull was the same colour as the CENTRAL PARK's. Ambrey assessed this group was searching for the CENTRAL PARK and posed no threat to the bulk carrier once correctly identified. Ambrey was able to confirm the skiffs were not Yemeni Coast Guard.

Iran also poses a direct threat to Israeli shipping. On the night of the 23rd/24th of November, a Malta-flagged, Israel-affiliated, container ship was struck by a Shahed-type UAV in the Arabian Sea. Thus, at least three Israel-linked merchant vessels have come under attack and several others have been disrupted due to precautionary measures.

In the past, the Houthis have used UAVs to strike vessels in ports and have used remote-controlled waterborne improvised explosive devices (RC-WIEBs) and small boats. The seizure of the GALAXY LEADER was the first incident involving the Houthis utilising a helicopter to seize a vessel.

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Sequence of events related to the Houthis in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

C. Mitigation

Ambrey advises Company Security Officers to assess whether their vessel was owned or managed by an Israel-affiliated company within the last year. If the vessel is, it would be advised to:

- **Assess the vessel's route**, particularly proximity to Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iranian Navy assets, and Houthi-controlled sites. It is advised to consider the predictability of the route.
- **Identify the vessel's planned ETA** to those sites, and the position relative to other potential targets. A schedule adjustment might be recommended. The use of UAS in direct attack is deliberate and intelligence-led. Avoid predictable routing behaviour. Adjust routing, even by small margins, and avoid contested waters and higher risk areas.
- It is advised to **consider the electronic signals policy**, including information and minimisation days before entry to the Red Sea, the Bab el Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.
- **Bridge teams must be briefed** and practiced on how to handle maritime harassment, including pre-prepared responses. If the vessel is exposed to an increased level of risk to UAS attack on a particular voyage, or a particular passage of that voyage, manning levels on the bridge should be kept to a minimum for the duration of the increased risk.
- **Evasive manoeuvres** and propulsion should be tested before entering the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.
- The merchant vessel is **hardened according to Best Management Practices** to delay boarding and slow access to crew areas and control systems onboard the vessel.
- **Crew members should be briefed** on what to do in the event of boarding, including a policy on whether to disable the vessel's navigation in busy shipping areas and the designation of a hardened Citadel/Safe Muster Point with control of fire suppression systems and independent communications systems.
- Crew are advised where possible, **to adopt ballistic protection measures**. Stand-off bar/cage/slat solutions are available and could help mitigate risk to key areas. Other measures include the designation of Safe Muster Points, and the minimisation of crew movements on deck, and in areas with external walls.

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- **Emergency communications** in the event of harassment, boarding, or an attack are documented and practised. These should include military liaison, and designated crisis response coordinators, such as Ambrey. These can be added to the Ship Security Alert System emergency broadcast recipients.
- **Vessels should proceed with increased awareness** as to the procedure for communicating with authorities, and military asset communications, including UKMTO, IMSC, EUNAVFOR, and independently deployed assets.
- **Private Maritime Security Teams are advised to not escalate** RUF, but they are advised to enhance Best Management Practices, by improvising measures, running drills, and supporting with lookouts and advice to the bridge team.
- Upon UAV threat careful consideration must be given to the location of a **UAS safe muster point**, which will differ from a surface threat.

D. Contact Information

- **Ambrey:** +44 203 503 0320, intelligence@ambrey.com. Ambrey advisories are available to Sentinel subscribers and digital operations support is available through the Guardian service. Contact your Account Manager for further information.
- **Fifth Fleet Battle Watch:** + 973-1785-3879, and email details to: cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil.
- **Fifth Fleet NCAGS:** cusnc.ncags_bw@me.navy.mil.
- **IMSC:** m-ba-imsc-bwc@us.navy.mil or +973-1785-8412/8192/8193.
- **UKMTO:** watchkeepers@ukmto.org or +44 (0) 2392 222060. UKMTO advisories and warnings are available at <https://www.ukmto.org/>.
- **U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center:** +1-800-424-8802.
- **USCG NAVCEN:** www.navcen.uscg.gov/contact/gps-problem-report or +1-703-313-5900.

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