

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20240112			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 12/01/2024				



AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – US and UK strikes against Houthi military targets

Source:

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A. Executive Summary

- 11th – 12th January 2024: The US and UK conducted airstrikes on Houthi military targets with the support of Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands.
- 12th January 2024: A new joint statement on strikes against Houthi military targets was issued by the US, UK, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea.
- Though the Houthi capability is likely to have been significantly degraded, Ambrey assesses that attacks by the Houthis on merchant shipping are highly likely to continue and broaden.
- **It is advised to engage Private Armed Security Teams (PASTs) in the Red Sea no further south than the Lloyd’s Joint War Committee’s boundary at 18N.**

B. Situation

On the night of the 11th to 12th of January 2024, the US and UK conducted airstrikes on Houthi military targets in Yemen. US and UK statements said the airstrikes had been conducted by US and UK militaries with the support of Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands. On the 12th of January, the governments of the US, UK, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea issued a joint statement on strikes against Houthi military targets. This was the largest number of strikes in the Red Sea region since the Houthis started to target Israeli territory and affiliated merchant shipping. The Houthis warned: “Whoever wants to get involved and attack our dear people and target the naval forces is risking his navigation and commercial ships.”

C. Threat Update

The Houthis have threatened to target Israel-affiliated shipping since the 19th of November 2023. By the 11th of January 2024, Ambrey had verified that the Houthis had threatened or attacked 19 merchant vessels. Nine merchant vessels reported damage, and one merchant vessel was seized. These merchant vessels were affiliated with Israel through ownership, management, or trade. In some cases, their affiliation had expired, and in one case, a vessel was damaged by accident. Following the US and UK strikes on Houthi military targets, Ambrey assessed it likely that the Houthis would broaden their targets to include those who carried out the strikes and those who supported the strikes. Following the action, some merchant shipping continued to transit the southern Red Sea without any reported incidents. However, coalition military forces and the international shipping association BIMCO recommended shipping companies avoid the southern Red Sea and a western part of the Gulf of Aden. At the time of writing, several shipping companies had heeded this advice. Ambrey assessed the Houthi threat area to extend further given their military capabilities. The threat was expected to last for several days at least.

D. Mitigation

Ambrey strongly advises conducting a thorough pre-voyage check of the vessel’s affiliations with Israel and those involved in strikes on Houthi military targets.

Ambrey is adjusting its Vessel Borne Armoury (VBA) locations to enable clients to engage PASTs throughout the Lloyd’s Joint War Committee’s Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean listed area, and

Ambrey is creating “secure drifting locations” for shipping companies that wish to pause their voyages.

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Ambrey strongly advises vessels to consider the following:

- **PAST:** These remain effective provided their team size and weapons composition are calibrated to the threat. Teams may also aid with watchkeeping and drilling crew members to mitigate risks. Companies may wish to review PAST RUF accordingly.
- **Route assessments:** 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.
- **Electronic signals policy:** It is advised that high risk merchant vessels consider the broadcasts, including information and minimisation days before entry to the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden.
- **Communications preparations:** Bridge teams must be briefed and practiced on how to handle maritime harassment, including pre-prepared responses.
- Evasive manoeuvres (steering and propulsion) should be tested before entering the region.
- **Vessel hardening:** According to Best Management Practices, to delay boarding and slow access to crew areas and control systems onboard the vessel. Crew are advised 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. Even vessels without an assessed heightened risk should consider this due to the risk of collateral damage.
- **Incident procedures:** 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. The criticality of a strong and properly equipped Citadel cannot be overstated. It can give responders the time to come to the crew's aid.
- Emergency communications in the event of harassment, boarding, or an attack should be documented and practiced. 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 of military asset communications, including UKMTO, IMSC, EUNAVFOR, Operation Prosperity Guardian, and independently deployed.

E. 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-ims-c-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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