

Type:	Threat	Version:	6.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20240115			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT UPDATE – 15/01/2024				



AMBREY THREAT UPDATE – Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden

Source:

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The Ambrey Threat Circular dated 12th of January 2024 remains active.

A. Executive Summary

- The main threat to merchant shipping remains targeted and linked to affiliation.
- If Israel, US, or UK-affiliated, it is advised to avoid transits through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden where possible at present.
- If affiliated with Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, or the Republic of Korea, it is advised to proceed with caution, and with all necessary security measures.
- The Houthis are assessed to retain capability throughout the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

B. Affiliations with heightened risk

Ambrey has grouped affiliations into four:

1. First tier: Israel. The Houthis have targeted Israel-affiliated shipping since the 19th of November 2023 as part of its response to the Israel-Gaza conflict. Ambrey assesses that the risk to merchant shipping affiliated through flag, ownership, operatorship, management, and trade is heightened.
2. Second tier: The US, and the UK. Ambrey assesses that the risk to merchant shipping affiliated through flag, ownership, operatorship, management, and trade is heightened. The US and UK merchant shipping was assessed to be at heightened risk following their strikes on Houthi military targets beginning 23:30 UTC 11th January 2024.
3. Third tier: Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands. Following the US and UK strikes on Houthi military targets, the US and UK issued statements that associated these States with the action. It is assessed that merchant shipping affiliated directly through flag, ownership, operatorship, or management could be at heightened risk.
4. Fourth tier: Denmark, Germany, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. Also following the US and US strikes on Houthi military targets, on the 11th of January a Joint Statement was issued with these countries. It is also assessed that merchant shipping affiliated directly through flag, ownership, operatorship, or management could be at heightened risk.

It should be noted that the Houthis have mistakenly targeted vessels using outdated information. This assessment will be reviewed after each incident, following diplomatic statements, and military operations.

At this time, those States participating in Operation Prosperity Guardian were not assessed to be at heightened risk.

C. Trade update

As of the morning of 15th of January 2024, since the US and UK strikes on Houthi military targets at 23:30 UTC on the 11th of January 2024:

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- One first tier merchant vessel transited the southern Red Sea. This switched off AIS transmissions during the transit.
- One second tier merchant vessel transited the southern Red Sea. The vessel was already in the area during the US and UK strikes. Following the strikes, a missile impacted the water within 400-500 metres from a UK-affiliated merchant vessel, and another missile reportedly hit a US-affiliated vessel, both in the Gulf of Aden.
- Four third tier merchant vessels transited the southern Red Sea. There were no tankers or gas carriers associated with this tier.
- Seven fourth tier merchant vessels transited the southern Red Sea. This included a variety of vessel types, including tankers, container ships and bulk carriers. One of these merchant vessels reported seeing an explosion, which US Central Command stated was an anti-ship cruise missile targeting the US Arleigh Burke-class destroyer LABOON.

Notes on the data:

- This data was subject to AIS availability. Some higher-risk vessels have been switching off AIS transmissions days before reaching the Red Sea.
- The affiliation was only assessed on current listed affiliation through flag, ownership, operatorship, or management. It was not based on historic affiliation.
- The affiliation was assessed using registered domiciles *and* company ownership. Some were assessed to have stronger affiliations with merchant shipping that has not been associated with Israel, the US, or the UK, including: the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

D. Next steps

Ambrey recommends:

- Company Security Officers assess their fleet’s affiliations with the four tiers.
- Merchant shipping with no or low affiliations are advised to transit with appropriate mitigations.
- Merchant shipping with moderate to high affiliations should take advice on whether to proceed based on a vessel- and voyage-specific risk assessment, and the provision of mitigation measures advised in Ambrey’s Threat Circular dated the 12th of January 2024.

On 15th of January 2024, the US Naval Forces Central Command stated:

- “The operational pause has ended, and Industry Round Table was advised. However, the southern Red Sea from 12-16N remains high risk. Companies are advised to continue to use best practices and should transit the area using caution. If vessels choose not to transit, the safer areas remain north of 18N or east of 46E.”

On the 14th of January 2024, the international shipping association BIMCO stated:

- “BIMCO recommends operators continue to consider avoiding the area. The security situation in the area has not changed since the coalition’s attacks against Houthi positions.”

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.

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- 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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