

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20240409			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 09/04/2024				



AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – HOUTHIS CLAIM OPERATION IN INDIAN OCEAN

Source:

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The following reports remain active:

Ambrey Threat Circulars dated 12th of January, 2nd of February, 12th of February, 7th of March and 15th of March 2024 remain active.

A. Executive Summary

- On the 7th of April, the Houthis claimed to have targeted a merchant vessel in the Indian Ocean.
- Other vessels owned by the same company have been targeted before, due to its Israeli trade.
- The Houthis are assessed to possess the capability to reach the vessel’s location, operating between Mombasa, Kenya, and Mogadishu, Somalia.
- Though the Houthis have stated they will target Israel affiliations in the extended area, they have blamed the Americans and British for the extension of their operations – a targeting of American and British-owned shipping is therefore assessed to remain within the Houthi target profile in the extended area.
- Vessels transiting the Indian Ocean should conduct thorough affiliation checks.
- At-risk vessels and their onshore personnel are advised to prepare to respond to intelligence or security events by implementing pre-agreed mitigation measures.

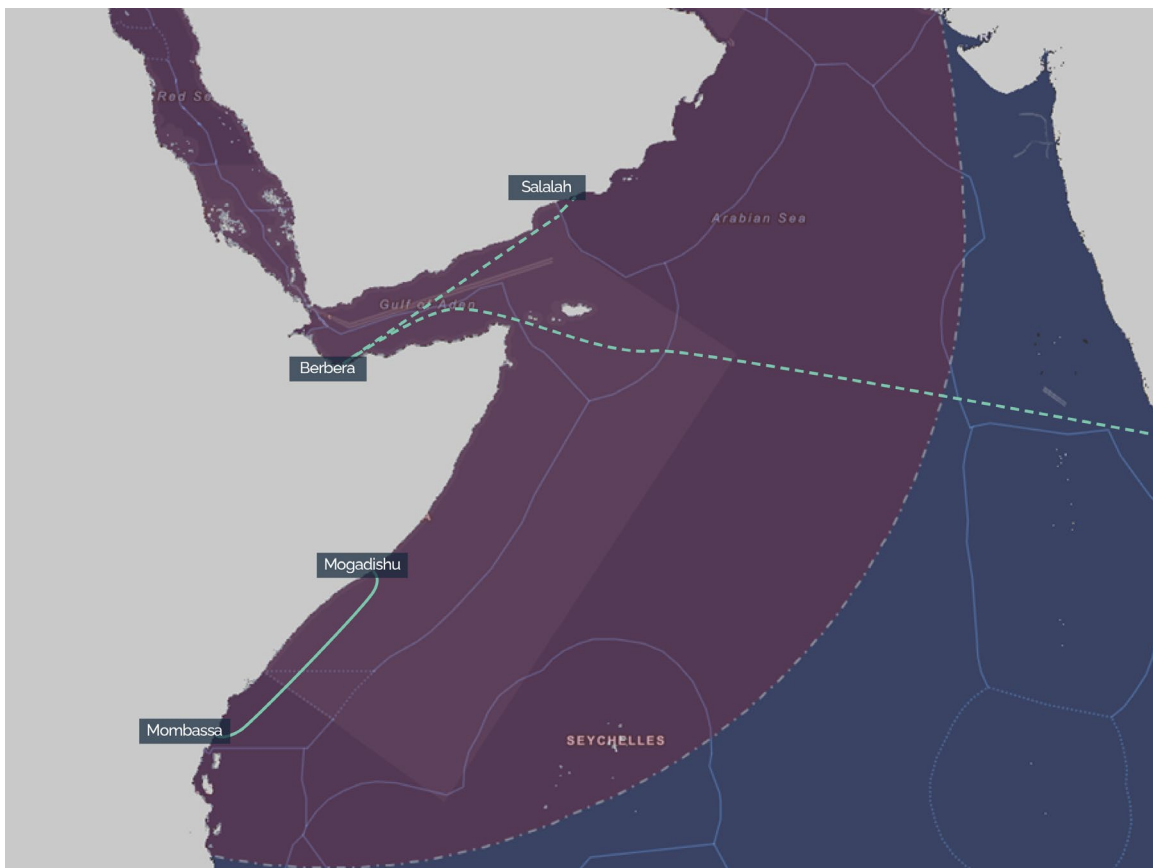
B. Situation

On the 15th of March 2024, the Houthis threatened to target Israel-affiliated shipping in the Indian Ocean to disrupt the flow of trade around the Cape Good of Hope (COGH). An increasing number of vessels have transited around the COGH instead of through the Suez Canal to avoid the Houthi threat. This has led to a reduction in available targets. On the 7th of April, the Houthis claimed to have targeted three merchant vessels. The Houthi spokesperson characterised one as a “British” vessel in the Red Sea. They characterised the others as “headed to the ports of occupied Palestine”, which is how the Houthis refer to Israel. One of these merchant vessels was in the Indian Ocean, and the other was in the Arabian Sea. The Red Sea incident has been publicly acknowledged and reported. At the time of writing, the other events, concerning a different owner/operator, in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea had not. The vessel allegedly targeted in the Indian Ocean was operating between Mombasa and Mogadishu. This was the first Houthi claim to target a vessel in the Indian Ocean. The vessel allegedly targeted in the Arabian Sea transited between Colombo, Sri Lanka; Berbera, Somalia; and Salalah, Oman. At the time of writing, the owner/operator (same company) had not published an acknowledgment, and no reporting body had issued a public report for either of the Indian Ocean or Arabian Sea events. Contrary to the Houthi statement, neither vessel was headed to Israel. However, the Houthis have used similar language before when targeting the same company. This was due to the company’s trade with Israel and cooperation with Israel-affiliated companies.

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C. Threat Update

The threat remains unchanged from previous circulars. The Houthis continue to target Israel-affiliated, US-, and UK-owned vessels in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Ambrey’s analysis indicates that they have targeted at least 55 merchant vessels with these affiliations, and 1 merchant vessel accidentally. Of the 55 with affiliations, 45 were identified as ‘current’ at the time of the attack, and 10 merchant vessels bore older affiliations, where the Houthi information was outdated. The Houthis are assessed to be capable of targeting merchant shipping in a considerably wider area. This could be direct, or by claiming responsibility for an Iranian attack. The Houthis’ claim to target a vessel in the Indian Ocean aligns with their stated target profile and their capability. Here, in the extended operations area, the Houthis have threatened to target Israel-affiliated shipping only. However, the majority of directly affiliated Israeli shipping continues to avoid the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) range from Houthi-controlled areas (illustrated below). A reduced availability of targets means that Ambrey assesses an extension of the target profile to the US- and UK-owned shipping to be likely. Crew members and onshore personnel should prepare to implement recommended mitigation measures immediately, should the vessel encounter UAV or missile activity during its voyage.



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D. Mitigation

Ambrey recommends a thorough affiliation check as part of a transit risk assessment is performed for all Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Arabian/Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean voyages. This is being performed as a matter of course for all Ambrey tasks.

Vessels assessed to be at high risk are advised to re-consider their voyage, which could include re-routing.

Note that the Houthi target profile could change during a voyage. This should be regularly checked and managed with an intelligence provider.

AIS transmissions and other signal emissions ought to be immediately stopped if UAV/missile activity is encountered. Irregular and frequent course and speed alterations also are assessed to reduce the likelihood of damage.

Companies should be prepared to make decisions quickly in the event of being targeted. They should practice Crisis Management responses to likely scenarios with all relevant stakeholders.

All deck movements should be halted where possible when transiting heightened-risk areas. Bridge manning should be reduced to a minimum.

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.
- EU Operation ASPIDES: eunavforaspides.ncags@gmail.com.
- 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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