

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20240503			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT UPDATE – 03/05/2024				



## **AMBREY THREAT UPDATE – HOUTHIS STATEMENT ON THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND AN ISRAELI RAFAH OFFENSIVE**

### **Source:**

This document has been approved for distribution by Ambrey Analytics Ltd.

### **The following reports remain active:**

Ambrey Threat Circulars dated 12th of January, 2nd of February, 12th of February, 7th of March, 15th of March, 9th of April and 13th of April 2024 remain active.

### **A. Executive Summary**

- In the afternoon of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2024, the Houthis announced that they would “immediately” target vessels headed to Israel from the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Houthis are assessed to possess the range to target shipping in the east Mediterranean Sea from Yemen.
- The Houthis and other Iranian-backed ‘Islamic Resistance’ groups based in the eastern Mediterranean may attempt to target shipping offshore.
- These groups have had limited success targeting Israeli ports, causing minor damage to Eilat. Though not widely reported, they have targeted offshore Israeli infrastructure.
- Merchant shipping headed towards Israeli ports is strongly advised to review their security measures as outlined below.
- In the event the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launch an offensive on Rafah, the Houthis have threatened to target any nationality of ships and companies in their area of operations that are known to be supplying and entering Israel.

### **B. Situation**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2024, the Houthis announced an ‘escalation’. They have declared that they would target all ships headed to Israel from the Mediterranean Sea in their “ample” range. This was to come into effect “immediately”.

They also announced that if Israel were to launch an attack on Rafah, Gaza, they would “impose sanctions on all ships and companies that are related to supplying or entering [Israel] of any nationality and prevent all ships of these companies from passing through their military operations zone”.

### **C. Threat update**

The Houthis are assessed to possess Unmanned Aerial Vehicles with sufficient range to target merchant shipping in the east Mediterranean Sea from Yemen. However, if launched from Yemen, there is also a higher chance of interception due to the presence of US and coalition warships, and Israeli and Egyptian air defences. The Houthis have repeatedly attempted to target Eilat, an Israeli port city in the Gulf of Aqaba, with limited success. IDF, US naval assets, the Egyptian air force, and Saudi air defences have all intercepted attempts. Iran-backed ‘Islamic Resistance’ groups in Iraq and Syria, and more recently a Bahraini group, have attempted to attack Israeli port cities, with only minor damage reported in Eilat. Air defences in Israel and coalition support to Israel are assessed to be largely effective but cannot guarantee to intercept all threats. Counter-electronic warfare measures are also in place in Israeli ports. Coalition naval forces are also deployed in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and, between Israel and Cyprus, there are counter-electronic warfare measures in place. Coalition defences further west are more likely to be variable and transient. Shipping is advised that the Houthis do monitor AIS and regular rotations which feature Israeli port fixtures.

If the IDF conduct a military operation in Rafah, the Houthis appear to be preparing to widen their target profile. This would include all ships and companies related to supplying and entering Israel. The Houthis have already targeted vessels based on trade with Israel and cooperation with Israeli companies, including those that have not been owned/operated by Israelis, and not owned by Americans or British companies. However, the Houthis have applied discretion in their

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targeting. They have now threatened to act “comprehensively”. A military operation in Rafah is not assessed to be a foregone conclusion. There is significant international opposition to a military operation in Rafah due to humanitarian concerns, including from those countries providing military support to Israel. The Government of Israel has failed to destroy Hamas militarily, and some parts of the governing coalition have urged the War Cabinet to follow through with an operation. Senior Hamas leadership in Gaza are assessed to be in the Rafah area. Nevertheless, the Government of Israel has proposed a ceasefire arrangement. At the time of writing, this was under consideration. If the ceasefire were implemented, it would make an IDF military operation in Rafah unlikely because it would involve a staged withdrawal of IDF from Gaza. It would also likely permit some movement of internally displaced people from Rafah to parts of northern Gaza. This would help to relieve an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Rafah but would be hampered by the significant destruction of property and infrastructure in northern Gaza and would require considerably more aid to these areas.

**D. Next steps**

- All vessels considering calling Israeli ports should undertake a Voyage Risk Assessment (including an affiliation check) prior to any final route decision being made.
- Vessels destined for Israeli ports are advised to engage intelligence and security services to assist with voyage planning, the selection and application of best management practices, digital watchkeeping, and crisis management.
- All shipping headed to Israel with Israel or an Israeli port as their AIS destination should withhold this information immediately.
- Port authorities in Israel have already withdrawn lists of vessels ‘heading to’ Israeli ports, but shipping agents must ensure high levels of information security.
- Vessels on regular rotations to Israeli ports, and vessels in the eastern Mediterranean Sea which could only be headed to Israeli ports are strongly advised to withhold their AIS transmissions and to report their positions hourly to their companies and intelligence and security providers.
- Crews should be briefed on what to do in the event of a suspicious sighting including a UAV, missile, an explosion, or a water column.
- More information to follow should the IDF launch a military operation in Rafah.
- Ambrey is committed to providing the highest levels of support to its clients. Please contact your Account Manager for further updates and support.

**E. Contact Information**

- Contact your Ambrey Account Manager or call +44 (0) 203 503 0320 if you have any questions.
- NATO Shipping Centre: +44 (0) 1923 956574 [info@shipping.nato.int](mailto:info@shipping.nato.int)
- US Sixth Fleet Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGs): +39 081 568 4517 [C6FNCAGS@eu.navy.mil](mailto:C6FNCAGS@eu.navy.mil)

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