

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20240315			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 15/03/2024				



AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – HOUTHIS THREATEN TO EXTEND AREA OF OPERATIONS

Source:

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The following reports remain active:

Ambrey Threat Circular – US and UK strikes against Houthi military targets, 12th of January 2024.

Ambrey Threat Update – Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, and Indian Ocean, 2nd of February 2024.

Ambrey Threat Circular – Houthi targeting profile, 12th of February 2024.

Ambrey Threat Circular – Houthi strike causes first crew fatalities, 7th of March 2024.

A. Executive Summary

- The Houthis have threatened to extend their area of operations to include the Indian Ocean.
- The threat specified that Israeli-affiliated vessels would be targeted.
- The Houthis blame the American and British activity for the escalation – a targeting of American and British-owned shipping is assessed to remain within the Houthi target profile.
- Vessels transiting the Indian Ocean should conduct thorough affiliation checks.
- The recommended mitigation measures remain unchanged, however, are assessed applicable to identified at-risk vessels beyond the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

B. Situation

Air strikes on Houthi military positions by the UK and US have not stopped or deterred the Houthi threat to shipping. The Houthis have stated that the “American-British aggression will not affect the upward trajectory of operations in terms of range, momentum, accuracy, and strength.” Since Ambrey’s last threat circular on the 7th of March 2024, a further three vessels have been targeted six times. In total, merchant vessels have been targeted at least 57 times since their offensive actions began on the 19th of November 2023. The RUBYMAR was the first vessel to have been sunk and, on the 6th of March, three mariners lost their lives due to the Houthi aggression. The international military presence in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is unable to fully protect shipping and often acts as a first responder. The vast majority of Israeli-, American-, and British-affiliated shipping has taken to transiting via the Cape of Good Hope to avoid the threat posed by the Houthis.

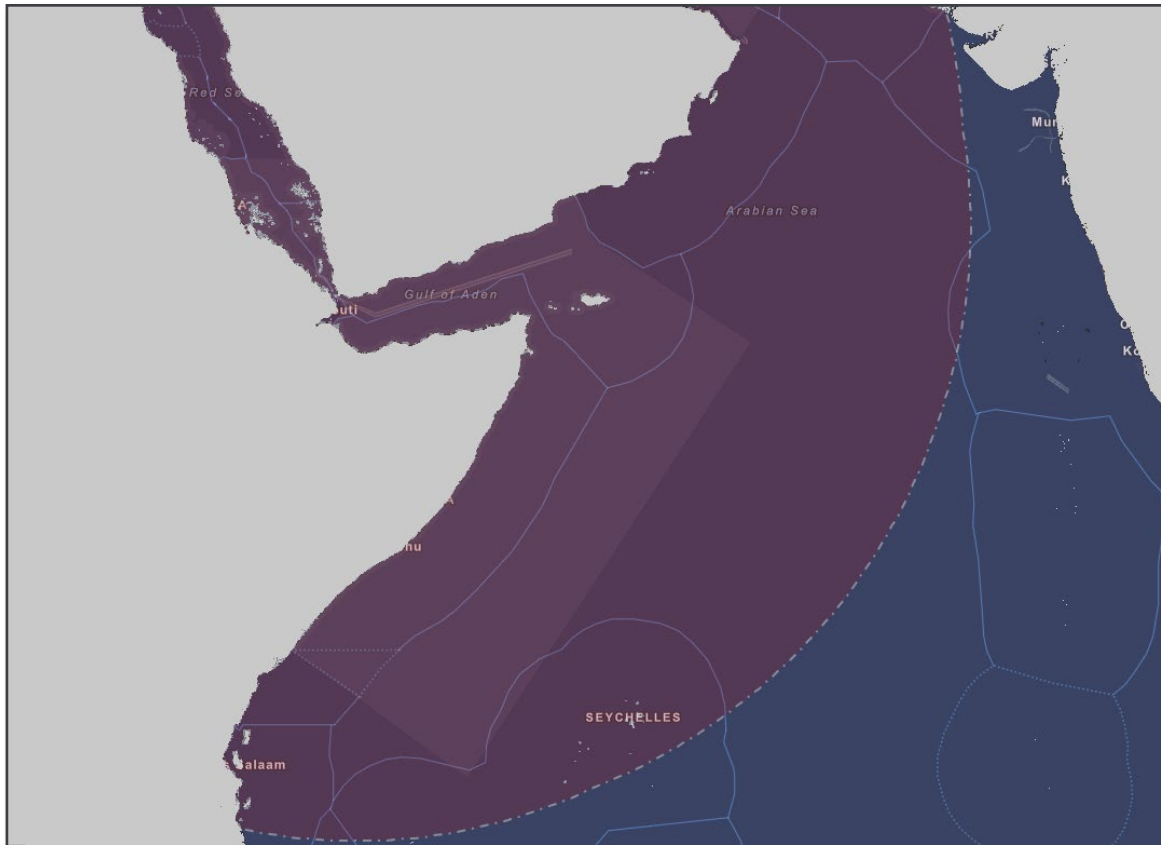
C. Threat Update

As vessels avoid the area, the risk to those willing to continue to transit increases, and the Houthis have fewer opportunities to demonstrate an effect. To maintain the pressure on shipping and the international community, the Houthis have expressed their intentions to target Israeli-affiliated vessels in the Indian Ocean. On the 14th of March the Houthi leader, Abdulmalik Badr al-Din al-Houthi stated: “we are moving to prevent the passage of ships associated with the Israeli enemy, even across the Indian Ocean and from South Africa towards the [Cape of] Good Hope.” The military spokesperson for the Houthis, Yayha Sare’e, reiterated the intentions by stating: “The Yemeni armed forces, with the help of God Almighty, began to expand the scope of their military operations against Israeli ships, or ships linked to Israel, or heading to the ports of occupied Palestine, to include the Indian Ocean via the Cape of Good Hope.” The Houthi explicitly threatened Israeli-affiliated shipping, however, American- and British-owned vessels could likely be targeted in accordance with the current targeting profile. The Houthi missile arsenal is assessed to have a maximum range of 1.900km. UAVs used by the Houthis have a range of up to 2.500km, meaning the Houthis can target vessels as far south as Tanzania and as far east as 069E when launched from Houthi-controlled territory. The Houthi threat extends to all of the Lloyd’s Joint War Committee’s Indian Ocean listed area. It is possible that the Houthis could use dhows as forward operating bases to conduct asymmetric warfare, including the use of remote-

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controlled waterborne improvised explosive devices. It also remains a possibility that Iran could also conduct operations and the Houthi officially claim responsibility, as has occurred in the past, allowing for targeting to occur outside of the known Houthi range. In January 2024 the Iranians targeted merchant shipping offshore the Maldives and India. The Iranians have targeted Israeli-owned shipping in the region since at least 2021, but at a lower tempo.

Likely maximum range of Houthi UAVs from Houthi-controlled territory:



D. Mitigation

Ambrey recommends an affiliation check as part of a transit risk assessment is performed for all Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Arabian 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 stopped if at heightened risk. 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.

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E. Contact Information

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- USCG NAVCEN: www.navcen.uscg.gov/contact/gps-problem-report or +1-703-313-5900.

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