

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20231206			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 06/12/2023				



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Source:

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A. Situation

On the 3rd of December, three merchant vessels reported encountering Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)/missiles in the southern Red Sea. In the first incident, a Bahamas-flagged, UK-owned, bulk carrier UNITY EXPLORER was attacked while transiting the Red Sea southbound approximately 34.5M west-northwest of Mocha, Yemen. Ambrey has been able to corroborate that the bulker was approached by at least two UAVs. One exploded approximately 30m over the vessel and a second exploded 1M ahead of the bulker. In the second incident, a Panama-flagged, US-controlled, container ship NUMBER 9 incurred physical damage by a UAV attack approximately 63M northwest of Hodeida, Yemen. Several vessels in the vicinity reported hearing broadcasts from the container ship that indicated she had been "struck by drone" and was "taking on water." An entity declaring itself to be Yemeni authorities threatened a second attack and ordered the container ship to alter course towards the coast of Yemen. The container ship reported that they were unable to do so since the engine "was out of order". NUMBER 9 ceased to transmit an AIS signal after coming to adrift, however continued its voyage and AIS transmissions resumed when offshore Yanbu, Saudi Arabia. In the third incident, nearby the attack on the UNITY EXPLORER, a Panama-flagged, Japan-owned, bulk carrier experienced heavy vibrations from an explosion nearby, and initially reported that they were struck by an unidentified object and issued a distress call. The US Navy's Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, USS CARNEY responded to two of the distress calls and intercepted UAVs while responding to the Japanese bulk carrier.

B. Threat Update

Israel-affiliated merchant shipping remains at heightened risk. Israel-affiliated means vessels that are flagged Israeli or owned/managed by an Israel-owned or -based company. This definition extends to vessels flagged, owned, or managed as defined above in past. The threat stems from the Houthis in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and a less imminent threat stems from Iran in the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.

Following the outbreak of conflict in Israel/Gaza, the Houthis launched UAVs and ballistic missiles towards Israeli territory. On the 14th of November, the leader of the Houthis stated that they would target Israeli shipping in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. On the 19th of November the Israel-affiliated GALAXY LEADER was seized offshore Hodeida. On 25th of November CENTRAL PARK was hailed offshore Hodeida to head for the port. Ignoring the demands, the vessel was boarded a day later south of Aden. Not being able to take control of the vessel, the perpetrators left the vessel and were later detained by the US Navy.

The Houthi claimed responsibility for GALAXY LEADER and the attacks on NUMBER 9 and UNITY EXPLORER. The US Navy confirmed the two vessels came under attack and having responded to UNITY EXPLORER's and the Japan-owned bulker's distress calls. The threat actor behind the CENTRAL PARK boarding remains unconfirmed, but Ambrey assessed it likely related to the same underlying cause.

UNITY EXPLORER is linked to British citizen Dan David Ungar. The GALAXY LEADER, owned by Abraham Ungar's Israeli company UNGAR AR, was seized by the Houthis, and

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detained in Hodeida, Yemen, two weeks earlier. A link between the two owners exists through Dan David Ungar's previous involvement in Ray Car Carriers, a subsidiary of UNGAR AR. NUMBER 9 was operated by the Israeli company Zim Integrated Shipping Services Ltd. until November 2021, outdating Houthis' records by two years. Ambrey advised of the potential of mistaken targeting as seen in similar incidents involving Iran. Iran backs the Houthis and is assessed to be an integral part of the Houthis' maritime intelligence gathering.

C. Mitigation

Ambrey advises Company Security Officers to assess whether their vessel was owned or managed by an Israel-affiliated company within the last three years. If the vessel is, it would be advised to:

- Assess 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.
- Identify the vessel's planned ETA to those sites, and the position relative to other potential targets. A schedule adjustment might be recommended.
- It is advised to consider the electronic signals policy, including information and minimisation days before entry to the Red Sea, the Bab el Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.
- Bridge teams must be briefed and practiced on how to handle maritime harassment, including pre-prepared responses.
- Evasive manoeuvres and propulsion should be tested before entering the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.
- The merchant vessel is hardened according to Best Management Practices to delay boarding and slow access to crew areas and control systems onboard the vessel.
- 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.
- 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.
- Emergency communications in the event of harassment, boarding, or an attack are 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, and independently deployed.
- Private Maritime Security Teams are advised to not escalate RUF against aerial threats, but they are advised to enhance Best Management Practices, by improvising measures, running drills, and supporting with lookouts and advice to the bridge team.

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D. 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-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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