

## Key messages:

### Red Sea ship attacks

- On the 19 November, the Bahamas flagged Galaxy Leader, operated by Japanese company NYK, and owned by British Company Ray Car Carriers was seized by Houthi forces. Subsequently, there have been an increasing number of attacks against merchant ships.
- As of 16 January 2024, there have been 28 attacks against merchant ships, peaking on the night of 9 January 2024 when 18 suicide drones, two cruise missiles, and one ballistic missile were launched by the Houthis. All ordinance was shot down by forces from Operation Prosperity Guardian.
- **This is an unacceptable act of aggression against innocent merchant ships, in contravention of international law, and ICS deplores the attacks in the strongest terms.**
- It should be remembered that despite all the rhetoric, the targets of Houthi aggression are innocent seafarers serving the trade on which we all rely.
- Houthis originally declared that only vessels associated with Israel, and ships calling at Israeli ports would be considered legitimate military targets. This has subsequently been extended to US and UK-affiliated vessels. The most recent attacks (Gibraltar Eagle, Zografia) would support this modus operandi.
- **A thorough threat and risk assessment should be conducted for all voyages through these waters.**
- Some companies have already rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid Houthi aggression, which adds cost and delay to global trade (See “useful figures”). This was increased to a degree following advice by the US Navy for a pause of 72 hours after last Thursday’s (11/01/2024) air strikes.
- However, ships continue to transit the route in compliance with best practice guidance, demonstrating the resilience of shipping in the face of security risks.
- Industry will continue to provide guidance to shipowners and operators and work with military powers in the region to mitigate the threat to shipping presented by the Houthis.
- The Red Sea is a crucial waterway linking Europe and Asia. Currently, 12% of global trade passes through the Red Sea.
- On the 3 January, the World Shipping Council, the International Chamber of Shipping and BIMCO jointly expressed their thanks to the 13 nations that have jointly condemned the ongoing illegal attacks on ships in the Red Sea and unlawful detention of vessels and crews there. As the governments of the US, the UK, Japan, Singapore, Germany, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and New Zealand, all stated, these attacks are unacceptable, illegal and directly threaten the freedom of navigation that is fundamental to global trade.
- On behalf of our members and their seafarers and customers throughout the world, the organisations thank these 13 nations for their strong commitment to defending rules-based international order and to holding malign actors accountable for unlawful seizures and attacks.

- **We must work together, as a matter of urgency, to stop the actions of the Houthis in attacking seafarers and merchant ships and de-escalate what is now an extremely serious threat to international trade.**

### **Operation Prosperity Guardian**

- On the 19 December 2023, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) welcomed the announcement from the US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin of the initiation of Operation Prosperity Guardian, to address the security challenges in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and expressed gratitude for action being taken to safeguard the lives of our seafarers and ships.
- Operation Prosperity Guardian is significant and providing a coordinated deterrent response to Houthi aggression to merchant shipping.
- Operation Prosperity Guardian, launched by the Combined Military Forces (CMF), is strongly supported by ICS and the shipping industry and praised for its continuing response to the Houthi threat and the guidance it has provided to merchant ships. ICS calls on other states to join the Operation.
- The Operation maintains a permanent presence to defend shipping and deter attacks.
- The Operation does not mount convoys, and escorts are only carried out for special interest vessels, which activity constitutes only 2-3% of coalition activity under the mandate.
- Cooperation between Op PG and other non-coalition forces deployed to the region remains strong, ensuring effective defence for merchant shipping across the area of the attacks. This is despite reported political and diplomatic spats between capitals.

### **Air Strikes and Action Ashore**

- At 1130 UTC on 11 January 2024, US and UK forces launched air strikes ashore in Yemen against Houthi military targets.
- Following the strikes, the US Navy issued guidance to shipping, advising a pause of up to 72 hours for transits but requesting ships still traversing the southern Red Sea to give position reports to the US Navy every 2-3 hours if they had AIS turned off.
- ICS is not in a position to comment on military tactics or actions.
- It is, however, reassuring that States are standing up in defence of shipping and seafarers, and threats to the fundamental right of freedom of navigation, as recognised and reinforced in the recent UNSC Resolution, are being countered.

### **Useful figures**

- The Red Sea is a crucial waterway, linking Europe and Asia.
- Routing around the Cape adds 6-14 days, depending on ship type, and adds 9000km to the voyage. A Suez transit takes 13-15 hours.
- 12% of world trade transits Suez. 40% of Asia-Europe trade and 30% of all container trade uses the canal
- \$3-9bn worth of cargo goes through the canal each day.
- As of 15 January 2024, 359 container vessels have diverted around the Cape of Good Hope with a total capacity of 4.79m TEU (Kuehne and Nagel).
- 96% drop in gas tankers transiting the Bab al-Mandab compared to a month ago (the Cradle.co).
- Traffic not at a standstill, and ships continuing to pass in and out of the Red Sea through Bab al-Mandab.
- Over 80% of all containerships moving between the Atlantic/Mediterranean basins and the Indian Ocean have diverted round the Cape (Linerlytica).