RiskIntelligence

Security Threat Update:
Red Sea / Gulf of Aden
3 April 2024

Table of contents

Security Threat Update: Red Sea / Gulf of Aden

This report provides an overview of recent incidents in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden as well as an assessments of threat levels for additional attacks against different types of merchant vessels.

Time of latest intelligence included in this report: 3 April 2024, 08:00 UTC.

Recent incidents (Red Sea / Bab el Mandeb / Gulf of Aden)

Below is a list of incidents directly affecting merchant ships in the Red Sea, the Bab el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden which have been recorded on the Risk Intelligence System during the past 30 days. Information includes date, time and a short description of the respective incident. Comprehensive descriptions for all incidents (as well as for older incidents) can be found on the Risk Intelligence System.

6 March	00:01 UTC	Bulk carrier TRUE CONFIDENCE hailed over VHF
The ship was transiting the Gulf of Aden just south of the Bab el Mandeb when it was hailed by an entity claiming to be the Yemeni Navy, ordering the vessel to change course.		

6 March	08:40 UTC	Bulk carrier TRUE CONFIDENCE targeted
The ship was struck by at least one projectile while drifting in the Gulf of Aden after being hailed over VHF several hours earlier. The attack caused a fire onboard. Three crew members were killed, four suffered serious injuries and the entire crew abandoned the vessel.		

8 March	12:55 UTC	Bulk carrier PROPEL FORTUNE targeted
The ship was targeted with two anti-ship ballistic missiles while transiting through the Gulf of Aden. The vessel was not struck and continued the voyage.		

11 March	10:06 UTC	Container ship PINOCCHIO targeted
The ship was targeted with at least one projectile while transiting southbound through the Red Sea. The vessel was not struck but an explosion was reported in close proximity.		

15 March	02:05 UTC	Crude oil tanker PACIFIC 01 targeted
The ship was targeted with at least one missile while transiting northbound through the Red Sea. The vessel was not struck and all crew are safe.		

17 March	02:05 UTC	LPG tanker MADO targeted
The ship was targeted with at least two missiles while transiting eastbound through the Gulf of Aden. The vessel was not struck and all crew are safe.		

23 March	14:35 UTC	Crude oil tanker HUANG PU struck
The ship reported being struck by a missile which caused a fire onboard. The crew extinguished the fire and the vessel proceeded to next port of call, southbound.		

1 April	19:56 UTC	Cruise ship CRYSTAL SYMPHONY hailed and targeted
The ship reported being hailed by an entity claiming to be the "Yemeni Navy", requesting they turn on their AIS, while transiting the BAM. Crew reported small arms fire to have hit the vessel. No casualties.		

Current situation

- Over the past week, US forces reportedly continued their targeting of missile and drone launch sites in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. Naval vessels from several countries also continued interceptions of aerial drones and missiles over the Red Sea. These have apparently decreased the Houthis' success rate in striking vessels.

- Declarations by different stakeholders cement the Red Sea's new routine has been established. Maersk has confirmed it would continue transiting through the Cape Good Hope and stated that while the military intervention was well regarded, it had not sufficiently decreased threat levels. Egypt has confirmed that the Suez Canal revenues had fallen by 50% since the start of the crisis, in line with the new average traffic levels.

- Houthi and southern Yemeni politicians held events to commemorate the start of the war in Yemen. Both sides traded blame on the failure to reach a political resolution. Notably, the Houthis indicated they were not in a truce but in a de-escalation state with the Saudis. This rhetoric opens up for the possibility of continued strikes and clashes with their northern neighbours and their proxies.

Military strikes against targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen have been conducted unilaterally by US forces and as joint strikes with the UK military, supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand. These strikes are conducted under Operation Poseidon Archer. For political reasons, the offensive actions are conducted separately from the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian which is aimed at protecting commercial shipping in the area.

Since the beginning of the Houthi campaign in November, the US and several other governments have frequently stated that Houthi attacks against merchant ships have been 'indiscriminate'. This conclusion, however, has never been supported by available evidence, although the Houthis have expanded and diluted the parameters of their targeting.

Based on an analysis of all recorded incidents since November and considering the military strikes against Houthi forces, Risk Intelligence assesses that the threat to merchant ships is closely linked to individual characteristics, broadly in line with the Houthis' stated targeting parameters and their previous actions.

Houthi forces are very likely to continue selecting specific targets rather than widen their campaign to indiscriminate attacks against civilian shipping. It is possible, however, that they will widen their campaign to an extent to assert pressure on southern Yemen and to limit port calls of commercial vessels in that part of the country, notably in Aden.

Following 5 months of campaign, a new normal is emerging. Continued military pressure on Houthi launches seems to have decreased the frequency of strikes, but Houthi capabilities and intentions remain. Traffic levels have consolidated at around 50% of what they were prior to the start of the Houthis' strikes, with the Suez Canal's revenues decreasing by 50% as well. Many

large shipping companies are still reticent to cross the Bab el Mandeb, given that the situation remains unstable.

Meanwhile, Houthi and southern Yemeni politicians held events to mark the start of the war in Yemen, now entering its tenth year. Both sides blamed the other for the slow pace of negotiations, with the Houthis remarking that they were not in a truce, but in a "de-escalation state" with the Saudis. This is typical of Houthi rhetoric in that it affords them space to resume hostilities at short notice, while maintaining pressure on their opponents.

Vessel type	Threat type	Threat level
Vessels specifically linked to Israel through ownership, port calls, trade with and/or commercial relationship between Israeli companies and owners/operators	Kinetic attack (missile, aerial/waterborne drone), possibly seizure and detention	**Severe**
Vessels linked to the United States, United Kingdom and other countries involved in Operation Poseidon Archer	Kinetic attack (missile, aerial/waterborne drone), possibly seizure and detention	**Severe**
Vessels linked to other countries participating in or supporting Operation Prosperity Guardian or Operation Aspides	Kinetic attack (missile, aerial/waterborne drone), possibly seizure and detention	**Elevated**
Other merchant ships in transit through the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden	Kinetic attack due to misidentification, potential proximity to the above threats ('collateral damage')	**Elevated**

Overall, the threat level to vessels directly owned by Israeli companies has been severe since the beginning of the Houthi campaign. Such vessels therefore largely stopped transiting the Red Sea, leading the Houthis to expand their potential targets to vessels trading with Israel. Moreover, some attacks were very likely carried out based on outdated information in publicly available databases, underlining the threat level for collateral damage.

Military action by the US and the UK has led to another expansion of the Houthis' target pool, highlighted by widely-reported threats against merchant ships linked to both countries. This has resulted in a severe threat level for vessels directly linked to the US and the UK which has been highlighted by recent attacks.

For other countries directly supporting military strikes under Operation Poseidon Archer, the threat level is at the same level, although it should be noted that the Houthis have not yet made any specific threats against these countries.

Several attempted and successful attacks against merchant ships closely linked with the US and the UK in recent weeks have shown that Houthi forces remain capable of conducting attacks. In addition, these attacks are not limited to the southern Red Sea where Houthi forces control a large portion of the Yemeni coastline. Several ships have also been struck in the Gulf of Aden.

The gradual degrading of the Houthis' missile launch capability may lead to an increase in the use of lower-level technology tactics such as firing rockets from skiffs or launching naval and aerial drones. However, the actual impact of military strikes on Houthi capabilities cannot be assessed. Reports about strikes are solely based on military sources and not independently verified.

It is very likely that a longer-term mission would be necessary to meaningfully reduce the threat posed by the Houthis. The current casualty-averse approach limits any greater damage to Houthi weapons stockpiles. At the same time, a shift in tactics is likely to have a greater civilian impact on the ground, potentially provoking another escalation in maritime attacks.

For merchant ships linked to countries solely taking part in or supporting Operation Prosperity Guardian or Operation Aspides which both have a purely defensive focus, the threat level is assessed as lower compared to countries participating in offensive military actions against the Houthis. For all other commercial vessels, the same threat level applies.

For vessels related to countries taking part in Operation Prosperity Guardian or Operation Aspides, this is largely due to the potential for kinetic attacks in lieu of other potential targets for Houthi forces. However, considering their careful selection of targets – which is in line with broader political ambitions – this is currently unlikely.

For vessels not related to countries taking part in Operation Prosperity Guardian or Operation Aspides, this is largely due to the potential for merchant ships being targeted due to misidentification as mentioned above. Proximity to kinetic attacks or proximity to interceptions of drones and missiles by military forces could also lead to collateral damage.

Finally, it is vital to consider that this remains a highly dynamic situation. Risk Intelligence strongly recommends all stakeholders to closely monitor the situation. Updates regarding incidents as well as constantly updated assessments of current threat levels are available through the Risk Intelligence System.

Background

Starting with the seizure of the GALAXY LEADER on 19 November, Risk Intelligence has identified 50 targeted attacks by Houthi forces against individual vessels in the Red Sea/Bab el Mandeb/Gulf of Aden area. This is lower than the number of attacks generally cited by military sources which are not providing an overview to highlight which incidents are classified as 'attacks on commercial vessels'.

Interceptions of drones and missiles are likely counted as additional attacks by these sources but this remains speculation without any evidence. Drones and missiles may have been used to target warships or merely used as a "show of force" in at least some of the interceptions.

Looking at all 50 attacks in detail, no preference for attacks against southbound or northbound vessels can be identified for attacks in the southern Red Sea. In addition, 20 ships have been targeted in the Gulf of Aden since the beginning of January (see Figure 1).
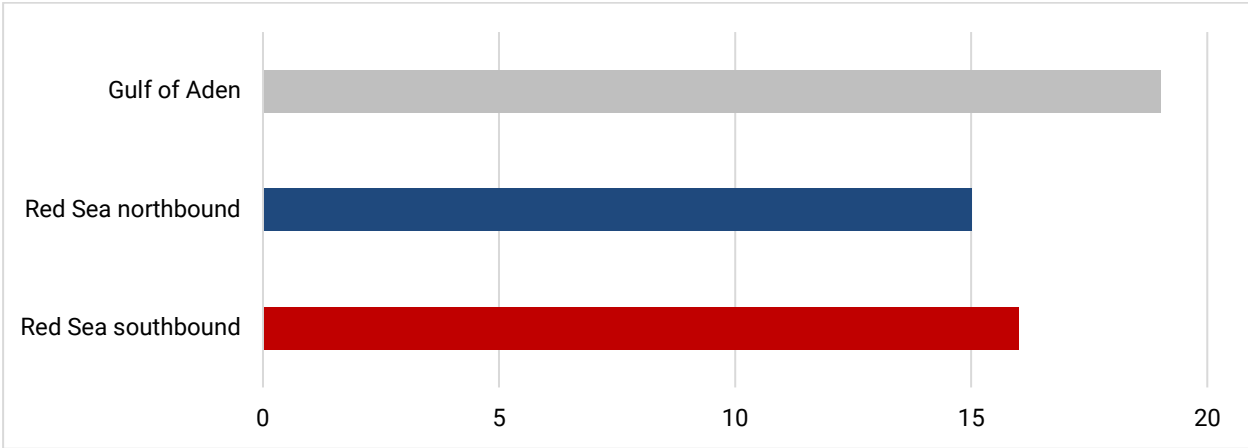

Figure 1: Number of attacks against merchant ships passing through the Red Sea/Bab el Mandeb/Gulf of Aden area since November 2023 (Source: Risk Intelligence)

Houthi attacks against maritime traffic have caused a significant decrease in ship transits through the Bab el Mandeb. It is unlikely that traffic will see a significant further decrease after the current level has remained more or less constant since late January, shown in Figure 2.
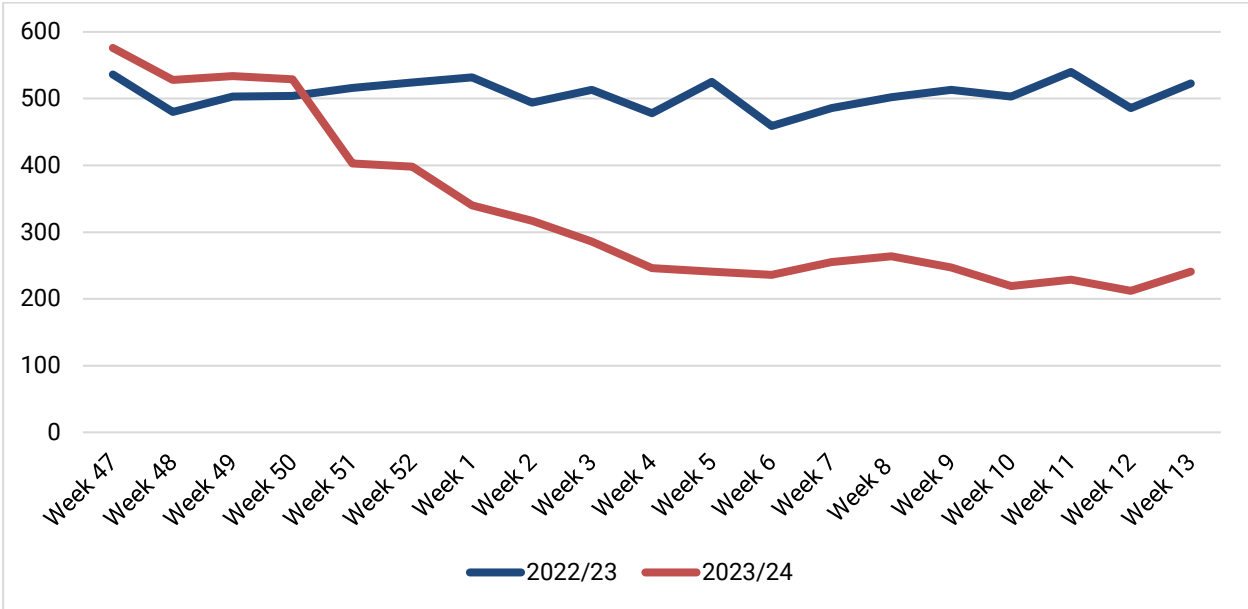

Figure 2: Number of Bab el Mandeb transits by merchant ships per week, including vessels without broadcasting on AIS (Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence)

Transits during the past weeks have consistently remained roughly 50% lower than during the same timeframe in 2023, and the gap has remained relatively constant since late January,

although there was a slight increase in in early April. Less than 10% of ships passing the Bab el Mandeb are following naval recommendations to disable AIS.

Another indicator that suggests a relatively stable amount of maritime traffic in the Red Sea in the coming weeks is the number of Suez Canal transits, which has remained at slightly above 200 vessels per week for the past eight weeks, with a slight and unsustained uptick in the recent past possibly due to an increase in trade linked to preparations for the Ramadan festivities.
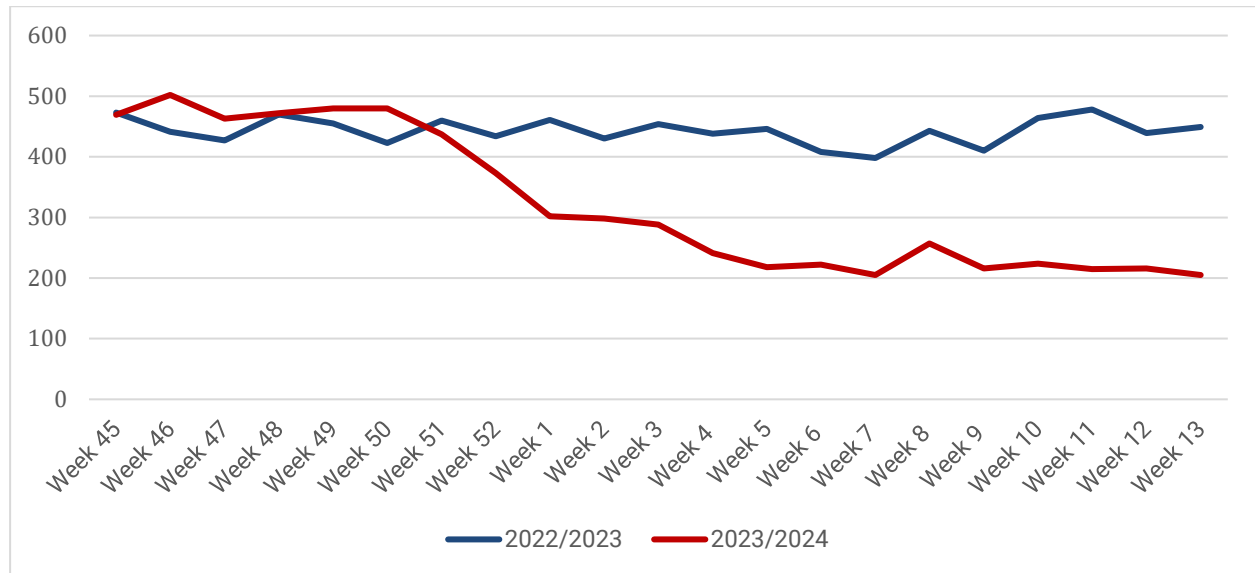

Figure 3: Suez Canal transits Year on Year comparison (Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence)

In general, maritime traffic remains significantly below the "normal" number of transits through the Suez Canal and in the Red Sea. It will be important to monitor these figures in the coming weeks to see if and when commercial vessels are returning to this route in significant numbers.

It is difficult to say whether a sustainable increase in maritime traffic will take place in the short or medium term. While such an increase is theoretically possible due to the increased presence of naval vessels, commercial pressure on ship owners and operators is more likely to be the determining factor.

The current threats in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden have also led to a noticeable increase in incidents that are perceived as suspicious by seafarers, including in the larger region outside the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Reporting such incidents should be strongly encouraged. At the same time, it is vital to thoroughly assess all reports to identify particular areas of concern.

The background to the current situation is the civil war in Yemen. Since 2015, the Houthis in the northern part of the country have fought against the Saudi and UAE-backed government in southern Yemen. Iran has supported the Houthis during the conflict. Houthi forces have previously targeted Saudi and UAE vessels in the Red Sea with anti-ship missiles and drones (aerial and waterborne). They have also attacked Saudi ports and naval vessels in the Red Sea as well as oil industry targets in southern Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

The Saudis and the Houthis are assessed to be close to a peace agreement that would involve financial and economic concessions to the Houthis. Neither side wants to jeopardise a potential deal. Saudi Arabia has refrained from criticising the Houthis which is a noticeable difference from Saudi rhetoric in the past. Moreover, attacks against commercial shipping have not interrupted Houthi-Saudi negotiations although it is impossible to assess when a final agreement will be signed. Houthi forces are very likely to continue to engage in attacks on maritime traffic as long as they deem their attacks unlikely to scupper the ongoing talks.

Guidance on commercial operations

Ship transits

Several shipping industry organisations have published the "Interim Industry Transit Advice, Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden – 5 February 2024". Among other information, the document includes considerations about routing and vessel hardening. Combined Maritime Forces have also issued a guidance document on 23 December 2023.

Both documents are available via www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org.

Vessel registration and incident reporting

It is strongly recommended for all merchant ships transiting the Western Indian Ocean, the Somali Basin, the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and the Red Sea to register with UKMTO and the Maritime Security Centre - Horn of Africa (MSCHOA). Any incidents or suspicious activities should also be reported to UKMTO and MSCHOA.

Contact details UKMTO

Email: watchkeepers@ukmto.org
Phone: +44 2393 222060
Website: www.ukmto.org

Contact details MSCHOA

Email: postmaster@mschoa.org
Phone: +33 298 220 220 or +33 298 220 170
Website: www.mschoa.org

If a vessel is under attack, **US naval forces in Bahrain** are able to coordinate assistance.

Phone: +973 1785 3879
Email: m-ba-navcent-ncags@us.navy.mil

Combined Maritime Forces also recommend ignoring VHF calls by "Yemeni navy" with instructions to alter course to Hudaydah or other locations in Yemen. When merchant ships are contacted, masters are advised to continue the voyage and call for a coalition warship on VHF Channel 16, stating current location, situation and intentions.

In addition, vessel operators are advised to contact the respective flag state for additional guidance or requirements regarding incident reporting procedures.

Mitigation measures

Risk Intelligence strongly recommends merchant ship operators to assess whether the respective vessel has been owned or managed by Israel-affiliated companies in the past. Such information may not have been updated in publicly available databases and could lead to misidentification of current commercial links with Israel.

Prior to voyages through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, ship operators should conduct a thorough ship and voyage-specific threat and risk assessment in line with shipping industry best practices. In addition, the following measures should be considered:

- Constant monitoring of the security situation, enabling vessels to avoid locations with recent or ongoing incidents.
- Introduction/update of contingency plans on the company level to address the possibility of seafarers being injured, killed or kidnapped during a security incident. The plan should include contingency and emergency plans; appropriate drills should be completed.
- Crew briefings and scenario drills based on a valid and relevant anti-attack plan to ensure that incidents are reported and alarm is raised without delay when required. Drills should include scenarios with major damage and casualties.
- Enhancement of firefighting, evacuation and damage control procedures, taking into account the possibility of significant damage as a result of direct targeting or collateral damage.
- Enhancement of medical equipment to deal with multiple casualties.
- Emergency contacts placed readily available on the bridge.
- Bridge team briefing regarding hailing/harassment via VHF, prepared responses and immediate contact with naval forces in the respective area. (Local authorities' calls on VHF may be an act of spoofing or even targeting, underlined by several incidents in recent days which involved self-proclaimed 'Yemeni authorities' or the 'Yemeni navy' ordering merchant ships to alter course.)
- Preparation of citadel with emergency provisions and functioning satellite phone.
- Depending on individual circumstances, embarkation of armed guards may be useful to mitigate specific risks, specifically in relation to the threat of boardings from small boats (e.g. Houthi forces, Somali piracy). However, the threat of direct targeting by missiles, aerial or naval drones used by Houthi forces in Yemen (southern Red Sea / Gulf of Aden) cannot be mitigated by embarkation of armed guards.

In general, existing BMP5 recommendations have been developed to deter piracy. While the guidance included in BMP5 is relevant to deter illegal boardings, it offers virtually no mitigation against current threats such as attacks by missiles, drones or – potentially – waterborne IEDs ('drone boats').

Ship operators should also consider to issue specific voyage guidance for transits through the Red Sea and/or the Gulf of Aden. This guidance should consider specific scenarios (e.g. aerial or waterborne threats, hailing on VHF) and include actions by the crew to minimise the impact of any security incident.

Red Sea – threat assessment (summary)

Following the incidents in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden related primarily to Houthi forces, there is now a significant threat to merchant ships linked to Israel through a variety of commercial relationships. Although threats will vary on a case-by-case basis, the overall threat level for these vessels is now assessed as severe for vessels linked to Israel through ownership and severe for vessels linked through other commercial relationships including port calls. Threats against vessels linked to the US and UK and other countries involved in direct military strikes against Houthi forces are severe.

This reflects the escalation in violence in early January, such as the launch of strikes on Houthi targets by the US-led Operations Poseidon Archer and Prosperity Guardian after 12 January 2024, which has expanded the scope of vessels considered as "legitimate targets" by the Houthis. The threat level for all remainder vessels, those not linked to Israel or nations directly involved in strikes against Houthi forces, is assessed as elevated. It is likely that the US and UK strikes are impacting the Houthis' missile launch capabilities, though the extent of that impact is difficult to assess.

The increased threat is a result of the Israel/Gaza conflict and Houthi actions, initially against Israel-linked vessels, but now against a broader spectrum of targets. Naval vessels have intercepted a number of drones and missiles intended for Israeli targets, or against the naval ships themselves. "Our eyes are open to constantly monitor and search for any Israeli ship in the Red Sea, especially in Bab al-Mandeb, and near Yemeni regional waters," Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi was reported saying in November 2023. On 9 December, a Houthi statement on social media said: "We warn all ships and companies against dealing with Israeli ports". The Houthis have since threatened to strike vessels in the Indian Ocean, even if they were transiting around Cape Good Hope. There is some doubt as to their ability to conduct such strikes autonomously.

The situation is evolving as the list of possible targets is expanding. Links to Israel may now be port calls by the respective vessel, owners/operators conducting trade with Israel in general or owners/operators being in commercial relationships with Israeli companies. While the threat level to vessels which are directly owned by Israeli companies is assessed as even higher, it should be noted that virtually no such vessels are currently transiting the Red Sea. Houthi forces have therefore significantly expanded their potential targets, including the categories mentioned above. What the Houthis consider to constitute a link strong enough to warrant a strike is variable and an internal Houthi decision.

At the same time, it is important to highlight the increased threat of collateral damage, particularly in the southern Red Sea with dense maritime traffic. It is very likely that Houthi forces have missed their intended targets on several occasions in recent days, increasing the potential for unintended strikes against other merchant ships. Moreover, this is a highly dynamic and evolving threat which must be monitored closely in light of ongoing incidents.

Maritime security in the southern Red Sea is also affected by the conflict in Yemen as some fighting between the Houthis and the rival government supported by the Saudi-led coalition

continues. The maritime dimension to this conflict is limited. Ceasefire talks in 2022 saw a substantial fall in cross-border attacks in Saudi Arabia, as well as an improved threat environment during transits through the Bab el Mandeb. Attacks have not taken place in 2023 or so far in 2024, likely due to progress in negotiations between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition. Both sides are unlikely to jeopardise a potential deal. The threat level for direct attacks against port and oil facilities in Saudi Arabia and the UAE is therefore lower while talks are ongoing.

There is a dispute between Yemen and Eritrea in the Hanish Islands area, primarily due to fishing. In an incident in June 2021, there was a clash between coastguard/naval forces. In August 2021, several fishing vessels and three Yemeni crew were detained by the Eritrean coastguard near the Hanish Islands. Due to the irregular nature of Yemeni coastguard forces, or the difficulty in identifying Eritrean craft (which are small speedboats), there are problems with merchant vessels misidentifying small patrol craft from Yemen and Eritrea as pirate vessels. Aggressive enforcement by coastguard vessels, or local craft attempting to warn away merchant vessels, are possible threats in the area. The piracy threat is minimal, even in southern areas, as this area is now considered to be outside the operational range of Somali pirates. The fighting in Sudan is not expected to affect threat levels in the Red Sea.

Aggressive enforcement by coastguard vessels, or local craft attempting to warn away merchant vessels, are possible threats in the area. The piracy threat is minimal, even in southern areas, as this area is now considered to be outside the operational range of Somali pirates. The fighting in Sudan is not expected to affect threat levels in the Red Sea.

Threat levels

Refer to the section "Methodology / Definitions" for a detailed definition of the threat level. A concise assessment of all threats listed in the table can be found below.

Threat type	Threat level
Terrorism	Moderate
Piracy	Low
Insurgency and Military Operations	High
Cargo Theft	Moderate
Smuggling	Elevated
Stowaways and human trafficking	Low
Fraud and corruption	Low
Activism	Low

Indian Ocean – threat assessment (summary)

This area covers the western Indian Ocean north of Madagascar and east towards India, including the Somali Basin, Gulf of Aden, and western Arabian Sea. Houthi maritime operations targeting vessels in transit can take place in western areas of the Gulf of Aden where threat levels are similar to the southern Red Sea. In the Indian Ocean, primary threats are piracy off Somalia and the conflict in Yemen which has some implications close to the Yemeni coast. There are possible drone threats to Israel-linked merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

There is a significant potential for pirate operations in the Somali Basin and the Gulf of Aden. On 4 January, the bulk carrier LILA NORFOLK was boarded around 460 nautical miles off the Somali coast before being assisted by the Indian Navy. The bulk carrier WAIMEA was also approached by skiffs on 27 January in what might have been a boarding attempt. These targets might have been selected due to their vulnerability to boarding. On 12 March, a group of 15 to 20 Somalis hijacked the Bangladesh-flagged bulk carrier ABDULLAH and took its 23 crew members hostage. The ship was boarded from two boats approximately 600 nautical miles off the Somali coast. In the light of recent attacks, it would appear that the pirates operate as far as 600 or even 800 nautical miles (WAIMEA attack), but they prefer to operate at around 400 nautical miles.

These cases show that pirates still have boarding capabilities at significant distances off the coast – out to around 800 nautical miles. It is unclear whether these incidents were linked to overall unhappiness by coastal communities over illegal fishing and were to prove a point or were opportunistic boardings for traditional hijackings and ransoms. There was limited information about the RUEN, including any ransom demands, until the vessel was freed by the Indian Navy on 16 March. The resolution of this case has given some clues as to the viability of potential hijacks in the future and if vessels can be held off Somalia for extended periods while ransoms are secured, but many details of the case remain unconfirmed.

There have also been seven reported boardings of fishing dhows off Somalia since November 2023. These are likely linked to illegal fishing activity in the area, which is an ongoing issue and has been a major focus for Somalia in expanding its maritime enforcement capabilities. Iranian vessels have been seized in the past and their crews held, with captives released as recently as 2022 and 2020. The most recent incidents were an Iranian dhow that was hijacked just off Somalia but then freed by Indian naval forces, and a Sri Lankan fishing vessel hijacked farther out in the Indian Ocean that was freed by the Seychelles coastguard.

In general, vessels in transit should be aware of the potential to encounter small armed craft in this area, particularly in the Gulf of Aden. These might be fishermen, traders, smugglers, militia or irregular military forces, or military or coastguard patrol craft operating out of southern Yemen or northern Somalia. The boarding of the product tanker CENTRAL PARK in the Gulf of Aden on 26 November 2023 has been assessed as related to Houthi-led actions against Israel-linked vessels, although some critical details of this incident have not been confirmed.

In Yemen are multiple political factions with their own militia forces, as well as security forces from Saudi Arabia and the UAE in operation. Terrorist groups have a limited presence. There have been no recent incidents, aside from those linked to Houthi operations. The situation in Yemen is primarily a consideration for operations close to the Yemeni coast or port calls.

Naval patrols operate in the area, such as EUNAVFOR's Operation Atalanta. Their mandates include maritime crimes (such as drugs and arms smuggling) as well as countering piracy. The group transit scheme for the Gulf of Aden remains operational. National deployments are also ongoing, such as the Indian naval patrol presence that has been effective in recent actions.

Shipping industry associations have published transit guidance for the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, which emphasises the importance of conducting thorough ship and voyage-specific threat and risk assessments considering additional advice from the flag state before passing through the area in question. The shipping industry has removed its high-risk area (HRA) designation for the Indian Ocean, effective 1 January 2023, although notes that: "Threat and risk assessments should still be carried out, and best management practices followed to continue to mitigate the risks presented in a changeable and often complex and potentially threatening environment."

UKMTO operates the Voluntary Reporting Area for the Indian Ocean, specifically the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Sea, administered by the Maritime Trade Information Centre (MTIC)/UKMTO (Dubai). UKMTO acts as primary point of contact for merchant vessels and liaison with military forces in the region. Vessels are encouraged to report their positions while operating in the area. MSCHOA manages the EUNAVFOR (EU Naval Forces Somalia and Operation Atalanta) voluntary registration scheme for vessels transiting the area and administers an interactive website that enables EUNAVFOR to communicate counter-piracy guidance to the maritime industry, and for shipping companies and operators to register vessel movements through the region.
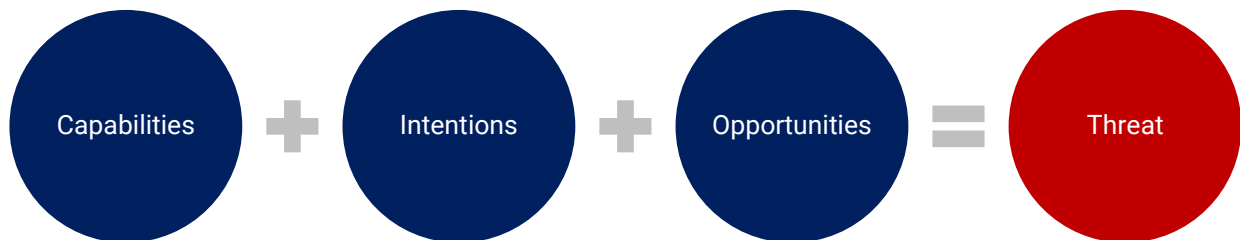
Threat levels

Refer to the section "Methodology / Definitions" for a detailed definition of the threat level. Concise assessments of all types of threats listed in the table below can be found on the Risk Intelligence System.

Threat type	Threat level
Terrorism	Moderate
Piracy	Elevated
Insurgency and Military Operations	Moderate
Cargo Theft	Low
Smuggling	Moderate
Stowaways and human trafficking	Low
Fraud and corruption	Low
Activism	Low

Methodology / Definitions

All threat levels are based on the likelihood of a threat type occurring, with generic consequences described in the relevant sections. All threat levels are based on an assessment of capabilities, intentions and opportunities of potential perpetrators, separated into different categories.

Capabilities + Intentions + Opportunities = Threat

Maritime operators are typically unable to lower the threat level by influencing the underlying variables. However, all variables are subject to change over time, e.g. changes in the intentions or capabilities of potential perpetrators. They should therefore be re-assessed as required.

In an additional step, the threat levels assessed here can be used to identify the risk level for a particular type of operations. Determining the risk level also requires an assessment of the vulnerability and the potential consequence of a particular incident. Appropriate mitigation measures can then be implemented to lower the risk level.

Threat levels

All threat levels mentioned above are assessed based on the likelihood and consequence of a particular threat type occurring. The levels are:

- Low: Not expected in the operational area or in proximity.
- Moderate: Not expected in the operational area but possible in proximity.
- Elevated: Possible in the operational area or in proximity.
- High: Expected in the operational area or in proximity.
- Severe: Commonplace in the operational area or in proximity.