

The Stakes of Houthi Aggression Against International Shipping Since October 7, 2023

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**COUNTER
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**UNITED
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Executive Summary

Since Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2024, and the subsequent outbreak of war between Israel and [Hamas](#), the Iran-backed [Houthi](#) rebel group in [Yemen](#) has played an increased role in the region's conflicts. After several failed attempts to influence the war by firing missiles toward the Jewish state, the Houthis commenced a sustained campaign against shipping in the Red Sea, launching at least 34 attacks since November 19 to harass and disrupt global shipping routes. The United States responded in December by announcing a multinational maritime coalition tasked with preserving freedom of movement and trade in the region.

The resulting tensions have not only escalated the implications of the Israel-Hamas war for the global economy, they have also expanded the Saudi-Iran proxy war in Yemen by bringing Iran and the United States closer to direct conflict. The attacks have led to market disruptions caused by increased operational costs and delays, as shipping companies are forced to either reroute or invest in enhanced security measures. Finally, Houthi attacks are likely to impact the peace process in Yemen, which according to the United Nations had made some progress in December despite escalations in the Red Sea. But continued Houthi attacks—and international deterrent responses—are likely to delay any progress toward peace between the Houthis and the Yemeni government.

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Houthi Aggression in the Red Sea: Overview

Joshua Lipowsky, Senior Research Analyst, Counter Extremism Project

Since Hamas's October 7, 2023, massacre in Israel and the subsequent outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas, Iran-backed Houthi rebel forces in Yemen have attempted to assert themselves in the conflict in support of Hamas.¹ Acting as part of Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance, the Houthis launched a series of missiles toward Israel throughout October. When that strategy proved unsuccessful, the rebel group adopted an intensified campaign against international shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The Houthis have launched at least 34 attacks since November 19, 2023, attacking or harassing ships directly or tenuously linked to Israel or Israelis, including ships transporting cargo to or allegedly docking in Israel.²

The Houthis' first strategy for affecting the outcome of the Israel-Hamas war was to fire missiles directly at the Jewish state. Over nine hours on October 19, a U.S. warship near the Red Sea shot down four cruise missiles and 15 drones, which a Pentagon spokesman accused the Houthis of firing "potentially towards targets in Israel."³ The rebel group continued to send drones and missiles toward southern Israel, though the strategy proved ineffective against Israeli air defenses.⁴ The Houthis claimed their goal is to force Israel to end its assault on Gaza, but found that their assault had little impact on Israeli policy.

This led the Houthis to announce a strategy shift on November 18 from directly targeting Israel to attacking Israeli interests in the Red Sea.⁵ In a statement on X, formerly Twitter, Houthi military spokesman [Yahya Sarea](#) declared that all Israeli ships were legitimate targets.⁶ The Houthis soon extended that strategy to include all ships they claimed were Israel-linked, no matter how tenuous the assumed connection. On November 19, the Houthis seized the *Galaxy Leader*, a British-owned and Japanese-operated cargo ship traversing the southern Red Sea off the Yemeni port of Hodeida. The Houthis took 25 hostages, labelling the ship as Israeli because it is owned by a company registered under Isle of Man-headquartered Ray Car Carriers, which is a unit of Tel Aviv-incorporated Ray Shipping.⁷ On December 9, in what Houthi leaders called a demonstration of support for the Palestinians, the Houthis further expanded their Red Sea terror campaign by announcing they would target all ships heading toward Israel, regardless of nationality.⁸ Sarea also banned all Israeli ships from the Red Sea and Arabian Sea until the Gaza Strip received food and medicinal aid. He warned all shipping companies to avoid sailing to Israeli ports.⁹

1 Ammar Awad and Maayan Lubell, "Gunmen in homes, captives abducted leave Israelis in shock," Reuters, October 7, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gunmen-homes-captives-abducted-gaza-leave-israelis-shock-2023-10-07/>; Lauren Frayer, "Israel revises down its death toll from the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks to about 1,200," NPR, November 11, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/11/1212458974/israel-revises-death-toll-hamas-attacks-oct-7>.

2 "U.S. Central Command," Twitter post, January 11, 2024, 10:21 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1745647248866738322>; Jon Gambrell, "Iran is 'directly involved' in Yemen Houthi rebel ship attacks, US Navy's Mideast chief tells AP," Associated Press, January 22, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/us-navy-houthi-attacks-red-sea-shipping-iran-8e55669e4d-18cbc7007654640fa5fde1>.

3 Oren Liebermann, "Incident involving US warship intercepting missiles near Yemen lasted 9 hours," CNN, October 20, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/20/politics/us-warship-intercept-missiles-near-yemen/index.html>; Jessie Yeung, Hamdi Alkhshali, and Kyle Blaine, "Israel says it thwarted aerial attacks by Yemen's Houthis near Red Sea," CNN, November 1, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/01/middleeast/israel-says-it-thwarted-attacks-from-yemens-houthis-intl-hnk/index.html>.

4 Ahmed Mohamed Hassan and Dan Williams, "Drone blasts hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns, Israel points to Houthi," Reuters, October 27, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/explosion-heard-egyptian-red-sea-town-near-israeli-border-witness-2023-10-27/>.

5 "Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels Threaten To Target Israeli Ships," Iran International, November 18, 2023, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202311180360>.

6 Yahya Sarea, Twitter post, November 19, 2023, 11:34 a.m., <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1726277654544785788>.

7 "Yemen's Houthi release video footage showing armed men seizing 'Israeli-linked ship,'" Reuters, November 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-release-video-footage-showing-armed-men-seizing-israeli-linked-2023-11-20/>; Isabel Debre and Jon Gambrell, "Yemen's Houthi rebels hijack an Israeli-linked ship in the Red Sea and take 25 crew members hostage," Associated Press, last updated November 20, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-houthi-rebels-hijacked-ship-red-sea-dc9b-6448690bcf5c70a0baf7c7c34b09>.

8 Mohammed Alghobari, "Yemen's Houthis warn they will target all ships headed to Israel," Reuters, December 9, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-say-they-will-target-ships-red-sea-en-route-israel-2023-12-09/>.

9 "Yahya Sarea," Twitter post, December 9, 2023, 12:23 p.m., https://twitter.com/Yahya_Sarea/status/1733537920449982498.

On December 31, U.S. Navy helicopters sank three Houthi speed boats attacking the container ship Maersk Hangzhou in the Red Sea. The Houthi boats were reportedly within meters of the ship when the helicopters sank them, killing all on board. A fourth boat escaped. The Houthis claimed 10 members were dead or missing after the attack.¹⁰ As the Houthis continued their attacks in the beginning of January 2024, the United States and its partners issued stern warnings of further consequences. The Houthis ignored those warnings, launching a January 3 attack on the CMA CGM TAGE container ship with two anti-ship ballistic missiles.¹¹ On January 6, the USS Laboon shot down a Houthi UAV in international waters in the Southern Red Sea in the vicinity of multiple commercial vessels. No casualties or damage were reported.¹²

The Houthis launched their largest missile and drone barrage to date on January 9, targeting a U.S. vessel they claimed was providing aid to Israel. U.S. warplanes, the U.S. destroyers USS Gravely, USS Laboon, and USS Mason, along with the British destroyer HMS Diamond, shot down 18 drones, two cruise missiles, and one ballistic missile. No injuries or damage were reported. Sarea called the attack “an initial response to the treacherous assault on our naval forces by the U.S. enemy forces,” referring to the December 31 incident.¹³ The Houthis’ next attack—an anti-ship ballistic missile fired on January 11 from Yemen into international waters in the Gulf of Aden—compelled a stronger response. Later that day, U.S. and British forces bombed more than 60 Houthi targets at 16 different sites in Yemen in what President Joe Biden called a “direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks against international maritime vessels in the Red Sea,” which included the first recorded use of anti-ship ballistic missiles.¹⁴ The United States and its partners have continued strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen since, while the Houthis—with Iranian support—have pledged to continue their assaults on international shipping lanes in the Red Sea while promising retaliation against the United States.¹⁵

This relentless assault on shipping in the Red Sea is made possible by Iran, which has made no secret of its support for the Houthis, providing weapons, training, and support since the group began its terrorist campaign in Yemen a decade ago. The U.S. Navy has also uncovered evidence of Iranian support: U.S. Central Command announced on January 16 that it had uncovered Iranian-made anti-ship cruise missiles and propulsion, guidance, and warheads for ballistic missiles, all bound for the Houthis.¹⁶ The United States has accused Iran of being “very directly involved” in the Houthis’ campaign in the Red Sea.¹⁷ Iran has also reportedly sent members of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as well as Hezbollah, to Yemen to advise the Houthis’ attacks. Iranian sources told Reuters in January that Iran has provided the Houthis with advanced drones, anti-ship cruise missiles, precision-strike ballistic missiles, and medium-range missiles. Further, IRGC commanders and

10 Adam Durbin, “US Navy helicopters destroy Houthi boats in Red Sea after attempted hijack,” BBC News, December 31, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67851897>; “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 31, 2023, 3:53 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1741381969936834951>.

11 “Yemen’s Houthis say they ‘targeted’ container ship, no damage reported,” Reuters, January 3, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-says-no-damage-reported-after-latest-houthi-attack-red-sea-2024-01-03/>; “A Joint Statement from the Governments of the United States, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the United Kingdom,” White House, January 3, 2024, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/03/a-joint-statement-from-the-governments-of-the-united-states-australia-bahrain-belgium-canada-denmark-germany-italy-japan-netherlands-new-zealand-and-the-united-kingdom/?utm_source=twitter.

12 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 6, 2024, 12:11 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1743681763145138365>.

13 Iain Marlow, “Blinken Warns of ‘Consequences’ for Houthis If Red Sea Strikes Persist,” Bloomberg, January 8, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-08/blinken-warns-of-consequences-for-houthis-if-strikes-persist>; David Gritten, “US and UK hint at military action after largest Houthi attack in Red Sea,” BBC News, January 10, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67932725>; “US, UK forces repel ‘largest attack’ by Houthis in Red Sea,” Reuters, January 10, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-uk-forces-shoot-down-houthi-missile-drone-attack-red-sea-us-military-2024-01-10/>.

14 “US CENTCOM Statement on 27th Houthi attack on commercial shipping lanes in the Red Sea,” U.S. Central Command, January 11, 2024, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/3643121/us-centcom-statement-on-27th-houthi-attack-on-commercial-shipping-lanes-in-the/>; “Statement from President Joe Biden on Coalition Strikes in Houthi-Controlled Areas in Yemen,” White House, January 11, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/11/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-coalition-strikes-in-houthi-controlled-areas-in-yemen/>.

15 Jon Gambrell, Tara Copp, Aamer Madhani, and Lolita C. Baldor, “US military strikes another Houthi-controlled site after warning ships to avoid parts of Red Sea,” Associated Press, January 13, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthis-us-ship-attacks-bombing-red-sea-iran-cc06d9186a00d1f22bea6b9c14dda12a>.

16 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 16, 2024, 6:09 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1747214405291716688>.

17 Jon Gambrell, “Iran is ‘directly involved’ in Yemen Houthi rebel ship attacks, US Navy’s Mideast chief tells AP,” Associated Press, January 22, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/us-navy-houthi-attacks-red-sea-shipping-iran-8e55669e4d18cbc7007654640fa5f-dc1>.

advisers are providing data and intelligence support to determine which ships traversing the Red Sea are headed toward Israel.¹⁸ Iran has denied U.S. accusations of involvement in the Houthis' attacks¹⁹ while also voicing continued support for the Houthis.²⁰ The Houthis, in turn, have reportedly turned to Iran for more weaponry.²¹ In response, the United States has increased pressure on the Houthis—and their Iranian sponsors—announcing on January 17 that it would re-designate the Houthis as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan labeled the Houthis' Red Sea attacks the “textbook definition of terrorism.”²² The designation is expected to go into effect within 30 days—to allow for the creation of new humanitarian aid processes in Yemen—and remain in place until and unless the Houthis cease attacking vessels in the region.²³

While Houthi attacks on Israel in October were aimed specifically at causing damage to the Jewish state, the shift in the Houthis' strategy targeting international shipping represents a more global agenda: an attempt to increase international pressure on Israel to end its assault on Hamas. The Houthis are attempting to create a causal link between global shipping delays—and the associated costs—and Israel's perceived aggression against Gaza. Houthi propaganda ties the attacks directly to Palestinian suffering in Gaza in order to create a paradigm whereby the international community shifts blame to Israel for the economic consequences of the Houthi attacks and applies pressure on Israel cease its operation in Gaza.

Instead of increasing pressure on Israel, however, Houthi violence has instead spurred the international community into action. On December 18, the United States announced Operation Prosperity Guardian, a multinational maritime force under the umbrella of the Combined Maritime Forces to ensure freedom of navigation in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The force includes the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain.²⁴ In recognition of the threat of Houthi aggression, the United States began targeting Houthi military sites in Yemen in January 2024. Further, Iran has sent its own warships to the Red Sea, increasing the risk of direct confrontation between it and the United States.²⁵ Rather than increasing pressure on Israel, the Houthis' Red Sea strategy has globalized the Yemen conflict. By instigating direct international military mobilization, the Houthis have drawn Western forces into Yemen, expanding the conflict beyond its previous incarnation as a proxy war between the Saudi Arabia-backed Yemeni government and the Iran-backed Houthis. Rather than creating international pressure on Israel, Houthi aggression in the Red Sea has brought the United States and Iran closer to direct conflict while opening the Houthis to U.S. strikes. The Houthi assaults have, therefore, succeeded in weakening their already tenuous position in Yemen while exposing Iran's direct involvement and stretching its military resources in a direct confrontation with the United States.

18 Samia Nakhoul and Parisa Hafezi, “Iranian and Hezbollah commanders help direct Houthi attacks in Yemen,” Reuters, January 20, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranian-hezbollah-commanders-help-direct-houthi-attacks-yemen-sources-say-2024-01-20/>.

19 Agence France-Presse, “Iran Dismisses US Claims It Is Involved in Houthi Ship Attacks,” Voice of America, December 23, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-dismisses-us-claims-it-is-involved-in-houthi-ship-attacks-/7410427.html>.

20 Patrick Wintour, “Iran rejects US and UK calls to end support for Houthi Red Sea attacks,” *Guardian* (London), January 1, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/01/iran-rejects-us-and-uk-calls-to-end-support-for-houthi-red-sea-attacks>.

21 Erin Banco and Iara Seligman, “Houthis seek more Iranian weapons to step up Red Sea attacks, intel shows,” *Politico*, January 21, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/01/21/intel-houthis-red-sea-yemen-00136814>.

22 “Statement from National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Terrorist Designation of the Houthis,” White House, January 17, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/17/statement-from-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-the-terrorist-designation-of-the-houthis/>.

23 “Statement from National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Terrorist Designation of the Houthis,” White House, January 17, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/17/statement-from-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-the-terrorist-designation-of-the-houthis/>.

24 “Statement from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Ensuring Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea,” U.S. Department of Defense, December 18, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3621110/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-ensuring-freedom-of-n/>.

25 Patrick Wintour, “Iran rejects US and UK calls to end support for Houthi Red Sea attacks,” *Guardian* (London), January 1, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/01/iran-rejects-us-and-uk-calls-to-end-support-for-houthi-red-sea-attacks>.

The Ripple Effect: Houthi Red Sea Attacks and Their Wide-Ranging Impact

Claire Jungman, Chief of Staff, United Against Nuclear Iran

The Iran-sponsored maritime attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea have not only heightened regional tensions but also triggered profound ramifications across the global maritime industry and economy. Iran's backing of the Houthis is part of its broader regional strategy. Iran's supply of advanced weaponry such as drones and missiles has intensified the attacks, escalated the situation, and made these key maritime routes increasingly perilous. By supplying not only sophisticated weaponry but also strategic guidance, Iran has enabled the Houthis to target critical shipping lanes, thereby exerting influence over a vital chokepoint in global trade. This has led to heightened security concerns in the region and necessitated a robust response from global powers.

Major shipping companies, recognizing the amplified risks in the Red Sea—a crucial artery for oil and consumer goods—have rerouted their vessels. This decision has significantly increased transit times by seven to 10 days and caused a surge in operational costs by 20% to 30%.²⁶ The ripple effect of this strategic shift has disrupted supply chains, leading to elevated shipping costs and logistical challenges.

The escalated risk has therefore driven a sharp rise in insurance premiums for vessels operating in the Red Sea corridor. Cargo insurance rates have soared from approximately 0.6% to as high as 2% of the cargo value, burdening shipping companies with additional financial strains and impacting global trade costs.²⁷

The redirection of shipping routes has critically impacted global trade. Traffic through the Suez Canal has seen a significant drop, with Egypt's Suez Canal revenues plummeting by 40% compared to 2023 levels.²⁸ The Drewry World Container Index reported a marked increase in shipping prices, escalating from \$1,521/40 ft. container to \$3,777/40 ft.²⁹ This spike has reverberated through global supply chains, leading to increased costs and market disruptions.

In response to these heightened threats, shipping companies and international coalitions have bolstered safety and security measures, including deploying private security teams, intensifying naval patrols, and employing advanced tracking systems. While these measures have improved maritime safety, they have also contributed to a 10% to 15% increase in operational costs for shipping companies.³⁰

The instability in the Red Sea extends beyond maritime trade, with far-reaching economic and political consequences. Regions heavily reliant on imports and exports through this route are grappling with disruptions, leading to shortages and inflationary pressures. This situation has sparked increased diplomatic dialogues and alliances as countries seek to secure their economic interests.

The ongoing conflict in the Red Sea, fueled by Iran's involvement and the Houthi attacks, therefore raises concerns about the long-term viability of these critical trade routes. Diversification of trade routes and increased international collaboration are recommended to mitigate risks and ensure stability in global maritime trade.

26 Panos Mourdoukoutas, "Red Sea, Panama Canal Send Container Freight Costs Soaring – What It Means For Global Economy and Wall Street," International Business Times, January 15, 2024, <https://www.ibtimes.com/red-sea-panama-canal-send-container-freight-costs-soaring-what-it-means-global-economy-wall-3722101>.

27 Thibault Denamiel, Matthew Schleich William Alan Reinsch, and Will Todman, "The Global Economic Consequences of the Attacks on Red Sea Shipping Lanes," CSIS, January 22, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/global-economic-consequences-at-tacks-red-sea-shipping-lanes>.

28 "Egypt's Suez Canal revenues down 40% due to Houthi attacks," Reuters, January 11, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/egypts-suez-canal-revenues-down-40-due-houthi-attacks-2024-01-11/>.

29 Thibault Denamiel, Matthew Schleich William Alan Reinsch, and Will Todman, "The Global Economic Consequences of the Attacks on Red Sea Shipping Lanes," CSIS, January 22, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/global-economic-consequences-at-tacks-red-sea-shipping-lanes>.

30 Jonathan Saul, "Shipping Industry Urges Caution on Use of Armed Guards in Red Sea," Reuters, December 15, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/shipping-industry-urges-caution-use-armed-guards-red-sea-vessels-2023-12-15/>.

The Houthis' attacks in the Red Sea have exposed the vulnerability of global trade networks to geopolitical conflicts. The widespread impact of these attacks underscores the necessity for both robust international maritime security measures as well as a strategic reevaluation of global trade strategies. Proactive and vigilant international efforts are essential in safeguarding global economic stability amidst these turbulent times.

Are Peace in Yemen and Deterrence in the Red Sea Possible?

Edmund Fitton-Brown, Former UK Ambassador to Yemen and Senior Advisor, Counter Extremism Project

Yemen has a troubled history, and the past three decades have been particularly difficult. The 1990s began with the reunification of Yemen, but whatever promise that held was killed off by Ali Abdullah Saleh's decision to support Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. A civil war followed in Yemen, which brought a rise in extremism that included the USS Cole attack in 2000. The corrupt and autocratic Saleh regime continued until it became a casualty of the Arab Spring. But the optimism surrounding the National Dialogue faded quickly and the northern Zaidi Houthis expanded their rebellion, taking over Sanaa in 2014.

Hardly anyone outside the circles of Yemen-watchers had even heard of the Houthis before 2014 and most people still cannot find their heartland of Saada on a map. For much of the past decade, the priority was to preserve the legitimate government of Saleh's first successor, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, whilst seeing if credible Houthi grievances could be addressed. The Houthis, meanwhile, were emboldened by their success. They arrested political opponents, including Hadi, who later fled to Aden. In 2015, Saudi Arabia militarily engaged the Houthis at Hadi's request. The Houthis followed Hadi south and forced him to flee Yemen. But they were over-extended and, having to fight both Government of Yemen and Saudi-led coalition forces, could not take Aden. Over the past nine years, battle lines have not moved as much as they did in 2014-15. But Yemen has sustained horrific casualties and damage. Besides Sanaa, contested cities like Hodeidah, Taz, and Marib have been devastated. The United Nations estimates acute food insecurity to affect tens of millions of Yemenis.³¹

Naturally, the focus of the international community has been on peacemaking. This limited the appetite for calling the Houthis a terrorist group, until their increasing attacks beyond the borders of Yemen caused a shift in opinion. Initially, the Houthis mainly attempted to hit targets far inside Saudi Arabia, with only occasional success. At the end of the Trump Administration in January 2021, the United States first designated the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization. The incoming Biden administration reverse the designation that February.³² But when the Houthis conducted a lethal drone and missile attack on Abu Dhabi in January 2022, the United Arab Emirates skillfully used its temporary position on the U.N. Security Council to secure Resolution 2624, which branded the Houthis as a terrorist group for the first time.³³

This was the state of affairs on October 6, 2023. The tolerance of the United States and others for the Houthis' naked aggression in the Red Sea has now been stretched to its breaking point. The Red Sea shipping route's importance to the global economy and the risk that significant quantities of shipping will have to reroute have compelled the U.S.-led coalition to act in defense of free trade. The subsequent international military campaign targeting Houthi military assets in Yemen is a clear message to the Houthis and to Iran that this aggression will not be tolerated.

31 "Joint Statement on Yemen Humanitarian Situation and Funding Gap [EN/AR]," U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, September 14, 2023, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/yemen/joint-statement-yemen-humanitarian-situation-and-funding-gap-enar>.

32 Jennifer Hansler, "Blinken removing Yemen's Houthis from list of foreign terrorist organizations effective next week," CNN, February 12, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/12/politics/blinken-fto-designation-reversal/index.html>.

33 Resolution 2624 (2022), U.N. Security Council, February 28, 2022, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_RES_2624.pdf.

Interestingly, against this violent backdrop, the United Nations announced in late December 2023 a “significant step” toward a ceasefire in Yemen.³⁴ The U.N. envoy celebrated this supposed progress without making any reference to Houthi attacks on international shipping. It may be that this latest Houthi tease of progress toward a ceasefire and peace talks is a calculated move to play on the international community’s desperate desire for peace in Yemen; and to make decisive action against the Houthis and Iran that much more difficult when it could be seen as undermining the prospects for that. The government of Saudi Arabia clearly wants to get out of a war that they have apparently felt trapped in for years. The international community wants to see humanitarian needs in Yemen alleviated. All of this begs the question, is it possible both to pursue peace in Yemen and deterrence in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb?

The latest U.S. action, and the assembling of a coalition with the United Kingdom and others to face down Iranian and Houthi aggression, indicates that deterrence will be the priority. And, indeed, it must be. The right of shipping peacefully to transit international navigation routes is established and must be reinforced. The Houthis are not a recognized government and attacking them proportionately is not an act of war against Yemen. Whereas indicating to them that their challenge is too difficult to meet, and that their deigning to talk peace after nine years of brutalizing the Yemeni population is enough on its own to secure them latitude to indulge in international blackmail, would be in effect to surrender to them. There is no guarantee that new U.N. talks will lead anywhere—so the Houthis must be told that those talks are welcomed for their own sake but are unrelated to maritime enforcement; and that they will face severe kinetic consequences if their attacks continue. The one proviso is that further kinetic action should not be allowed to damage critical infrastructure on the Yemeni coast, particularly the port of Hodeida, which is essential to the commercial and humanitarian operations upon which the well-being of so many Yemenis depends.

The success of U.S. action is not assured, however—indeed, it can be predicted with some confidence that the Houthis will exert every effort to prove that they cannot be deterred. Their response has been defiant, but they have not been able to mount an attack on the scale of the one that drew the first U.S./UK military response. But the U.S. action is carefully calibrated to degrade Houthi offensive capabilities in the Red Sea and, also, to interdict and deter Iranian re-supply. It is a proportionate and targeted approach, which will disappoint those who want to see a more muscular deterrence that targets not just the Houthis but also their Iranian allies. There is, of course, an option for the United States to escalate further, depending upon what provocation it faces. But it is possible that the degradation of the Houthis’ capabilities and the deterrent effect of U.S. resolve will see a reduction in Houthi activity to the point where the levels of maritime traffic in the region recover.

34 “UN envoy welcomes ‘significant step’ towards ceasefire in Yemen,” United Nations, December 26, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1145087>.

APPENDIX: Timeline of Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

- **October 19, 2023:** A U.S. warship near the Red Sea shoots down four cruise missiles and 15 drones over a period of nine hours. A Pentagon spokesman accuses the Houthis of firing the projectiles “potentially towards targets in Israel.”³⁵
- **October 27, 2023:** Drones strike the Egyptian Red Sea towns of Taba and Nuweiba, wounding six people. According to an Egyptian military spokesman, two drones were fired from the southern Red Sea aiming north. Israel accuses the Houthis of launching the drones to target Israel.³⁶
- **Late October 2023:** Saudi military forces intercept a Houthi missile over Saudi territory. The missile was reportedly headed toward Israel.³⁷
- **October 31, 2023:** Israel intercepts a surface-to-surface missile launched from the area of the Red Sea, while Israeli jets intercept what the Israeli military describes as “aerial threats.”³⁸
- **November 7, 2023:** Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea announces a drone attack against “sensitive areas” inside Israel. In a statement on the Al Masirah TV channel, Sarea claims the attack succeeded in the “halting of movement in the targeted bases and airports for hours.”³⁹
- **November 8, 2023:** The Houthis shoot down a U.S. MQ-9 drone over the Red Sea near the coast of Yemen. U.S. officials acknowledge the attack on the drone but do not confirm if the drone was in Yemeni airspace. A Pentagon spokesman says Houthi attempts to recover the drone are unlikely to retrieve anything of significance.⁴⁰
- **November 9, 2023:** Sarea claims that the Houthis successfully launched a “batch of ballistic missiles” targeting “various sensitive targets” in southern Israel. Sarea accuses Israel of maintaining secrecy around the success of the Houthi attack. According to Israel media, there are no reports of explosions in Israel beyond a drone that was shot down in Eilat. Sarea does not mention the drone in his statement.⁴¹
- **November 13, 2023:** The Houthis launch armed drones toward the Israeli Red Sea city of Eilat.⁴²
- **November 14, 2023:** Israel intercepts a missile near the Red Sea. A Houthi spokesman says the Houthis launched a missile toward the Red Sea city of Eilat in Israel. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi warns that his forces are actively searching for Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.⁴³
- **November 15, 2023:** While in international waters in the Red Sea, the USS Thomas Hudner shoots down a drone traveling toward the ship from Yemen. No casualties or damage are reported.⁴⁴

35 Oren Liebermann, “Incident involving US warship intercepting missiles near Yemen lasted 9 hours,” CNN, October 20, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/20/politics/us-warship-intercept-missiles-near-yemen/index.html>; Jessie Yeung, Hamdi Alkhshali, and Kyle Blaine, “Israel says it thwarted aerial attacks by Yemen’s Houthis near Red Sea,” CNN, November 1, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/01/middleeast/israel-says-it-thwarted-attacks-from-yemens-houthis-intl-hnk/index.html>.

36 Ahmed Mohamed Hassan and Dan Williams, “Drone blasts hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns, Israel points to Houthi,” Reuters, October 27, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/explosion-heard-egyptian-red-sea-town-near-israeli-border-witness-2023-10-27/>.

37 Sam Dagher, Mohammed Hatem, and Leen Al-Rashdan, “Saudi Forces on Alert After Clash With Iran-Backed Houthis,” Bloomberg News, last updated October 31, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-10-30/saudi-arabia-clashes-with-yemen-s-houthis-rebels-putting-kingdom-on-high-alert>.

38 Jessie Yeung, Hamdi Alkhshali, and Kyle Blaine, “Israel says it thwarted aerial attacks by Yemen’s Houthis near Red Sea,” CNN, November 1, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/01/middleeast/israel-says-it-thwarted-attacks-from-yemens-houthis-intl-hnk/index.html>; “Yemen’s Houthis say they launched missiles, drones at Israel,” Reuters, October 31, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-warns-possible-hostile-aircraft-near-red-sea-city-eilat-2023-10-31/>.

39 “Houthis launch drones towards ‘sensitive’ targets in Israel,” Middle East Monitor, November 7, 2023, <https://www.middleeast-monitor.com/2023/11/07-houthis-launch-drones-towards-sensitive-targets-in-israel/>.

40 “US drone shot down near Yemen - officials,” Reuters, November 8, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-drone-shot-down-near-yemen-officials-2023-11-08/>; “Houthis tried to recover U.S. drone they shot down, Pentagon says,” Reuters, November 9, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/houthis-tried-recover-us-drone-they-shot-down-pentagon-says-2023-11-09/>.

41 “Yemen’s Houthis claim to launch ‘batch’ of missiles toward southern Israel,” Times of Israel, November 9, 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/yemens-houthis-claim-to-launch-batch-of-missiles-toward-southern-israel/.

42 “Yemen’s Houthis say they fired ballistic missiles towards Israel,” Al Jazeera, November 14, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/14/yemens-houthis-say-they-fired-ballistic-missiles-towards-israel>.

43 “Yemen’s Houthis say they fired ballistic missiles towards Israel,” Al Jazeera, November 14, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/14/yemens-houthis-say-they-fired-ballistic-missiles-towards-israel>; Mohammed Alghobari, “Yemen’s Houthis leader says group will target Israeli ships in Red Sea,” Reuters, November 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-leader-says-group-will-target-israeli-ships-red-sea-2023-11-14/>.

44 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, November 15, 2023, 10:13 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1724888888888888888>.

- **November 19, 2023:** Using a helicopter, the Houthis seize the British-owned and Japanese-operated cargo ship the *Galaxy Leader* in the southern Red Sea off the Yemeni port of Hodeida, taking 25 hostages. The Houthis describe the ship as Israeli. The vessel is owned by a company registered under Isle of Man-headquartered Ray Car Carriers, which is a unit of Tel Aviv-incorporated Ray Shipping. Sarea issues a statement on X, formerly Twitter, calling Israeli ships legitimate targets. Sarea says the Houthis are “treating the ship’s crew in accordance with Islamic principles and values.” Israel accuses Iran of directing an “act of terrorism.” The Ray Car Carriers-managed vessels *Glovis Star* and *Hermes Leader* divert course away from the Red Sea. On November 20, the Houthis release video footage of the capture of the *Galaxy Leader*.⁴⁵
- **November 23, 2023:** While patrolling the Red Sea, the USS *Thomas Hudner* shoots down multiple one-way attack drones launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. No damage or injuries are reported.⁴⁶
- **November 25, 2023:** An entity claiming to represent Yemeni authorities orders a British vessel to alter course. Britain’s Maritime Trade Operations agency calls on other vessels to exercise caution.⁴⁷
- **November 27, 2023:** At 1:41 a.m. Sanaa time, the Houthis fire two ballistic missiles toward the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS *Mason* and the Israeli-linked commercial tanker *M/V Central Park* in the Gulf of Aden. The *Mason* had responded to a distress call from the *Central Park* after armed Somali pirates boarded the vessel. The missiles land in the Gulf of Aden approximately 10 nautical miles from the ships. There is no damage or injuries reported from either vessel. The *Central Park* is operating under the management of Zodiac Maritime, an international shipping company owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer’s Zodiac Group. Three Chinese Navy vessels reportedly ignored the *Central Park*’s 59 distress calls after the pirates attacked the ship.⁴⁸
- **December 3, 2023:** At about 9:15 a.m., Sanaa time, the Houthis fire a ballistic missile at the Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier *Unity Explorer* in the Red Sea. The missile hits near the ship. At about noon, the U.S. Navy destroyer USS *Carney* shoots down a drone launched from Houthi-controlled territory toward the warship. A second missile hits the *Unity Explorer* a half hour later, causing minor damage. The *Carney* shoots down another drone while responding to the *Unity Explorer*. At about 3:30 p.m., missiles strike the Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier *Number 9* in the Red Sea, causing minor damage to the *Number 9* but no casualties. At approximately 4:30 p.m., another missile strikes the Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier *The Sophie II* in the Red Sea. No significant damage is reported. While on its way to assist *The Sophie II*, the *Carney* shoots down another drone. The *Sophie II*’s owner, Kyowa Kisen of Imabari, Japan, announces the crew is safe and the ship did not sustain any damage. The United States accuses the Houthis of launching the attacks with Iranian support. Houthi spokesman Yahya Sarea claims two of the attacks. According to Sarea, a missile struck the first vessel and a drone struck the second ship, both in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Sarea does not mention the

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-houthis-seize-ship-red-sea-no-israelis-among-owners-or-crew-2023-11-19/>.

45 “Houthis seize ship in Red Sea with link to Israeli company,” Reuters, November 20, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-houthis-seize-ship-red-sea-no-israelis-among-owners-or-crew-2023-11-19/>; Agence France-Presse and Times of Israel staff, “Houthis say Israeli ships ‘legitimate target,’ as threat to global shipping grows,” Times of Israel, November 20, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/yemens-houthis-say-israeli-ships-legitimate-target-as-threats-to-shipping-grow/>; Jon Gambrell, “Analysis: Iran-backed Yemen rebels’ helicopter-borne attack on ship raises risks in crucial Red Sea,” Associated Press, November 21, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-red-sea-ship-yemen-houthis-65b611ff878a411900037e7c9a8ee17b>; Jonathan Saul, “Two ships divert course away from Red Sea area after vessel seized by Houthis,” Reuters, November 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/two-ships-divert-course-away-red-sea-area-after-vessel-seized-by-houthis-2023-11-20/>; “Yemen’s Houthis release video footage showing armed men seizing ‘Israeli-linked ship,’” Reuters, November 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-release-video-footage-showing-armed-men-seizing-israeli-linked-2023-11-20/>; Yahya Sarea, Twitter post, November 19, 2023, 11:34 a.m., <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1726277654544785788>; Isabel Debre and Jon Gambrell, “Yemen’s Houthi rebels hijack an Israeli-linked ship in the Red Sea and take 25 crew members hostage,” Associated Press, last updated November 20, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-houthi-rebels-hijacked-ship-red-sea-dc9b6448690bcf5c70a0baf7c7c34b09>.

46 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, November 22, 2023, 8:40 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1727502473009733952>.

47 Aziz El Yaakoubi, “Israeli-managed vessel hit by suspected Iranian drone, US official says,” Reuters, November 25, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-managed-vessel-hit-by-suspected-iranian-drone-us-official-says-2023-11-25/>.

48 Caitlin Doornbos, “Iran-backed Houthis fire on US Navy ship answering distress call from Israel-linked tanker,” *New York Post*, November 27, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/11/27/news/iran-backed-houthis-fire-on-us-navy-ship-answering-distress-call-from-israel-linked-tanker/>; “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, November 26, 2023, 10:44 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1728982985238843665>.

U.S. warship. According to Sarea, the Unity Explorer is owned by a British firm that includes Dan David Ungar, who lives in Israel, as one of its officers. Sarea says the Houthis will continue to prevent Israeli ships from navigating the Red Sea while Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip continues.⁴⁹

- **December 11-12, 2023:** At midnight Yemen time on December 12, a Houthi cruise missile strikes the Norwegian tanker Strinda in the Red Sea, causing a fire. No injuries are reported. The U.S. Navy destroyer USS Mason responds to a distress call to render aid. According to Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea, the Houthis attacked the Strinda because it was delivering crude oil to an Israeli terminal. The ship's Norwegian owner, Mowinckel Chemical Tankers, says the vessel was headed to Italy and carrying biofuel feedstock, not crude oil. In response to the attack, Israel deploys a warship to the Red Sea.⁵⁰
- **December 13, 2023:** The Houthis launch two missiles toward the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Ardmore Encounter in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Both missiles miss the Ardmore Encounter, which is carrying Indian-manufactured jet fuel. Houthi forces in speedboats pull up alongside the vessel and attempt to board it, at which point armed guards on board the tanker open fire and repel the attackers. No damage or casualties are reported. The American warship USS Mason shoots down a suspected Houthi drone flying in its direction during the missile attack.⁵¹
- **December 14, 2023:** The Houthis fire a ballistic missile toward the Hong Kong-flagged container ship Maersk Gibraltar in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The missile misses. An entity claiming to be the "Yemeni Navy" had hailed the Maersk Gibraltar before the missile launch. The Houthis claim they directly hit the Gibraltar with a drone strike. Maersk denies the vessel had been hit. Maersk reports the crew and ship are safe. The Maersk Gibraltar was underway from Salalah, Oman, to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.⁵²
- **December 15, 2023:** The Houthis launch a projectile toward the Liberian-flagged and German-owned ship Al Jasrah in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The projectile, reportedly a drone, strikes the ship, causing a fire. No injuries are reported. The drone exploded on impact, suggesting it may have been Iran's Shahed 136 series one-way attack drone.⁵³
- **December 15, 2023:** The Houthis launch two ballistic missiles toward the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. One of the missiles strikes the Liberian-flagged MSC Palatium III near the strait, causing a fire. No injuries are reported. According to a U.S. defense official, the Houthis had intended to target the Al Jasrah in the second attack. A Houthi statement claims the militants fired missiles at the MSC Alanya and MSC Palatium III, which the Houthis accused of heading toward Israel. The statement does not mention Al Jasrah. According to ship tracking data reported by Reuters, the Alanya and Palatium III were both destined for Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁴

49 Jon Gambrell, "3 commercial ships hit by missiles in Houthi attack in Red Sea, US warship downs 3 drones," Associated Press, last updated December 4, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/red-sea-houthi-yemen-ships-attack-israel-hamas-war-gaza-strip-716770f0a780160e9abed98d3c48fbde>; "Houthi Attacks on Commercial Shipping in International Water Continue," U.S. Central Command, December 3, 2023, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/3605010/houthi-attacks-on-commercial-shipping-in-international-water-continue/>.

50 Nadine Awadalla, Terje Solsvik, and Phil Stewart, "Yemen's Houthis claim missile attack on Norwegian tanker in tense Middle East," Reuters, December 12, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/cruise-missile-yemen-strikes-tanker-ship-us-officials-2023-12-12/>; "U.S. Central Command," Twitter post, December 11, 2023, 10:45 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1734419108366590302>.

51 Jon Gambrell, "Missiles from rebel-held Yemen miss a ship loaded with jet fuel near the key Bab el-Mandeb Strait," Associated Press, December 13, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-rebels-ship-attacks-us-navy-1727df3d95e548c6e4d20b51f096268f>.

52 Jon Gambrell, "Missile fired from rebel-controlled Yemen misses a container ship in Bab el-Mandeb Strait," Associated Press, December 14, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-ship-attack-missile-israel-hamas-war-gaza-strip-b2478db9aad81ca447e6a393480f9a8>; "Maersk denies Houthi claim container ship hit by Yemeni militia," Reuters, December 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/maersk-says-container-ship-en-route-saudi-arabia-was-targeted-by-missile-2023-12-14/>.

53 "Attacks from Houthi-controlled Yemen hit two ships -US official," Reuters, December 15, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uk-maritime-agency-probing-reports-further-incident-near-bab-al-mandab-strait-2023-12-15/>; Barak Ravid, "U.S. warns Houthis to stop attacks in Red Sea," Axios, December 15, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/2023/12/14/us-warns-yemens-houthis-stop-red-sea-attacks>; "Iran's Threat to Maritime Security," UANI, accessed January 9, 2023, <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/irans-threat-to-maritime-security>.

54 "Attacks from Houthi-controlled Yemen hit two ships -US official," Reuters, December 15, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uk-maritime-agency-probing-reports-further-incident-near-bab-al-mandab-strait-2023-12-15/>; Barak Ravid, "U.S. warns Houthis to stop attacks in Red Sea," Axios, December 15, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/2023/12/14/us-warns-yemens-houthis-stop-red-sea-attacks>; Jon Gambrell, "2 attacks launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels strike container ships in vital Red Sea corridor," Associated Press, December 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-ship-attack-israel-hamas-69289146266b9042b5896aa46796>

- **December 16, 2023:** The USS Carney shoots down 14 unmanned aerial systems (UAS) launched as a drone wave from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. U.S. Central Command reports the UAS to be one-way attack drones. There is no damage to ships in the area or reported injuries.⁵⁵
- **December 18, 2023:** Houthi drones attack the Panama-flagged MSC Clara and the Norwegian-owned Swan Atlantic in the Red Sea off Yemen’s coast. No injuries are reported. Sarea accuses the ships of being “linked to the Zionist entity.” In response, Taiwan’s Yang Ming Marine Transport Corporation announces it will divert its ships sailing through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden via the Cape of Good Hope for the next two weeks. To combat the Houthi threat in the Red Sea, the United States launches Operation Prosperity Guardian, a multinational maritime force under the umbrella of the Combined Maritime Forces.⁵⁶
- **December 23, 2023:** The Houthis fire anti-ship ballistic missiles and attack drones toward international shipping lanes in the Southern Red Sea, targeting the Norwegian-flagged, owned, and operated chemical/oil tanker M/V Blaamanen and the Gabon-owned, Indian-flagged crude oil tanker M/V Saibaba. The USS Laboon responds to multiple distress calls, shooting down four Houthi unmanned aerial drones targeting the Laboon. No injuries are reported.
- **December 26, 2023:** Houthi forces launch drones and missiles over 10 hours in the Red Sea. U.S. forces in the Red Sea shoot down 12 one-way attack drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles, and two land attack cruise missiles. There are no injuries or damage reported aboard any ships in the area.⁵⁷
- **December 28, 2023:** The USS Mason shoots down a drone and an anti-ship ballistic missile in the Southern Red Sea that were fired by the Houthis. There are no reported injuries or damage to any of the 18 ships in the area.⁵⁸
- **December 30, 2023:** A Houthi missile targets the Singapore-flagged, Denmark-owned/operated container ship Maersk Hangzhou in the Red Sea. The strike causes minimal damage and there are no reported injuries. The USS Gravely and USS Laboon respond to a distress call. While responding, the Gravely shoots down two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.⁵⁹
- **December 31, 2023:** Four Houthi small boats attack the container ship Maersk Hangzhou in the Red Sea. The Houthis attack the ship with small arms and approach to within 20 meters of the vessel while attempting to board it. A contracted security team onboard the Hangzhou returns fire. U.S. helicopters from the USS Eisenhower and Gravely respond to a distress call from the Hangzhou. The Houthis fire upon the helicopters, which return fire and sink three of the four boats, killing the Houthi crews. The fourth Houthi boat escapes.⁶⁰
- **January 2, 2024:** At approximately 9:30 p.m. Yemen time, the Houthis fire two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi controlled areas in Yemen into the Southern Red Sea. Multiple commercial ships in the area report impact in the surrounding water. No damage or injuries are reported.⁶¹
- **January 3, 2024:** The Houthis fire two anti-ship ballistic missiles toward the Red Sea, claiming to target a container ship headed for Israel. In a televised speech, Sarea names the ship as the CMA CGM Tage container ship. The French shipping firm CMA CGM reports no damage or injuries. According to the

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55 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 16, 2023, 9:49 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1736035863849824595>.

56 “Yahya Sare’e,” Twitter post, December 18, 2023, 9:29 a.m., https://twitter.com/Yahya_Saree/status/1736755584328765910; Ahmed Elimam, Phil Stewart, and Terje Solsvik, “Vessel attacked in Red Sea off Yemen coast, US blames Houthis,” Reuters, December 18, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/ukmto-ambrey-report-possible-explosion-south-yemens-port-mokha-2023-12-18/>; “Statement from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Ensuring Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea,” U.S. Department of Defense, December 18, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3621110/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-ensuring-freedom-of-n/>.

57 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 26, 2023, 3:36 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1739746985652158755>.

58 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 28, 2023, 7:18 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1740527574772834536>.

59 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 30, 2023, 7:47 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1741259817602429357>.

60 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, December 31, 2023, 3:53 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1741381969936834951>.

61 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 3, 2024, 10:34 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1742389041725886957>.

company, the ship had been heading toward Egypt, not Israel. Sarea warns, “No U.S attack will pass without a response or punishment.”⁶²

- **January 6, 2024:** At approximately 9:30 a.m. Yemen time, the USS Laboon shoots down a Houthi UAV in international waters of the Southern Red Sea in the vicinity of multiple commercial vessels. No casualties or damage are reported.⁶³
- **January 9, 2024:** U.S. and British warships shoot down a Houthi missile and drone barrage over the Red Sea in what is reportedly the largest Houthi attack in the area to date. Warplanes from the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Dwight D Eisenhower join the U.S. destroyers USS Gravelly, USS Laboon, and USS Mason, and British destroyer HMS Diamond in shooting down 18 drones, two cruise missiles, and one ballistic missile. No injuries or damage are reported. The Houthis claim they were targeting a U.S. ship providing support to Israel. Sarea calls the attack “an initial response to the treacherous assault on our naval forces by the US enemy forces.” Sarea reiterates the Houthis’ intention to “prevent Israeli ships or ships heading towards occupied Palestine from navigating in both the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea until the [Israeli] aggression [on Gaza] has come to an end and the blockade has been lifted.”⁶⁴
- **January 11, 2024:** At approximately 2 a.m. Yemen time, Houthi rebels in Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen fire an anti-ship ballistic missile into international shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. No injuries or damage are reported. U.S. and British forces bomb more than 60 Houthi targets at 16 different sites in Yemen in what President Joe Biden calls a “direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks against international maritime vessels in the Red Sea,” which included the first recorded use of anti-ship ballistic missiles. Separately, U.S. forces in the Arabian Sea seize Iranian-made weapons bound for the Houthis. The seized weapons include Iranian-made ballistic missile and cruise missiles components. Seized items include propulsion, guidance, and warheads for Houthi medium range ballistic missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles, as well as air defense associated components.⁶⁵
- **January 13, 2024:** At 3:45 a.m., the USS Carney strikes a Houthi radar site in Yemen using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles. The strike is separate from Operation Prosperity Guardian.⁶⁶
- **January 14, 2024:** At approximately 4:45 p.m., the Houthis fire an anti-ship cruise missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the USS Laboon in the Southern Red Sea. U.S. aircraft shoot down the missile. There are no reported injuries or damage.⁶⁷
- **January 15, 2024:** At approximately, Houthi forces launch an anti-ship ballistic missile toward the Southern Red Sea commercial shipping lanes. The missile fails in flight and crashes in Yemen. There are no injuries or damage reported. At approximately 4 p.m., the Houthis launch an anti-ship ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and strike the Marshall Islands-flagged, U.S.-owned and -operated container ship M/V Gibraltar Eagle. There are no reported injuries or significant damage.⁶⁸

62 “Yemen’s Houthis say they ‘targeted’ container ship, no damage reported,” Reuters, January 3, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-says-no-damage-reported-after-latest-houthi-attack-red-sea-2024-01-03/>; “A Joint Statement from the Governments of the United States, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the United Kingdom,” White House, January 3, 2024, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/03/a-joint-statement-from-the-governments-of-the-united-states-australia-bahrain-belgium-canada-denmark-germany-italy-japan-netherlands-new-zealand-and-the-united-kingdom/?utm_source=twitter.

63 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 6, 2024, 12:11 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1743681763145138365>.

64 Iain Marlow, “Blinken Warns of ‘Consequences’ for Houthis If Red Sea Strikes Persist,” Bloomberg, January 8, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-08/blinken-warns-of-consequences-for-houthis-if-strikes-persist>; David Gritten, “US and UK hint at military action after largest Houthi attack in Red Sea,” BBC News, January 10, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67932725>; “US, UK forces repel ‘largest attack’ by Houthis in Red Sea,” Reuters, January 10, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-uk-forces-shoot-down-houthi-missile-drone-attack-red-sea-us-military-2024-01-10/>.

65 “US CENTCOM Statement on 27th Houthi attack on commercial shipping lanes in the Red Sea,” U.S. Central Command, January 11, 2024, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/3643121/us-centcom-statement-on-27th-houthi-attack-on-commercial-shipping-lanes-in-the/>; “Statement from President Joe Biden on Coalition Strikes in Houthi-Controlled Areas in Yemen,” White House, January 11, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/11/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-coalition-strikes-in-houthi-controlled-areas-in-yemen/>; “Statement from President Joe Biden on Coalition Strikes in Houthi-Controlled Areas in Yemen,” White House, January 11, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/11/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-coalition-strikes-in-houthi-controlled-areas-in-yemen/>; U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 16, 2024, 6:09 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1747214405291716688>.

66 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 13, 2024, <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1746010301479174562>.

67 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 14, 2024, 8:25 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1746705110401695779>.

68 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 15, 2024, 10:12 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/174705110401695779>.

- **January 16, 2024:** A missile strikes a Malta-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier Zografia in the Red Sea, causing damage but no injuries. Sarea claims a “direct hit” on the vessel, which was traveling from Vietnam to Israel. The ship had 24 crew on board but was empty of cargo when attacked. In response, the United States launches strikes against Houthi sites in Yemen, destroying four anti-ship ballistic missiles ready to launch.⁶⁹
- **January 17, 2024:** At approximately 8:30 p.m., the Houthis launch a one-way attack UAS from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen and strike the Marshall Islands-flagged, U.S.-owned and -operated bulk carrier M/V Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden. There are no reported injuries or damage. At approximately 11:59 p.m., U.S. forces strike 14 Houthi missiles ready to launch in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. According to U.S. forces, the missiles were on launch rails and presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships.⁷⁰
- **January 18, 2024:** The Houthis launch two anti-ship ballistic missiles at M/V Chem Ranger, a Marshall Island-flagged, U.S.-Owned, Greek-operated tanker ship. The missiles land in the water near the ship. There are no reported injuries or damage. U.S. forces strike two Houthi anti-ship missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen that were aimed into the Southern Red Sea and ready to launch.⁷¹
- **January 19, 2024:** U.S. forces strike three Houthi anti-ship missiles aimed at the Southern Red Sea and ready to launch.⁷²
- **January 20, 2024:** U.S. forces launch airstrikes against a Houthi anti-ship missile aimed into the Gulf of Aden and ready to launch.⁷³
- **January 22, 2024:** U.S. and British forces, with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands, strike eight Houthi targets in Yemen. The targets include missile systems and launchers, air defense systems, radars, and weapons storage facilities.⁷⁴
- **January 23, 2024:** U.S. Central Command forces strike two Houthi anti-ship missiles aimed toward the Southern Red Sea and prepared to launch. According to U.S. forces, the missiles presented an imminent threat to merchant ships and U.S. Navy vessels in the region.⁷⁵
- **January 24, 2024:** The Houthis fire three anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the U.S.-flagged, owned, and operated container ship M/V Maersk Detroit in the Gulf of Aden. One missile lands in the sea, while the USS Gravely shoots down other two. There are no reported injuries or damage.⁷⁶

[tus/1746913313932685597](https://www.reuters.com/business/red-sea-attack-fears-disrupt-global-trade-patterns-2024-01-16/).

69 Idrees Ali, Dmitry Zhdannikov, and Phil Stewart, “US attacks Houthi anti-ship missiles, vessel hit in Red Sea,” Reuters, January 16, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/red-sea-attack-fears-disrupt-global-trade-patterns-2024-01-16/>.

70 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 17, 2024, 5:33 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1747749078685872216>; “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 17, 2024, 8:43 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1747796789087125645>.

71 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 18, 2024, 7:42 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1748143745567010833>; “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 18, 2024, 1:40 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1748052643543683356>.

72 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 19, 2024, 5:17 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1748469686470160775>.

73 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 20, 2024, 10:18 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1748726814334214404>.

74 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 22, 2024, 6:03 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1749568374861091194>.

75 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 23, 2024, <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1749986029325451526>.

76 “U.S. Central Command,” Twitter post, January 24, 2024, 12:13 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1750205198067237095>.