

Houthis Target Maersk and MSC Vessels as They Vow to Renew Attacks



EU force highlights its escorts while warning of potential for more Houthi attacks (EUNAVFOR Aspides)

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Security services received reports of an explosion near an unidentified vessel today in the Red Sea. It is the first acknowledged report in days and came just hours after the Houthis issued a renewed threat on their official channels.

Details were vague on today's incident with the UK Maritime Trade Organization issuing only brief details. They received a report from a vessel of an explosion in the water approximately 72 nautical miles southeast of the port of Djibouti. The statement only said that there had been an explosion "at a distance," and that the crew and vessel were reported safe.

A Houthi spokesperson late today claimed responsibility reporting they had targeted two vessels, the *Maersk Yorktown* (28,900 dwt) a U.S.-flagged containership operated by Maersk Line Ltd., which operates under contract to the U.S. military, and the *MSC Veracruz* (68,000 dwt). The MSC vessel is registered in Portugal. The Houthis are again attributing the MSC vessel as an "Israeli ship" while saying a U.S. warship was also involved in today's attacks. UKMTO so far has only reported one distant explosion.

U.S. Centcom later confirmed that it intercepted one anti-ship ballistic missile launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen over the Gulf of Aden that was likely targeting the *Maersk Yorktown*, which they described as "a U.S.-flagged, owned, and operated vessel with 18 U.S. and four Greek crewmembers." They also confirmed that coalition forces engaged and destroyed four airborne unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. There was no confirmation that the MSC vessel or a U.S. warship was targeted. The Houthis claimed the drones were targeting those two vessels.

On its official channels, the Houthi militants had posted a statement reading, "Political Bureau of Ansarullah: We hope that Armed Forces escalate their operations against Zionist navigation, those associated with it in Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean." This came as they leveled fresh allegations of atrocities in Gaza attributed to the Israeli army. The group is also citing various media reports including the statistic that Red Sea traffic had fallen by 66 percent.

"The drop of confirmed attacks in recent weeks in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden shall however not dismiss the fact that Houthis probably still hold the capacity to launch such attacks," EUNAVOR Aspides wrote in today's status update. They also warned, "Looking at the wide Indian Ocean, the capture of a merchant vessel in the international waters near Hormuz, the fourth of its kind being currently held hostage, shows that the threat of hijacking is still present in this part of the ocean."

Aspides' command is reporting that the mission has protected 85 merchant vessels since it was launched. They said the warships deployed have also been successful in intercepting or destroying nine drones, one unmanned surface vessel, and four ballistic missiles.

U.S. Central Command's last report came on April 16, when they said forces successfully engaged two unmanned aerial vehicles. The prior incident was three days earlier on April 13 when a single anti-ship ballistic missile was fired toward the Gulf of Aden by the Houthis. There had been a flurry of activity earlier in April but the pace has lessened in the second half of the month.