

## Report: Top-secret US plans to attack Houthis accidentally shared with journalist

Vance, Hegseth led online chat that included magazine editor

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The oil tanker Sounion in 2024 was attacked by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea. (Photo: Eunavfor Aspides)

A top-secret group chat of U.S. officials discussing plans for military strikes aimed at reopening shipping in the Red Sea inadvertently included a journalist, according to a new report.

Details of the March 15 attacks against Houthis in Yemen were discussed in a group chat on the open-source, encrypted messaging platform Signal led by Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief of The Atlantic, reported that he was accidentally included in the chat, which provided precise information on targets, weapons packages and timing. Goldberg did not divulge that information.

Also on the chat were National Security Adviser Michael Waltz, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.

The planning also included discussion about how to get European countries to compensate the U.S. for its actions.

“It will have to be the United States that reopens these [Red Sea] shipping lanes,” Waltz texted, according to an article in The Atlantic. “Per the president’s request we are working with DOD and State to determine how to compile the cost associated and levy them on the Europeans.”

It was not immediately known why the group chat, known as a principals committee, was held on a public messaging platform. On Monday, when asked about the security breach, President Donald Trump told media in the Oval Office, “I don’t know anything about it.”

The Houthis began attacking vessels they claimed had links to Israel in the Red Sea shortly after the start of the war in Gaza in late 2023. Major ocean container lines and tanker operators withdrew from the region in 2024. Only CMA CGM of France continued to operate scheduled services.

Diversions of vessels on longer voyages around Africa’s Cape of Good Hope were a boon for carriers, whose higher operating costs translated into higher rates and billions of dollars in windfall profits. Some observers have gone so far as to jokingly describe the Houthis as “business partners” with carriers.

The U.S. and European Union in 2024 built a significant naval presence in the region, at times escorting merchant shipping. The U.S. has been attacking Houthi positions in Yemen since late 2024.

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