



Universal Maritime Solutions Pte Ltd  
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## **WEEKLY THREAT ADVISORY NO. 653**

(4 - 10 April 2024)

### **Summary of Threat Activities and Conclusion**

1. Pirate and maritime crime activity in East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA continued to be high for seventeen consecutive weeks, arising from political conflicts in the Middle East. There were four reports of attacks arising from political conflicts or piracy-related activities during the reporting period.
2. A fishing dhow was reported hijacked by pirates last week and intelligence agencies assessed this vessel could be used as a mother ship by the pirates to extend their range of operations.
3. GULF OF ADEN: On 9 April, an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) launched from Houthi-controlled territory likely targeted a container ship approximately 36 NM southeast of Aden, Yemen.
4. ARABIAN SEA: On 9 April, four skiffs launched from a green colored fishing vessel approached a merchant vessel approximately 467 NM east of Socotra Island, Yemen.
5. GULF OF ADEN: On 7 April, a missile impacted the water near a container ship approximately 59 NM southwest of Aden, Yemen.
6. RED SEA: On 6 April, two missiles targeted the same container ship as on 7 April, approximately 60 NM southwest of Hodeida, Yemen.
7. Based on the geopolitical development, the forecast is that the piracy situation will get worse as the conflict between Israel and Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and other Arab factions intensifies. The recent attacks by the US and UK against Houthi targets in Yemen will only deepen the problem, and pirate syndicates will make use of the turmoil and chaos to conduct attacks of opportunity against defenceless commercial shipping.
8. There are now reported attempts by the US to engage Iran to help reduce the hostilities, including an offer of USD 1.6 billion to the Houthis to stop their attacks



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on selected targets in the Red Sea. The US and its allies now realise that their past targeting efforts against the Houthis are not yielding much results and need to find other solutions.

9. There have been some calls by some ignorant commercial bodies that do not understand the threat deeply and well enough to call for the removal of AST onboard commercial vessels due to concerns that the onboard AST might cause an incident with approaching naval craft. While the concerns are reasonable, the proposed solution to remove the onboard AST is highly unprofessional and dangerous. Implementing it would make the commercial vessels concerned 'sitting ducks' in the face of attacks by Somali pirates who take advantage of the chaos and distractions caused by the conflict. Some intelligence sources have established that some pirate action groups are working in cahoot with the Houthis. Therefore, we should see the increased attacks by Somali pirates linked with the Houthis activities in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. For this reason, UMS HQ instructed how UMS Maritime Marshals will respond and behave when confronted with this situation. See paragraph 34.
10. All vessels in the vicinity are, therefore, to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity to UKMTO.
11. In the latest quarterly report by UKMTO, it was reported that there has been an increased incidence of suspicious sightings compared to a year ago before the lifting off of the HRA by commercial shipping bodies. Intelligence agencies have unanimously agreed that there would be attempts by pirates' syndicates to exploit hopefully a relaxed attitude by the shipping community, and today we are seeing the manifestation of the situation happening. In other words, the possibility of a successful hijack can only be prevented if vessels have on-board armed security teams (AST) to deter and if necessary, prevent any attack and boarding by pirates.
12. The main message of the Quarterly Reporting by UKMTO is that piracy has been suppressed but not eradicated. So long as the socio-politico-economic problems of Somalia and Yemen are unresolved, the threat of piracy against commercial shipping will remain.
13. All Masters and UMS Maritime are advised to remain vigilant. The increased piracy related activities in the waters of Indian Ocean and East Africa/Red Sea have in fact been anticipated by intelligence agencies by the removal of the HRA by world



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commercial bodies but not by the War Committee that assessed that the present situation has inadvertently increased the threat level.

14. UKMTO and other intelligence agencies have noticed increased activities by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). This recent development brings a new equation and range of challenges to the safety of commercial vessels transiting in waters that are prone to pirates' attacks in the Northern Indian Ocean and Southern Red Sae and maritime security operations. UMS HQ repeats the article on the subject in paragraph 31 given its importance in understanding the capabilities of UAV in maritime security operations (in particular paragraph 31.6) for a detailed exposition.

15. The hijacks of product tanker MONJASA Reformer and Success tanker in West Africa waters remind all stakeholders that we cannot be complacent and take security nonchalantly. A successful hijack is an incident waiting to happen if ship owners, Masters and on-board Maritime Marshals are not serious about security thus putting their crew members' lives and their family interests in jeopardy. A vessel transiting in waters that can possibly be attacked by pirates that are without armed security protection has a high risk of being hijacked. Therefore, for the sake of the security of the lives of the crew members on board, the presence of an armed security team cannot be over-emphasised.

16. **2024-001-Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, Northwestern Indian Ocean, Somali Basin, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz, and Persian Gulf-Threats to Commercial Vessels**

16.1. This advisory replaces and cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2023-011 and U.S. Maritime Alert 2024-001B

16.2. Issue: Regional conflict, military activity, and piracy pose significant threats to commercial vessels operating in the above listed geographic areas as evidenced by recent Houthi attacks and Somali piracy activity. The U.S. government is continually assessing the maritime security situation in the region to safeguard freedom of navigation, ensure the free flow of commerce, and protect U.S. vessels, personnel, and interests. The recent standup of Operation Prosperity Guardian is one of many examples of U.S. and international cooperative maritime security operations within this region. The following are currently deemed to be the most pressing threats to U.S.-flagged and U.S.-affiliated commercial vessels throughout this region.



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**16.3. Houthi Hostile Actions:** Commercial vessels transiting the Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden are at an elevated risk of hostile actions from the Houthis. Hostile actions include one-way Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) attacks; ballistic and cruise missile attacks; small arms fire from small boats; explosive boat attacks; and illegal boardings, detentions, and/or seizures. There have been at least 30 separate Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and one Houthi seizure of a commercial vessel in these areas, affecting over 55 nations since November 19, 2023. In November 2023, the Houthis conducted a helicopter-borne landing and seizure of a Bahamas-flagged commercial vessel in the Southern Red Sea. Entities claiming to be Yemeni authorities have also attempted to direct commercial vessels in the Southern Red Sea to divert to Yemen. These threats pose both direct and collateral risks to U.S.-flagged and U.S.-affiliated commercial vessels transiting in international shipping lanes, or otherwise operating in these areas.

16.3.1. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels operating in these areas are advised to remain as far as possible from Yemen's territorial sea without compromising navigational safety. Crewmembers should be especially vigilant when at anchor, operating in restricted maneuvering conditions, or proceeding at slow speeds.

16.3.2. Coordinate voyage planning with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) and consider their recommendations and guidance whenever possible. NAVCENT NCAGS stands a 24-hour watch and has the latest information on the current maritime security threats and the operational environment in this region.

16.3.3. The route taken through these areas, and timing of the transit, remains at the discretion of individual companies and vessel Masters. Transiting these areas during hours of darkness may frustrate efforts to target vessels.

16.3.4. Adherence to all U.S. and international requirements and guidance regarding operation of AIS remains the responsibility of individual companies and vessel Masters. Ships operating with AIS switched on and off have both been the object of Houthi attacks. Switching AIS off makes it marginally more difficult to track or target a ship but may also hinder the ability of coalition forces to provide support.



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- 16.3.5. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are advised to provide hourly positional email updates to the NAVCENT NCAGS detachment when transiting these areas.
- 16.3.6. Maritime operators are advised to alert their crews to the fact that all electronics signals from their vessels pose a risk to maritime operations.
- 16.3.7. A missile strike on a Marshall Islands-flagged commercial tanker in the Gulf of Aden on January 26, 2024 resulted in a significant onboard fire. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels carrying flammable, explosive, or otherwise hazardous cargoes are strongly advised to reconsider transit through these areas. However, if planning voyages through these areas, vessels should take all prudent safety precautions, including thoroughly preparing for emergency responses, and considering carriage of additional safety and damage control preparedness supplies and equipment, such as those needed to extinguish fires.
- 16.3.8. If hailed on VHF by the Houthis, or entities claiming to be Yemeni authorities, and instructed to alter course to Al Hudaydah or another location on the northwest coast of Yemen, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should ignore the VHF call and continue their passage if safe to do so.
- 16.3.9. If the Houthis seek to board U.S.-flagged commercial vessels in these areas, the ship's Master should, if the safety of the ship and crew would not be compromised, decline permission to board, noting that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.
- 16.3.10. When combined with evasive maneuvering, vessels transiting these areas with armed security details onboard have successfully deterred boarding by individuals in approaching small craft. The decision whether to embark a contracted armed security detail and assessment of associated risks is the responsibility of individual companies and vessel Masters, who are responsible for establishing use of force guidance and pre-planned responses for vessels carrying contracted armed security details.
- 16.3.11. If Houthis board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel without a contracted armed security detail onboard, the crew should not



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forcibly resist the boarding party. Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent or agreement to that boarding.

16.3.12. When operating in these waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should maintain a vigilant lookout at all times. If U.S.-flagged commercial vessels observe or hear a suspected UAV or missile or observe a small boat approaching with apparent hostile intent, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space until the threat has passed. Additional precautions should be taken to ensure small boats are kept at a safe distance whenever possible.

16.3.13. In addition to U.S. Maritime Alerts and this Advisory, interim industry transit advice for the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has been established by Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). CMF guidance messages are available on the Maritime Global Security website at [maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/](https://maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/).

**16.4. Iranian Illegal Boarding/Detention/Seizure:** Commercial vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea are at risk of being illegally boarded and detained or seized by Iranian forces. Recent incidents include the April 2023 Iranian seizure of a Marshall Islands-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman, the May 2023 Iranian seizure of a Panama-flagged vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, and the January 2024 Iranian seizure of a Marshall Islands-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea. Iranian forces attempted to seize one Marshall Islands-flagged vessel and one Bahamas-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman during July 2023, but were prevented from doing so by U.S. Naval Forces. Iranian forces have utilized small boats and helicopters during boarding operations and have attempted to force commercial vessels into Iranian territorial water

16.4.1. If hailed by Iranian forces, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should provide vessel name and flag state and affirm that they are proceeding in accordance with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.

16.4.2. If Iranian forces seek to board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel navigating these waters, the ship's Master should, if the safety of the ship and crew would not be compromised, decline permission to board, noting that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.



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- 16.4.3. If Iranian forces board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel, the crew should not forcibly resist the boarding party. Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent or agreement to that boarding.
- 16.4.4. It is recommended that vessels in the Persian Gulf remain as far as possible from Iran's territorial sea without compromising navigational safety. When transiting eastbound in the Strait of Hormuz, it is recommended that vessels transit close to Oman's territorial sea.
- 16.4.5. Industry transit advice for the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman was established on 9 November 2023, and can be found on the Maritime Global Security website at [maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/](https://maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/).
- 16.5. **Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships:** Recent cases of piracy pose a threat to commercial vessels operating in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and Somali Basin, and Northwestern Indian Ocean. Since November 2023, there have been three boarding/hijacking incidents, representing the first such attacks against commercial shipping in the region since March 2017. Pirates may utilize captured fishing vessels as motherships to target vessels operating hundreds of miles from the coast of Somalia. In November 2023, one Liberian-flagged vessel was boarded in the Gulf of Aden; in December 2023, one Malta-flagged vessel was hijacked in the Arabian Sea; and in January 2024, one Liberia-flagged bulk carrier was boarded in the Indian Ocean. Specific case details are available via the Office of Naval Intelligence's weekly "Worldwide Threat to Shipping" product at <https://www.oni.navy.mil/ONI-Reports/Shipping-Threat-Reports/Worldwide-Threat-to-Shipping/>.
- 16.5.1. The Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea (BMP5), and Maritime Global Security website at: <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org> should be consulted prior to operating in the above listed geographic waters.
- 16.5.2. Transit by yachts and privately owned sailing vessels through the region is hazardous and may result in capture. The U.S. Government advises against all operation of yachts and pleasure craft in these areas. American citizens abroad should inform the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of their plans to transit the area and/or update their information via the Smart Traveler Enrollment





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Program at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Yachting guidance can be found at: <https://on-shore.mschoa.org/reference-documents/advice-for-sailing-vessels>.

16.5.3. **UAVs:** Outside of the Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden, UAV attacks also pose a threat to commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea. The most recent attacks were on a Malta-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea in November 2023, and on a Liberian-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea in December 2023.

- If U.S.-flagged commercial vessels observe or hear a suspected UAV, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space on the vessel until the threat has passed.

16.6. **Limpet Mines:** Limpet mines have been used to damage commercial vessels on multiple occasions in recent years and are primarily a threat to commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman. Limpet mines, or similar improvised explosive devices, can be attached to vessel hulls, above or below the waterline, via swimmers or small boats, while a vessel is berthed, at anchor, or underway.

16.6.1. When operating in these waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should maintain a close lookout and remain vigilant for suspicious activity to include the approach of swimmers or small boats. Close attention should be given to the vessel's waterline, especially at slow speeds, at anchor, and when moored.

16.6.2. If a mine has been, or was attempted to have been, attached to a vessel, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space on the vessel until the threat has passed.

16.6.3. **Guidance:** U.S.-flagged commercial vessels operating in these waters are advised to exercise caution, review security measures, and monitor VHF Channel 16. To afford best protection in the region, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are also advised to in the event of any attack, incident, or suspicious activity, immediately:

15.6.3.1. Activate the Ship Security Alert System

15.6.3.2. Contact the U.S. Fifth Fleet Battle Watch





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### 15.6.3.3. Contact UKMTO

15.6.3.4. Simultaneously register with both the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Office (UKMTO) and the IMSC watch 24 hours prior to entering the Indian Ocean Voluntary Reporting Area by sending UKMTO and IMSC, via a single e-mail, the Initial Report from Annex D of (BMP5). Include the estimated times of arrival at the Suez Canal, Bab el Mandeb Strait (BAM), and Strait of Hormuz (SoH) in line 10 of the report and add line 14 for comments as needed (e.g., speed restrictions or other constraints, anticipated time of entering/exiting the SoH Traffic Separation Scheme; an outline of the navigation plan for operating in the SoH and Persian Gulf, etc.). Utilize other reports included in Annex D of BMP5 as necessary.

15.6.3.5. Vessels operating in this area are advised to include both NAVCENT NCAGS and the IMSC watch on all updates or incident report emails. By including both as addressees on each email, awareness will be enhanced without creating an additional reporting burden.

15.6.3.6. Conduct a pre-voyage risk assessment and incorporate appropriate protective measures into vessel security plans.

15.6.3.7. The Maritime Global Security website at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/> offers industry issued best practices and guidance to mariners by geographic region and provides contact and subscription information for regional maritime security reporting centers, particularly in high risk-areas.

15.6.3.8. Answer all VHF calls from coalition navies. Vessels should be aware that U.S. and other coalition naval forces may conduct maritime awareness calls, queries, and approaches to ensure the safety of vessels transiting these listed waters.

15.6.3.9. Due to the risks of piracy, kidnapping, hijacking, and robbery while operating within U.S. Coast Guard designated High Risk Waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are required to comply with the Guidelines for U.S. Vessels Operating in High-Risk Waters contained in U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Directive 104-6 (Rev 8) and comply with their Coast Guard approved Vessel Security Plan annex on counter piracy. The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance announced in the Federal Register in August 2021 the availability of Revision 8 to Maritime



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Security (MARSEC) Directive 104–6. U.S. vessel owners and operators who needed to act under previous versions of MARSEC Directive 104–6 should immediately contact their local Coast Guard Captain of the Port or District Commander for a copy of Revision 8.

15.6.3.10. Per 33 CFR 101.305, report all suspicious activities, breaches of security, and transportation security incident events involving U.S. vessels or persons to the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center. Additional U.S. Coast Guard port specific requirements may be found in Port Security Advisory 1-22 at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/InternationalPortSecurity/Port%20Security%20Advisory/PSA%20%201-22%20Remove%20Cote%20d'Ivoire.pdf?ver=6DzYOE5WAJQVh7ld4c0ycQ%3d%3d>.

### 15.7. Contact Information:

a) Fifth Fleet Battle Watch: [cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil](mailto:cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil) or + 973-1785-3879.

b) NAVCENT NCAGS:  
+973-1785-0033 (Primary/Watch Desk), +973-3940-4523 (Alternate), or [m-ba-navcent-ncags@us.navy.mil](mailto:m-ba-navcent-ncags@us.navy.mil).

c) IMSC: [m-ba-imsc-bwc@us.navy.mil](mailto:m-ba-imsc-bwc@us.navy.mil) or +973-1785-8412/8192/8193. IMSC organizational information is available at <https://www.imscsentinel.com/>.

d) UKMTO: [watchkeepers@ukmto.org](mailto:watchkeepers@ukmto.org) or +44 (0) 2392 222060. UKMTO advisories and warnings are available at <https://www.ukmto.org/>.

e) U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center: +1-800-424-8802.

f) USCG NAVCEN: [www.navcen.uscg.gov/contact/gps-problem-report](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/contact/gps-problem-report) or +1-703-313-5900.

## 17. Maritime Advisory 2022-007-Gulf of Guinea-Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom.

17.1. Issued on: 6 July 2022. This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2022-001. Issue: Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) serve as a significant threat to U.S.-flagged vessels transiting or operating in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as well as U.S. mariners onboard a vessel or transiting to or from a vessel in the GoG. Guidance: Mariners transiting this area should visit the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-



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Gulf of Guinea MDAT-GoG) website at <https://gog-mdat.org/home> and the NATO Shipping Centre website at <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea> for additional information on threats and specific recommendations for their vessels.

- 17.2. Additionally, the “Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea” (available under the Geography – Gulf of Guinea pull-down menu at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/>) provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area. For any maritime industry questions about this advisory, contact [GMCC@uscg.mil](mailto:GMCC@uscg.mil). This Advisory will automatically expire on 2 January 2023
18. U.S. Maritime Advisory 2023-001-Gulf of Guinea-Piracy /Armed Robbery/ Kidnapping for Ransom Issued on 3 January 2023. This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2022-007. Issue: Piracy/Armed Robbery at Sea/Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) serve as a significant threat to U.S.-flagged vessels transiting or operating in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as we as U.S. mariners onboard a vessel or transiting to or from a vessel in the GoG. Guidance: Mariners transiting this area should visit the maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) website at <https://gog-mdat.org/home> and the NATO Shipping Centre website at <https://shipping.nato.int/ncs/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea> for additional information on threats and specific recommendations for their vessels. Additionally, the “Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea” (available under the Geography – Gulf of Guinea pull-down menu at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/>) provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area. For any maritime industry questions about this advisory, contact [GMCC@uscg.mil](mailto:GMCC@uscg.mil). This Advisory will automatically expire on 2 July 2023.
19. Pirate and maritime crime activities in West African waters are at a low level. There were no reports of piracy or crime at sea during this period.
20. In other parts of the world, there were four reports of piracy or crime at sea during the reported period.
21. BANGLADESH: On 8 April, two robbers boarded a container ship anchored off Chittagong Port.



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22. MALAYSIA: On 6 April, three unarmed robbers boarded a barge under tow by a tug in the westbound lane of the Singapore Strait Traffic Separation Scheme.
23. INDONESIA: On 4 April, three robbers armed with knives boarded a bulk carrier berthed at Kuala Tanjung Port in the Malacca Strait.
24. HAITI: On 4 April, an unknown number of gang members seized a cargo ship carrying a cargo of rice departing Port-au-Prince Port.
25. The navies of China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea and Iran continue to provide escort naval services to their flag vessels due to the continued presence and danger posed by Somalia-based piracy threats. These efforts, combined with the increased deployment of armed maritime marshals on board commercial shipping, have significantly reduced the success of Somalia-based piracy in the HRA in hijacking commercial vessels of late but not the presence of pirate groups operating in the HRA. International Intelligence Agencies' assessment is that existing presence of Somali-based piracy threats can easily be translated to successful hijacks as were experienced in 2009/2010/2011 by should these preventive measures be eased off by all stakeholders.

### **Instructions and Piracy Related News**

#### **26. Warning for Red Sea, Bab el-Mandab Straits and Gulf of Aden**

- 26.1. There have been numerous attacks and suspicious approaches reported near the southern entrance to the Bab el Mandeb Strait during the reporting period. Levels of pirate activity in the Indian Ocean remain elevated, with five hijacks reported since March 2017 (MT ARIS 13, CASAYR II NO.30, AL KAUSAR, SALAMA 1 and OS 35). The threat of further attacks and hijacking remains high. All Masters are advised to exercise heightened vigilance within the High Risk Area (HRA), stringently implement BMP4 and liaise closely with embarked armed security teams (AST) and regional authorities. If not making calls in Yemen, it's recommended by UKMTO that vessels should use the IRTC and western lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) in the Bab el Mandeb / southern Red Sea region, to provide a greater lee from Yemen. Further such incidents and hijackings are likely to take place, and all vessels transiting this region are advised to remain vigilant. While international naval patrols and anti-piracy measures on-board commercial vessels have practically eradicated Somali piracy since its peak in early 2011, poverty



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coupled with other factors that motivate pirates remain and some vessels transiting this region may have increasingly become complacent in the belief that the piracy threat had diminished.

26.2. While the international community has over the past several years taken significant steps in order to improve security in the region, including boosting naval forces in the area and requiring ships to take protection measures, including reporting in and out of high risk areas, sailing at top speed as far away as possible from the Somali coast and travelling with armed escorts on-board, the threat of an attack and hijacking remained as the real root of the cause on the ground in Somalia has never been properly addressed. After five years without a successful attack, analysts say that complacency may have set in and this week's successful hijacking is likely to result in potential copycat attacks, as pirate action groups head-out in a bid to successfully hijack a commercial vessel. Masters are advised to remain vigilant at all times inside the HRA and are advised to adhere to strict guidance and protective measures as set down in BMP5. Sailing yachts should avoid transiting the HRA. Past activity has demonstrated that pirates will attack both large and small yachts transiting this region. While successful attacks and hijackings of merchant vessels have significantly decreased over the past two years, the possibility of attacks and the successful hijacking of sailing vessels continue to remain high. This is due to the reduction of revenue sources from pirated merchant vessels and the fact that sailing yachts are vulnerable and easier targets. PAG's continue to conduct "soft approaches" on merchant ships transiting the area. Skiffs have approached vessels in order to probe the reaction of the crewmembers and any possible Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on-board. If the pirate approach does not elicit a response, the pirates will likely proceed with an attack, in which additional skiffs may participate. Vessels transiting the greater Gulf of Aden region should operate under a heightened state of alert. This is due to increasing tensions in the region, which in turn can escalate the potential for direct or collateral damage to vessels transiting the region. These threats may come from a number of different sources such as missiles, projectiles, or waterborne improvised explosive devices. Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for the 1 October 2016 attack on a UAE vessel.

26.3. UMS HQ advises all vessels transiting this region to report any hostile activities immediately. Somali pirates have recently shown an ability to



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mount hijacking expeditions far out into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, and inshore traffic might be an easier target. EUNAVFOR spokesperson Commander Jacqui Sherriff said that the recent series of attacks against commercial shipping again highlights the need for vigilance and adherence to self-protection measures (by the deployment of on-board AST) and compliance to Best Management Practices (BMP) 5. It is crucial that Somali pirates are denied opportunities to attack vessels so that there will no chance of a successful hijack. One successful hijack is one hijack too many because it will encourage and motivate more Somalis to taking up piracy!

26.4. CMF and EUNAVFOR and intelligence agencies have warned of increased complacency amongst stakeholders which may give rise to opportunities for piracy action groups and organizations funding piracy activities to revive the threat.

### **27. Actions to be Taken when a Vessel with On-Board UMS Maritime Marshals is Approached by a Naval Craft.**

27.1. On 16 Dec 23, in the face of increased attacks from pirate action groups and approaches from naval craft, UMS HQ issued the orders on actions to be taken when a naval craft approaches a vessel. These orders were issued to all Team Leaders, and they were further personally briefed by the UMS Operation Officer because of the importance of the subject and the requirement that these orders be fully understood and complied with.

27.2. UMS Maritime Marshals onboard a vessel are to protect the vessel and crew members from pirate action groups. They are equipped with weapons and equipment to handle the threat posed by pirate action groups and **ARE NOT MEANT TO DETER NOR OPPOSE ANY NAVAL CRAFT THAT MAY APPROACH THE VESSEL FOR WHATEVER PURPOSES. The Orders is repeated in the paragraphs below.**

27.3. If a naval craft approaches our vessel, the following actions will be taken.

27.3.1. The Team Leader is to alert and discuss the approach of the naval craft with the Master.

27.3.2. The Master must notify the vessel's owner/HQ of the situation.

27.3.3. The team Leader will notify the UMS Operations Officer/UMS HQ.



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- 27.4. If the naval craft asks the vessel to stop, the Master will take the appropriate action, as per his discussion with his HQ.
- 27.4.1. Based on the decision to stop, the Team Leader will immediately give orders to his Maritime Marshal(s) to unload and clear their weapons.
- 27.4.2. **NO WEAPON WILL BE LOADED.**
- 27.4.3. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ANY MEMBER OF THE MARITIME MARSHAL TEAM SHOW HIS WEAPON TO DETER THE NAVAL CRAFT, FIRE WARNING SHOTS, OR FIRE ANY SHOT AT THE APPROACHING NAVAL VESSEL. THE TEAM LEADER IS TO ENSURE THIS IS CLEARLY BRIEFED AND UNDERSTOOD TO HIS TEAM MEMBERS. THERE MUST BE NO DEVIATION FROM THIS ORDER.**
- 27.5. When the vessel stops as ordered and naval personnel come on board, UMS Maritime Marshals will take the following actions:
- 27.5.1. All Maritime Marshals should keep low on the deck and cover their head with both hands, with their hands visible. They will all be together, lined up side by side.
- 27.5.2. On no account should any Maritime Marshal make any movement that could be misinterpreted as hostile actions. Their individual weapon should be placed on deck next to the Maritime Marshal, and at no time should any Maritime Marshal handle his weapon.
- 27.5.3. Do not take any videos or photographs.
- 27.5.4. All Maritime Marshals should be ready to be questioned on their identity and roles. They will answer the questions truthfully and cooperate fully with the naval personnel on board.
- 27.5.5. The Team Leader will be the spokesperson of the Maritime Marshal Team, working closely with the Master.
- 27.6. Remember to be cooperative and calm. There is no need to be unduly concerned as the vessel and crew members, including the Maritime Marshal Team, have not committed any wrongdoing.
- 27.7. After the naval personnel depart and the vessel resumes its mission, the Team Leader reconstitutes the Team to continue the mission.





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27.8. The Team Leader will report the matter to UMS HQ accordingly

### 28. Piracy in the Indian Ocean HRA has NOT Been Eradicated

28.1. UMS HQ has always maintained this position not to give stakeholders a sense of false security. The current development of piracy raging its ugly head again in the waters off Somalia and in the Indian Ocean is testimony to the accuracy of our analysis.

28.2. The decision by world shipping bodies such as BIMCO and the like has given the wrong perception that piracy in the Indian Ocean HRA has been eradicated. **Nothing can be further from the truth!**

28.3. Piracy threats have been reduced due to the strong presence and sustained effort by naval forces, namely EUNAVFOR and the US-led Combined Military Force (CMF) and the deployment of armed security teams (AST) onboard commercial vessels. The deployment of ASTs onboard commercial vessels since the peak of the piracy threat in 2008 has proven effective, as no vessel with an AST has ever been hijacked.

28.4. Naval and intelligence agencies think pirate syndicates lie low due to the strong deterrence and are involved in other forms of criminal activities, such as drug smuggling. These pirate and criminal syndicates have not been wiped out, and given the correct circumstances and environment, they can get their acts together quickly.

28.5. The pirate syndicates are privy to the announcement of the lifting of the HRA. They could view the situation in 2023 as a golden opportunity to resume their proven lucrative 'business'. The current political situation in the Middle East is a significant distraction to the naval forces that will not focus their attention and presence on the more critical military problems with the Iranian-backed Houthis.

28.6. Given Somalia's poor socio-economic situation, thousands of Somalians will be more than happy to take up arms to hunt and hijack commercial vessels again. The lack of local law enforcement to prevent piracy activities will make this revival a strong possibility. Therefore, the comeback scenario cannot be discounted and is a likely possibility.

28.7. Therefore, from a risk assessment point of view, the risk level in 2024, if deterrence measures are removed, the risk of piracy in 2024 will be objectively higher than in the last 5-6 years.



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### 28.8. Low piracy threat does not mean NO PIRACY THREAT!

### 29. Somali Piracy Resurgence Poses Increasing Threat To Maritime Security, IMB Says

- 29.1. The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reports a worrisome increase in maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia in the first quarter of 2024.
- 29.2. The first three months of 2024 saw a rise in incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships globally, with 33 incidents recorded, compared to 27 during the same period in 2023.
- 29.3. Among the reported incidents, pirates boarded 24 vessels, attempted attacks on six, hijacked two, and fired upon one. Violence towards crew members is also escalating, with 35 taken hostage, nine kidnapped, and one threatened.
- 29.4. The report highlights a worrying trend of Somali pirate activity with two reported hijackings and pirates demonstrated an increased ability to target vessels at greater distances from the Somali coast.
- 29.5. One notable incident involved a Bangladesh-flagged bulk carrier M/V Abdullah, hijacked on March 12 with its 23 crew members taken hostage by over 20 Somali pirates. The vessel was approximately 550 nautical miles from Mogadishu at the time of the incident.
- 29.6. IMB has expressed concern over several reported hijacked dhows and fishing vessels, which pirates use as mother ships to launch attacks far from the Somali coastline.
- 29.7. “The resurgence of Somali pirate activity is worrying, and it is crucial to protect trade, safeguard routes, and the safety of seafarers who keep commerce moving,” said ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton.
- 29.8. The IMB commended authorities for their actions in responding. One notable operation by the Indian Navy in March resulted in the capture of 35 Somali pirates and the release of a previously hijacked vessel and its 17 crew.
- 29.9. IMB Director Michael Howlett urged vessel owners and Masters to adhere to recommended guidelines in the latest version of the Best Management Practices (BMP 5). He also praised the Indian navy and



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Seychelles coast guard for intercepting hijacked vessels, safeguarding crews, and capturing pirates.

29.10. Meanwhile, incidents in Gulf of Guinea waters continue at a reduced level, with six reported in Q1 2024 compared to five in the same period of 2023. However, caution is still urged due to the continued threat of piracy and armed robbery, as evidenced by the kidnapping of nine crew members from a tanker in January 2024.

29.11. There has been a rise in low-level opportunistic crimes in Bangladeshi waters and the Singapore Straits in 2024, posing a threat to crew safety with incidents of hostage-taking reported.

### **30. Houthis Back to Attacking Ships After Brief Pause**

30.1. The past week has seen an increase in attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, and a Houthi spokesperson has sparked fears of the 'danger area' expanding into the Arabian Sea.

30.2. Eight consecutive days of attack-free shipping in the Red Sea, between 23 March and 1 April, marked the longest quiet streak since December when containerships began diverting around the Cape of Good Hope.

30.3. However, in the past week, UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) has confirmed two attacks on vessels, the most recent yesterday, 111km south-west of Al Hudaydah, Yemen.

30.4. UKMTO said: "The master of a vessel has reported two missiles in the vicinity. The first was intercepted by coalition forces, the second impacted the water a distance from the vessel. The vessel reports no damage, and the crew is reported safe. The vessel is proceeding to next port of call."

30.5. Meanwhile, Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree said on TV yesterday that during the past 72 hours, Houthis had targeted a British ship and several US frigates in the Red Sea. He also said they had attacked two Israeli vessels in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean that were heading to Israeli ports.



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- 30.6. *The Times of Israel* reported that, according to Mr Saree, the attacks included a missile strike against British ship *Hope Island*, and what Mr Saree described as “two Israeli ships”, *MSC Grace* and *MSC Gina*.
- 30.7. The 3,500 teu *Hope Island* (pictured above) is owned by UK firm Borealis Maritime, chartered to Italian operator Messina Line and deployed on the RSSEA service that connects the Italian ports of Genoa and Salerno with a string of east African ports, turning in Durban. According to AIS data, its next call is Mombasa on 16 April.
- 30.8. And, according to AIS data from VesselsValue.com, the 900 teu *MSC Grace* is currently moored at Mombasa with armed guards on board.
- 30.9. The 4,000 teu *MSC Gina* has just been assigned to MSC’s Dar Es Salaam feeder service that has a port rotation of Mombasa-Dar Es Salaam-Colombo. If the vessel was the intended target, it ought to have been steaming on a course far outside what has so far been understood to be the Houthi danger area.
- 30.10. Lars Jensen, CEO of Vespucci Maritime, said: “The element to note is the claim to have attacked vessels in the Arabian Sea which is essentially the northern end of the Indian Ocean.
- 30.11. “If this is true, it would constitute an expansion of the risk area to the approach routes to the major container hubs on the south coast of Oman, as well as approach routes towards the Strait of Hormuz,” he added.
- 30.12. However, while the Houthis claimed to have carried out these attacks, they have not so far been corroborated by other sources.
- 30.13. Mr Jensen pointed out that this could have either be propaganda to make the Houthis appear more resourceful – the targeting was so poor that the vessels in question never even saw the attack – or that the attacks were indeed real and close, but for some reason the intended targets chose not to publicly report them.



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30.14. He added: “Another option could be that the Houthis are simply claiming this without any factual basis, hoping that the threat alone would cause more ships to avoid the area, and hence expand their *de facto* vessel blockade to a larger area.”

### **31. EU Red Sea mission commander asks for 'more assets' to protect ships from Houthi attack**

31.1. The operation commander of a European naval mission to protect ships transiting through the Red Sea from Houthi attacks said on Monday that he wants to increase its assets to expand its area of operation.

31.2. The EU naval mission, named Aspides, operates in an area that is “twice as big as the land mass of our 27 member states”, Greek Admiral Vasileios Gryparis told reporters in Brussels.

31.3. For this reason, it has focused on the high-risk area in the south of the Red Sea, where shipping has decreased by 50 per cent since the Houthis started launching drone attacks against commercial ships on October 19 in response.

31.4. “If we increase assets and our presence then we might be able in the near future to deploy the assets to the rest of the area of operation,” said Admiral Gryparis. Aspides has its headquarters in Greece and has four frigates from Germany, Italy, France and Greece, as well as personnel from 19 EU countries. It is up to EU countries to decide if they want to deploy more warships to the mission.

31.5. The operation has escorted 68 vessels and repelled 11 attacks since its launch on February 19, according to the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. “It’s a mission that has a certain and important level of engagement and risk,” said Mr Borrell, speaking alongside Admiral Gryparis.



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- 31.6. The EU Council has allocated €8 million (\$8.6 million) for the common costs for the one-year, renewable mission. “We have to balance the cost of action with non-action,” said Mr Borrell. “This €8 million doesn’t include national-borne cost like the salaries. But compare this cost with the cost of doing nothing.”
- 31.7. Around 30 per cent of global container ships and 21 per cent of the globe's energy transit goes through Bab Al Mandeb, said Mr Borrell. “It's a vital vein for us. We cannot let this part of the world be without protection, it is our strategic interest and we act as a security provider.”
- 31.8. However, Mr Borrell was reluctant to link the conflict in Gaza to the attacks, saying the Houthis targeted ships “indiscriminately”. “For the Houthis, there is a [relation between] the attacks they are performing and the war in Gaza,” said Mr Borrell. “From our side, we just want to ensure freedom and security of navigation, and we hope that we could control the situation and this will not expand to a wider geographical zone.”
- 31.9. “They are co-ordinated with Iran,” he said. “They have a partnership of convenience. But control of Houthi decision-making power is something that we don’t know. Certainly the Houthis have been gaining capacities and autonomy.”
- 31.10. Houthi forces said on Sunday that they had launched rockets and drones at British, US and Israeli ships. The US and the UK have launched retaliatory aerial bombardments on Houthi military targets on land in Yemen.
- 31.11. The EU has not taken part in these operations and has highlighted that Aspides is a purely defensive operation. It is still “very early” to measure the impact of Aspides on Houthi attacks, said Admiral Gryparis. “In absolute numbers, we might see noticeable small reductions. But you have to bear in mind that they have the capability to always to choose the time and place.”



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31.12. From a military perspective, Aspides is a “difficult” operation, he added. “We have to wait all the time, being shot at,” he told reporters. “We are patient and we stick to our mandate.”

31.13. Aspides has improved its co-ordination with other naval missions in the area to protect commercial shipping from Houthi attacks and avoid cases of friendly fire, said Admiral Gryparis. The US navy's Combined Task Force 153 operates in areas adjacent to Aspides.

31.14. “We have a better co-ordination so far with [the US-led] Operation Prosperity Guardian and we have a common operational understanding in the whole area,” he added.

31.15. If we are getting the same threats, we have to issue the same warnings so everybody is aware – OK in that direction you have now a missile oncoming, or a swarm of drones,” said Admiral Gryparis, speaking to *The National* on the sidelines of the press conference.

31.16. In late February, a German ship came close to mistakenly shooting down a US drone. The incident happened a week before the first fatal Houthi attack against a merchant ship, in which three seafarers were killed.

### **32. Houthis Claimed Ballistic Missile Attack on U.S.-Crewed Boxship**

32.1. On Tuesday, U.S. forces successfully defended a Maritime Security

Program boxship from Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Gulf of Aden.

32.2. The U.S.-flagged, U.S.-crewed vessel *Maersk Yorktown* was under way, escorted by destroyers USS *Laboon* and USS *Mason*, when Houthi fighters targeted her with an anti-ship ballistic missile. The munition was engaged and destroyed, and no injuries or damage were reported.

32.3. Central Command said Tuesday that *Yorktown* was the likely target of the attack, and Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree confirmed it on Wednesday evening.





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- 32.4. Saree also claimed that Houthi fighters had targeted the boxships *MSC Darwin* and *MSC Gina*. It is the second time that Houthi leaders have claimed an attack on the latter vessel, which has been calling at several ports in the Gulf of Aden and Oman.
- 32.5. The Houthi group claims that it is motivated to attack vessels linked to Israel or to Israel's allies, citing the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The group consistently describes MSC-operated ships as "Israeli" for uncertain reasons; one of MSC's owners was born in Haifa, but the firm itself is based in Switzerland and the founder is Italian.
- 32.6. According to vessel data firm Windward, voyages in the Red Sea operated by the top six ocean carriers dropped by 50 percent in the first quarter because of persistent Houthi attacks. Maersk and MSC still transit the general area about 70-80 times a month, according to Windward's analysis.

### 33. West Africa.

- 33.1. Unlike the presence and substantial involvement of international navies, numbering more than 43 countries and the legit deployment of armed security team (AST) onboard commercial vessels transiting the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, the situation in the West Africa HRA is about just the opposite. Nigerian government laws and regulations prohibit the deployment of ASTs other than those brokered by local security companies that used personnel from the Navy, which the government has declared as not supported by it. Besides the Nigerian Navy, there are also no other naval forces that provide security and deterrence to the pirates managed by criminal syndicates operating from Nigeria.
- 33.2. In other words, the waters and ports around Nigeria are almost a perfect hunting ground for the local criminal syndicates. Given this situation, the threat of piracy at this point of time is higher and more dangerous than that posed by Somali pirates in the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, although depending on the continued presence of the navies of EUNAVFOR and CMF and the other independent naval forces and the continued used of on-board ASTs, the situation may quickly reverse. Somali pirates still have the intent, skills, and resources to attack merchant ships. Fundamentally naval forces and intelligence agencies have repeatedly called for continued vigilance and preparedness in the fight against the threat of piracy at both the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA



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and the West Africa HRA. Ignoring these warnings places one's business, vessels, and crew members at risk!

34. UMS HQ advises all stakeholders never to take the security and safety of their vessels and crew members for granted. **CURRENT LOW PIRACY THREAT doesn't mean NO PIRACY THREAT!**

35. ***Remember Always "Be Vigilant, Be Safe and Never Be Sorry"***

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