

Background Guide

IMO



AIMUN

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A man must elevate himself

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE COMMITTEE

One of the major misconceptions about the concept of MUN's is that you just research from the internet and speak in the committee. However, that's not the only thing you do, you are required to research for the committee AND ANALYSE whatever you've studied.

On a MUN level; analysis is a very important aspect when it comes to you playing the role of a delegate in a committee. Most delegates get confused by the term analysis and are not able to improve the quality of their analysis overtime. In very simple words, "Analysis means interpreting the research you have from your perspective". The reason analysis is an important aspect of a MUN is because, without analysing the current research you can't progress towards development but can only dwell upon the already existing research. Before that, let's understand what does your analysis include? When you start analysis, you need to keep the following things in mind:

- **Context**– What is the context of your analysis? Basically, what are you analyzing? What is it related to?
- **Stakeholders**– Who/What are driving your research and playing a major role? Who are the relevant members to your research?
- **Impact**– What impact will your research have on the agenda? What role will it play on the stakeholders of the research you have regarding the agenda?
- **Scope of Solution Space**– What all solutions can be formulated to tackle the problem?
- **Constraints within solution**– The solutions formulated in the solution space would have a few constraints, what are those? And can they be tackled or is there any way around?
- **Key Insights**– What is the final conclusion or key takeaways you have from the analysis you've done regarding your agenda?

VALID SOURCES OF PROOF IN THE COMMITTEE

Evidence or proof is from the following sources will be accepted as credible:

1. News Sources:

a. **State-operated News Agencies**—These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation,

they can be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are,

- i. RIA Novosti (Russia) (<http://en.rian.ru/>)
- ii. IRNA (Iran) (<http://http://www.irna.ir/en/>)
- iii. BBC (United Kingdom) (<http://bbc.co.uk/>)
- iv. Al Jazeera (Qatar) (<http://www.aljazeera.com>)

2. Government Reports:

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information. Some examples are,

i.) **Government Websites** like the State Department of the United States of America (<http://www.state.gov/index.htm>) or the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (<http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm>)

ii.) **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** of various nations like India [<http://www.mea.gov.in/>] or People's Republic of China (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>).

iii.) **Permanent Representatives to the United Nations** Reports (<http://www.un.org/en/members/>)

iv.) **Multilateral Organizations** like: NATO (<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>), ([http:// www.aseansec.org/](http://www.aseansec.org/)), OPEC (http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/), etc.

3. United Nations Reports:

All UN Reports are considered are credible information or evidence for this simulation:

i.) UNSC (<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/security-council-documents>)

UNGA (<https://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/index.shtml>)

ii.) UN Affiliated Bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.

iii.) Treaty Based Bodies like the Antarctic Treaty System (<http://www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm>), the International Criminal Court (<http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menu/ICC>)

4. Subsidiary Organs of the UN:

- International Law Commission (<https://legal.un.org/ilc/>)
- The Commission on the Status of Women itself is a subsidiary organ of the UN, being a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>)

• **NOTE** — Sources like Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>), Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org/>), Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/>) or newspapers like the Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>), Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>), etc. are typically not accepted as PROOF/EVIDENCE. However, they can be used for better understanding of any issue or on rare occasions, be brought up in debate if the information given in such sources is in line with the beliefs of a Government.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE (IMO)

IMO – the International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the

prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships. IMO's work supports the UN SDGs.

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, IMO is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping. Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.

In other words, its role is to create a level playing-field so that ship operators cannot address their financial issues by simply cutting corners and compromising on safety, security and environmental performance. This approach also encourages innovation and efficiency.

Shipping is a truly international industry, operating effectively through globally agreed-upon regulations and standards facilitated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Over 80% of global trade relies on international shipping, making it the most efficient and cost-effective method for transporting goods, fostering commerce, and creating prosperity worldwide. The IMO ensures a safe, secure, and efficient shipping industry through comprehensive regulations covering ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation, and disposal.

Shipping is crucial for future sustainable economic growth. Through the IMO, member states, civil society, and the shipping industry collaborate to enhance the sector's contribution to a green and sustainable economy. Sustainable shipping and maritime development are key priorities for the IMO.

As part of the United Nations, the IMO actively supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A sustainable transport sector is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda, with the IMO's efforts aligning with all SDGs, particularly SDG 14 on oceans.

The IMO's commitment to a sustainable global maritime transportation system is evident through the development and implementation of global standards in energy efficiency, new technology, maritime education and training, maritime security, traffic management, and infrastructure development.

ABOUT THE AGENDA

The Red Sea crisis began on October 19, 2023, when the Iran-backed Ansar Allah (Houthi movement) in Yemen launched missiles and armed drones at Israel, demanding an end to the invasion of the Gaza Strip. Since then, the Houthis have seized and conducted aerial attacks on numerous merchant and naval vessels in the Red Sea, prompting hundreds of airstrikes on missile sites and other targets by U.S. and allied forces. This crisis is connected to the Israel– Hamas war, the Iran– Israel proxy conflict, the Iran– United States proxy conflict, and the Yemeni crisis. The Houthi militants, who oppose Yemen's internationally recognized government, have controlled a significant portion of the country's territory along the Red Sea since 2014. Following the start of the Israel– Hamas war, the Hamas-aligned group began launching missiles and drones at Israel. Houthi militants have also targeted various countries' merchant vessels in the Red Sea, particularly in the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which serves as a critical maritime chokepoint for global trade leading to the Suez Canal in Egypt. The group has declared they will not cease attacks until Israel ends its operations against Hamas, asserting that any vessel linked to Israel, including U.S. and UK warships, is a legitimate target, while also indiscriminately attacking ships from many nations. From October 2023 to March 2024, the Houthis attacked over 60 vessels in the Red Sea. To avoid these attacks, hundreds of commercial vessels have been rerouted to navigate around South Africa.

The Houthi attacks have triggered a military response from several countries. In January 2024, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2722, which condemned the Houthi actions and reaffirmed the principle of freedom of navigation. In response, the United States initiated Operation Prosperity Guardian to safeguard shipping in the Red Sea. Since January 12, the U.S. and UK have led coalition air and missile strikes against the Houthis, while other nations independently patrol the waters near Yemen and engage Houthi vessels. Undeterred, Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree stated in May, "We will target any ships heading to Israeli ports in the Mediterranean Sea in any area we are able to reach."

BACKGROUND

Houthis within Yemen

The Houthi movement is an Iran-backed Zaydi Shia Islamist militant organization that holds de facto control over certain regions of Yemen, despite not being recognized as the legitimate government of the country. The group's takeover began in 2014 when they captured the capital city of Sanaa; however, the internationally recognized government of Yemen remains the anti-Houthi Presidential Leadership Council. As the conflict escalated into a protracted civil war, millions of people were displaced internally, leading to a humanitarian crisis. In response, a Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on Yemen, which, combined with the ongoing conflict, has severely crippled the country's economy, reducing it by half and contributing to one of the worst famines in the world since 2016.

In the midst of these tensions, the U.S. military has targeted and destroyed drones in areas of Yemen controlled by the Houthis, as well as over the Red Sea, citing perceived threats that heighten the already volatile situation in the region. These military actions come as the Houthis continue their attacks, complicating ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the Yemeni war.

The Houthis and the Israel– Hamas War

Following the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which ignited the Israel– Hamas war, various Iran-backed militant groups, including the Houthis, expressed solidarity with the Palestinians and threatened attacks on Israel. Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi cautioned the United States against intervening on Israel's behalf, warning that such actions would provoke drone and missile strikes in retaliation. To cease their attacks in the Red Sea, the Houthis demanded a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict and an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

Importance of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden hold significant importance in global geopolitics as they serve as a crucial link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 marked a pivotal moment, enhancing the strategic relevance of these waterways. Prior to the Suez Canal's inauguration, the connection between Europe and Asia relied on a lengthy and roundabout route around the Cape of Good Hope. The canal dramatically reduced this distance by nearly 40%, enabling more efficient movement of trade and people.

The broader region stretching from Egypt to India is characterized by three key maritime chokepoints: the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean; the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, which links the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean; and the Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. These chokepoints are critical as cargo ships navigating through these narrow passages are particularly vulnerable to attacks and interdictions.

With the discovery of oil and gas in West Asia, the strategic importance of the Red Sea route has escalated even further. Approximately 17,000 ships traverse the Suez Canal each year, accounting for around 10% of global trade. If shipping companies opt to avoid this route due to security concerns, transportation costs are likely to rise, leading to delays for consumers in Europe and Asia. This situation could exacerbate inflation in already fragile economies, which are suffering from the secondary effects of the Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore, the Houthi attacks on global shipping must be understood within this broader context.

Houthi Attacks on Global Shipping

Yemen has been caught in conflict since 2014, and the Houthi rebels have managed to persist despite the coordinated military efforts by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Houthis receive backing from Iran, positioning Yemen as a battleground for a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. With the Houthis firmly established in Yemen, particularly near the strategically crucial Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, Iran has gained a forward operating base in a region vital to the global economy. Tehran's support extends to Hezbollah in Lebanon and has historically included backing for Hamas in Gaza. As a result, Iran, through its

network of proxies, is capable of launching strikes throughout the area, from Lebanon in the north to Yemen in the south, and into the Arabian Sea to the west, targeting Israeli and American interests.

Recently, to express solidarity with Palestinians and send a message to Israel, the Houthis initiated attacks on ships associated with Israel. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), there have been 50 violent incidents in the Red Sea since October. This spike in attacks can be contextualized within the broader scope of 250 incidents occurring off Yemen's coast since 2015. The Houthis aim to connect the Israeli conflict in Gaza with the global economy, raise awareness of Palestinian suffering, and demonstrate their capabilities and resolve. Despite the formation of an American naval coalition and attempts to thwart their actions, the Houthis have continued their assaults, even publicly releasing footage of seizing a vessel named Galaxy Leader.

US-led Naval Coalition and Deployment of Indian Warships

In reaction to the Houthi assaults, the US launched Operation Prosperity Guardian, part of the existing US naval task force Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) that patrols the Red Sea. The US reached out to key allies to participate in this operation, which includes nations such as the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and Seychelles. The mission aims to "jointly address security challenges in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden" to ensure freedom of navigation for all nations and enhance regional security and prosperity.

However, Spain and Italy have reportedly distanced themselves from the US-led initiative. Recognizing the region's strategic importance, India has also deployed warships to safeguard sea lanes, enhancing its naval presence since its anti-piracy operations began in 2008. India's deployment of approximately 10 frontline warships, commandos, P-8I maritime surveillance aircraft, and MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones aims to strengthen intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

Ethiopia-Somaliland Deal

Amid escalating regional tensions, Ethiopia and Somaliland announced a significant agreement on January 1st, granting Ethiopia maritime access while recognizing Somaliland's autonomy. This arrangement benefits both parties: Ethiopia's navy will gain 12 miles of commercial and military sea access, while Somaliland embarks on its path toward de jure independence.

The 50-year deal also includes Ethiopia granting stakes in its state-owned Ethiopian Airlines to Somaliland. This agreement represents Ethiopia's long standing aspiration for sea access, particularly since the secession of Eritrea in 1993. As the world's largest landlocked country, Ethiopia relies heavily on Djibouti for its maritime needs, paying approximately \$1.5 billion in transit fees.

The deal is part of Ethiopia's broader strategy to diversify its access to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, with previous attempts, such as a trilateral agreement with the UAE and Somaliland in 2018 to develop the port of Berbera, having stalled. This new bilateral deal underscores Somaliland's strategic significance along the southern Gulf of Aden coastline, a historically important region that has attracted global powers since the Cold War when the Soviet Union established a significant base at Berbera.

Maritime Geopolitics and Impact on the Region

The region surrounding the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden comprises Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somaliland, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Increased foreign military presence has been observed in this area since anti-piracy operations commenced in 2007-08, with various regional and global powers establishing naval bases and expanding their strategic influence. This includes involvement from the US, Russia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, the European Union (EU), Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

Djibouti currently hosts military installations from the US, China, France, and Japan, while countries like Eritrea, Sudan, and Somaliland have attracted different nations seeking to build naval bases.

These dynamics are primarily playing out in the maritime domain, as evidenced by efforts to modernize ports, construct railways, pipelines, and road links for sea access, establish agreements for naval bases, and enhance the strategic presence of naval forces in the region. Given these recent developments, examining the broader maritime landscape from Suez to Somalia and their implications for regional security and stability is increasingly relevant.

GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Red Sea

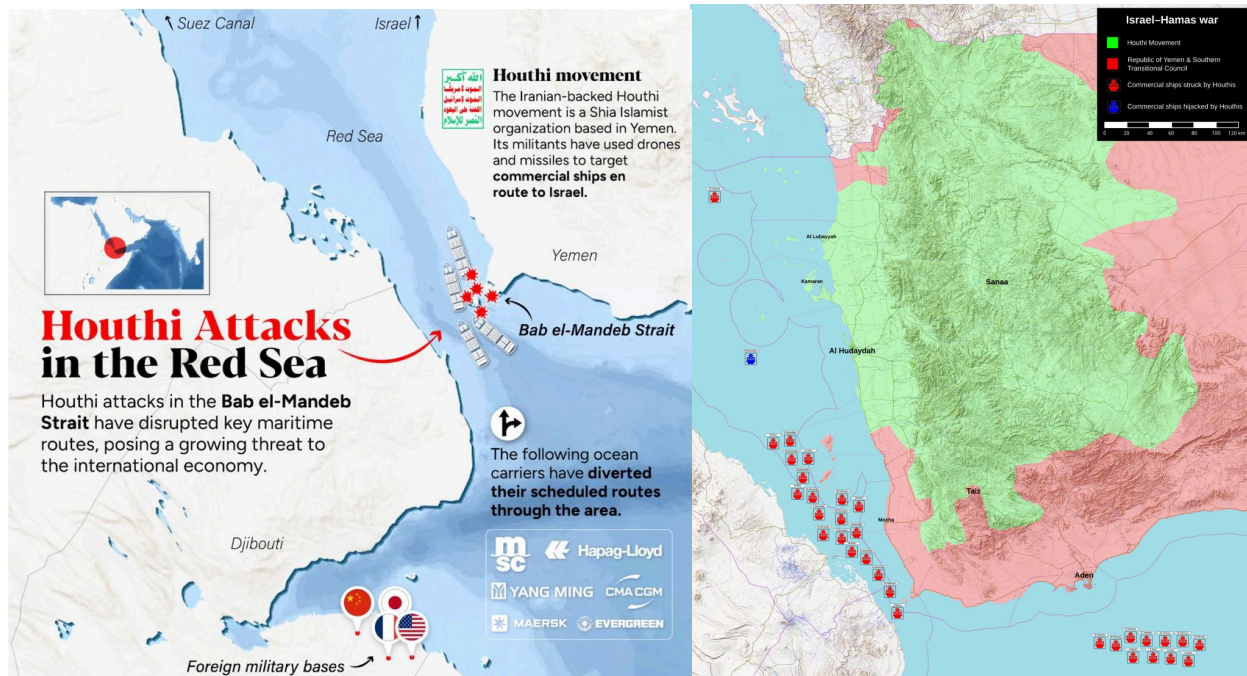
The Red Sea is a significant sea route that links the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal. With important shipping lanes passing through it, particularly for goods and oil from the Gulf states and beyond, it plays a vital role in international trade. Due to its strategic significance, it frequently serves as the center of attention for geopolitical disputes, especially when tensions between regional players develop. The narrow Bab-el-Mandeb strait in the Red Sea, which connects Djibouti, Africa, and Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula, is particularly susceptible to disruptions that could affect the world's oil supply and marine traffic.

Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf is a vital canal that links the Middle East to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, giving it great geographic significance. It is a vital center for the world's energy supplies because it borders important oil-producing countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Much of the world's oil travels via the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most strategically important chokepoints in the globe. Further augmenting the Gulf's geopolitical significance are its abundant marine life, fisheries, and ancient trade routes, which have sustained local economies and cultures for millennia.

Following the Red Sea crisis, the Houthi rebels have attacked shipping routes, indicating that they support Hamas in its conflict with Israel. International shipping

has been put at risk by these attacks, particularly in the Red Sea, which could destabilize the area. With Iran's support, the Houthis employ this tactic to obstruct vital sea lanes, highlighting the Red Sea and Persian Gulf's strategic importance in world trade and politics. The world economy depends heavily on these waterways, so any instability or obstruction could have a negative impact on oil prices and international shipping lanes.



Courtesy: Politico, CNBC

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENT

Suez Canal 1915: Battle of the Suez Canal took place from January 26 to February 4, 1915. The Turkish Suez Expeditionary Force, led by Djemal Pasha and Kress von Kressenstein, attempted to surprise the British and seize control of the canal.

June-September 2004: The rebellion began in June 2004 with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's government arresting hundreds of Houthi members. Fighting continued until the leader, Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, was killed on 10th September

March-June 2005: Violent clashes between the government and Houthis, now led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, left hundreds dead. A ceasefire agreement resulted in the surrender of the Houthis' top military commander

2005-2006: Sporadic clashes persisted, but in March 2006, Saleh granted amnesty to 600 Houthi fighters and won the 2006 election.

January-June 2007: Fighting resumed early in 2007, but a ceasefire was reached in June with Qatar's mediation

April-July 2008: New confrontations erupted, and by July, Saleh declared an end to the fighting in the Saada governorate

2009-2010: Operation Scorched Earth was launched in August 2009 to crush the rebellion. Cross-border clashes with Saudi forces ensued until a ceasefire was agreed upon in February 2010, coinciding with Operation Blow to the Head targeting both Houthis and AQAP militants

Post-Arab Spring: Unity Government and Houthi Takeover

January 2014: The National Dialogue Conference concluded with a document to guide Yemen's new constitution

February 2014: A presidential panel approved a plan to transition Yemen into a federation of six regions

August 2014: President Hadi dissolved his cabinet and reversed a controversial fuel price hike following anti-government protests

September-October 2014: The Houthis took control of most of Sanaa and seized the Red Sea port city of Hodeida

January 2015: President Hadi resigned after being placed under house arrest by the Houthis, who rejected a proposed draft constitution

February 2015: The Houthis took control of the Yemeni government, which was condemned by the United Nations. Hadi escaped to Aden, rescinded his resignation, and declared himself the legitimate president, denouncing the Houthi takeover as a coup

March 2015: The Islamic State executed its first major attacks in Yemen, targeting Shia mosques in Sanaa. The Houthis advanced south, prompting President Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia.

Yemen Conflict Timeline (2015-2019)

August 2015: Houthis take control of Shabwah governorate after prolonged battles.

September 2015: President Hadi returns to Aden after Saudi-backed forces recapture the city from Houthi forces.

April 2016: The United Nations sponsors talks between the Hadi government and the coalition of Houthis and the General People's Congress led by former President Saleh

February 2018: Martin Griffiths is appointed as UN Special Envoy for Yemen

March-May 2018: Fighting escalates on Yemen's western coast. A Saudi-led coalition drone strike kills Saleh Ali al-Sammad, and UAE forces take over Socotra, causing tensions.

June-July 2018: President Hadi meets UAE Crown Prince. The coalition launches an offensive on Hodeida

August-October 2018: International outcry after a school bus air raid kills 40 children. The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi raises questions about US support for the Saudi-led war

November-December 2018: The US Senate votes to invoke the War Powers Resolution to end US military involvement in Yemen. The UN-mediated Stockholm Agreement is signed but fails to achieve its goals.

January-June 2019: Continued fighting. Houthis launch a drone attack on Al-Anad Air Base. UAE scales back its military presence while supporting the STC.

Houthis and International Responses

November 2023: Declaration of War and Hijacking: In the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, the Houthis declared war on Israel and shot down a US drone. On November 19, they hijacked an Israel-linked cargo ship in the Red

Sea and took 25 crew members hostage. The Houthis have continued attacks on ships in this crucial shipping route since then.

December 2023: Operation Prosperity Guardian: In response to the ongoing attacks, the US and a coalition of 20 countries launched Operation Prosperity Guardian to safeguard maritime traffic in the Red Sea.

Peace Talks Update: The UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, reported progress in peace negotiations. Both the Presidential Leadership Council President Rashad al-Alimi and Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdul Salam agreed on measures for a ceasefire, with significant roles played by Saudi Arabia and Oman

January 2024: Terrorist Designation: The Biden administration re-designated the Houthis as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), a move that reversed their 2021 delisting and was aimed at curbing the Houthis' maritime attacks

February 2024: Escalation Threats and Aid Disruption- Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi threatened increased Red Sea attacks if aggression against Gaza did not stop International aid deliveries faced severe delays due to the conflict's escalation. Saudi Aid to Yemen- Saudi Arabia provided \$250 million in aid to the Yemeni government, aimed at supporting civil servant salaries and other government expenses.

March 2024: Expanded Attacks: The Houthis claimed their first attack on cargo ships in the Indian Ocean Their total number of attacks on naval and commercial vessels in regional waters surpassed 60 since the initiation of Operation Prosperity Guardian. Peace Talks at Standstill: The peace deal talks were halted as Houthi attacks continued, causing international outrage

Houthi Attacks and Command Responses (May - August 2024)

May 2024: May saw heightened Houthi threats and significant responses from US central command supported by the UK. Here are the key events:

May 3: The Houthis threatened to attack ships of companies engaging with Israel if the Israeli government proceeded with its Rafah operation, additionally threatening ships in the Eastern Mediterranean

May 30: CENTCOM (USA) and the United Kingdom Armed Forces conducted strikes on 13 Houthi targets in Yemen.

June 2024: June marked an escalation in Houthi attacks, particularly on commercial ships, which affected global shipping routes.

June 6: US successfully destroyed eight Iranian-backed Houthi uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) in a Houthi-controlled area⁴.

June 12: A Houthi unmanned surface vessel struck the Greek-owned coal carrier Tutor, severely damaging its engine room

By 28th June, CENTCOM stated that American strikes had destroyed 7 drones and a UAV ground control station in Houthi controlled territory.

July 2024: July saw the Houthis' first successful attack on Israel, escalating regional tensions and prompting military responses.

July 19: Houthi forces launched a drone strike on Tel Aviv, killing one person, which was a significant escalation in their attacks

July 21: US destroyed four Houthi uncrewed surface vessels in the Red Sea. Houthis announced the “Jaffa” phase aimed at targeting Tel Aviv

August 2024:

August included several critical engagements between Houthi forces and Central Command, underscoring the continued volatility in the region.

August 3: US destroyed a Houthi missile and launcher in Yemen

August 6: US shot down one Houthi drone and two Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles over the Red Sea

August 12: The United Kingdom Maritime and Trade Organization received reports from MV Delta Atlantica regarding attacks by an uncrewed surface vessel, although there were no injuries

August 13-18: US engaged in a series of operations against Houthi military assets in Yemen and the Red Sea

STAKEHOLDERS

1. Yemen

The Houthi rebels in Yemen have been a major factor in the escalating of the Red Sea shipping crisis. The Houthis have been attacking ships in the Red Sea since November 2023, focusing on commercial shipping lanes. Following the October 2023 Hamas-Israel conflict, the Houthis expressed their solidarity with Hamas and increased the intensity of their attacks. The Houthis first targeted ships with ties to Israel before focusing on ships connected to the United States, the United Kingdom, and ultimately nearly all commercial traffic passing through the area.

About one-third of all container traffic worldwide uses the Red Sea as a vital route, so the attacks have severely disrupted global shipping. Due to the rerouting of several large shipping companies' vessels to avoid the area, the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen has been delayed and fuel costs have increased. This has harmed Yemen's internal humanitarian crisis in addition to harming trade with other countries.

2. Iran

Iran has been playing a complex role in the Red Sea crisis,, especially after the Houthi movement in Yemen launched recent attacks on maritime traffic. As part of a larger show of support for Hamas, which is at odds with Israel, these attacks have taken place.

Iran is a major military, financial, and political supporter of Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen. Iran is able to project power in the Red Sea, a crucial international waterway, by allying with the Houthis. This allows Iran to obstruct shipping lanes and put pressure on its enemies, notably Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The Houthis' attacks on ships in the Red Sea with missiles and drones appear to be a part of a plan to bolster Iran's regional agenda and demonstrate support for Hamas. Tehran is alleged to have provided the Houthis with cutting-edge weapons so they could conduct these operations. Iran undercuts the power of Western and Gulf powers in the area while simultaneously bolstering its supporters.

Iran wants to combat its enemies and continue to have influence in important maritime areas, which is why it is involved in the Red Sea problem. Tensions are rising not only between Israel and Hamas but throughout the Middle East as a whole due to this behavior, which is especially detrimental to the safety of important shipping routes.

3. Israel

Israel's battle with the Houthis in Yemen is the main reason for its substantial involvement in the Red Sea situation. With support from Iran, the Houthis have attacked Israeli sites with missiles and drones, disrupting Red Sea marine traffic. In part, these actions are a reaction to Israel's military operations in Gaza. The Houthis have successfully imposed a naval embargo on Israeli shipping lanes, causing ships to divert around Africa and greatly increasing shipping prices and times. Israel's economy has also been negatively impacted by this, especially the port city of Eilat, which has directly lost money.

Israel has responded by stepping up airstrikes on Houthi strongholds in Yemen, focusing especially on the vital port of Hodeida, which the Houthis use to transport Iranian-supplied weaponry. As part of its military reaction, Israel has secured its maritime lanes and territory by building cutting-edge air and naval defense systems. The prolonged strain has made it difficult for ships to navigate the Red Sea, a crucial route for international trade, and has made the instability in the region worse.

4. Russia

Russia's stance in the current Red Sea conflict is low-key but strategic. Securing its interests in the region is its main priority, especially with regard to energy flows and maritime security. Moscow has voiced alarm about the security risks brought

about by attacks on shipping lanes, especially those carried out by the Houthis. In an effort to safeguard its military and commercial ships traveling through the region, Russia has sought diplomatic channels. It even managed to get the Houthis to promise the safety of Russian ships in the Red Sea until September 2024.

In an effort to strengthen its position in the area and provide itself a tactical military presence close to the Bab el-Mandeb strait, Russia is also investigating the potential of building a naval station in Eritrea, more precisely in the Dahlak Islands. This is in line with Russia's longer-term relationships with Eritrea and its larger goals of strengthening its military power and advocating for a multipolar international order. Furthermore, Russia's desire to challenge European and American hegemony in vital maritime areas like the Red Sea is reflected in the possible base in Eritrea.

5. Palestine

While the specific actions or direct involvement of Palestine in the Red Sea crisis are not detailed in the provided documents, it is clear that the crisis has significant implications for the broader Israel-Palestine conflict. The Houthis have launched numerous missile and drone attacks on Israel and its allies in the Red Sea, linking their actions directly to the ongoing warfare between Israel and Hamas. This militant strategy has effectively broadened the scope of the conflict to include maritime domains

6. UK

The UK has actively participated in military actions against the Houthi militia in Yemen to degrade their capabilities and deter further aggression. On January 12, 2024, the Royal Air Force carried out targeted strikes against military facilities used by Houthi rebels in Yemen, in coordination with the United States and with non-operational support from the Netherlands, Canada, and Bahrain¹. These strikes were described as "limited, necessary and proportionate action in self-defence," aimed at degrading Houthi military capabilities and protecting global shipping¹. The UK has also deployed three Royal Navy frigates to the region, marking the largest British military footprint in the area since the Cold War. In addition to military and diplomatic efforts, the UK has committed to providing humanitarian aid to Yemen, pledging £88 million to support the Yemeni people amidst the

ongoing conflict³⁵. Furthermore, the UK has imposed new sanctions on Houthi leaders and sought to cut off financial resources to further degrade their capacity to conduct attack

7. USA

The U.S. has launched Operation Prosperity Guardian, a multinational naval coalition established in December 2023 to safeguard maritime commerce in the Red Sea. This operation is a response to at least 100 Houthi attacks on merchant vessels using drones and missiles, significantly disrupting global trade routes¹⁴. The U.S. military has conducted frequent airstrikes targeting Houthi military infrastructure, including missile launchers and radars, and has countered Houthi drone and missile attacks with its naval forces in the region. Despite military efforts, the U.S. has faced challenges in rallying widespread international support for Operation Prosperity Guardian, with some nations hesitant to join due to concerns over broader geopolitical implications, especially concerning Iran's influence in the region. The U.S. has imposed sanctions targeting key Houthi leaders and entities to curtail their aggressive actions in the Red Sea. As of January 2024, the Houthis were redesignated as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" group, aiming to limit their access to resources that could facilitate further attacks on shipping

8. China

China's strategic interest in the Red Sea is two-fold: geo-economic and geopolitical. On the geo-economic front, China is deeply invested in maintaining stable maritime trade routes crucial for energy flows from the Middle East to China and for the flow of Chinese imports and exports to Europe. Disruptions to these routes are undesirable for China, as they impact the stability and success of China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative. All of the Red Sea littoral states have signed up for the MSR, highlighting the importance of the Suez Canal, Red Sea, and Gulf of Aden to China's strategic economic interests. Moreover, China has invested tens of billions of dollars in Red Sea facilities, including ports, railways, and factories in East Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, which are part of its Belt and Road Initiative. The Houthis have stated that Russian and Chinese ships will not be targeted, diminishing the immediate impact on Chinese trade, although the broader disruptions elevate shipping costs and delay deliveries.

9. WTO

The WTO has reported that the Red Sea crisis significantly impacted global merchandise trade volumes in 2023, characterizing the disruptions as notable but manageable within the current economic context. Despite the seriousness of the attacks by Yemen-based Houthi rebels, the overall economic fallout has been moderated by previously established factors, including lower freight costs and moderate demand, which have combined to help contain inflationary pressures

While the immediate economic effects have been considered moderate, the WTO also warned of potential long-term risks, particularly if the disorder in Red Sea shipping continues. The disruption not only affects freight costs but also raises concerns about humanitarian flows of essential goods, including food and medicine. Prolonged issues could likewise contribute to global inflationary pressures, further complicating the economic landscape for affected regions.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is the Red Sea Crisis and how does it impact the global economy?
2. What are the recent security developments in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea?
3. How does tension in the Red Sea affect shipping in the Persian Gulf?
4. What are the security challenges and implications for global trade related to the risks in the Red Sea?
5. What is at stake in the Red Sea shipping crisis?
6. How has the EU responded to the situation in the Red Sea?
7. What impact does the Iran-Israel war have on maritime security in the Eastern Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf regions?
8. How do tensions in the Red Sea influence oil and shipping markets?
9. What are the effects of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf on the northern Indian Ocean?
10. What can your member state do to address root causes of piracy and insurgency like poverty and political instability?
11. Is there precedent in the handling of other previous shipping crises that could be feasible in this case?
12. What are your state's relations to the main states and groups causing the shipping crisis in the Red Sea? How can these be used to effectively navigate and negotiate the crisis?