

Yemen's Houthis hit U.S.-owned ship in missile attack

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The M/V Gibraltar Eagle, a Marshall Islands-flagged, U.S.-owned and operated container ship, has been hit by an Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile launched by AnsarAllah Houthi-Source: X

Washington, January 15 (RHC)-- Houthi rebels in Yemen have struck a US-owned and operated container ship with an anti-ship ballistic missile off the coast of Yemen, the United States Central Command said. In a statement on Monday, the U.S. military said that no injuries or significant damage

were reported and that the Marshall Islands-flagged Gibraltar Eagle was continuing its journey after the incident in the Gulf of Aden.

The Yemeni rebel group has claimed responsibility for the attack. “All American and British ships and warships involved in the aggression against our country are considered hostile targets,” military spokesperson Yahya Saree said, before adding that no future American or British attack on Yemen would go “unpunished.”

Earlier, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) agency said that a vessel was hit from above by a missile 95 nautical miles southeast of Aden, without identifying the vessel.

British Maritime Security firm Ambrey said three missiles were reportedly launched by the Houthis, with two not reaching the sea and the third striking the bulk carrier. It said that the impact reportedly caused a fire in a hold, but that the bulker remained seaworthy with no injuries on board. It assessed the vessel was not Israel-affiliated.

The attack on the ship comes less than a day after the Houthis launched an anti-ship cruise missile toward a US destroyer in the Red Sea, U.S. officials said. The Houthis control western Yemen, including the strategically critical Bab al-Mandeb Strait, which leads into the Red Sea and up to the Suez Canal.

Since Israel's war in Gaza began, they have been attacking ships in the area that they say are linked to Israel or bound for Israeli ports. They say they are attacking the vessels to pressure Israel to halt its assault on Gaza and ease restrictions on supplies of humanitarian aid for its Palestinian population. Israel has been at war with Hamas, the group that governs Gaza, for more than three months.

U.S. and British forces responded to the Houthi attacks last week by carrying out dozens of air and sea strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen.

Abdel-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis, has pledged revenge. He said that “any attack on Yemen's Houthis on the part of the United States will not go without a response.”

Reporting from Washington, DC, Al Jazeera's Mike Hanna said that US officials believe that after the strikes last week, the Houthis retained about three-quarters of their capacity to fire missiles and launch drones. “This recent attack on a U.S.-owned freighter was launched, it would appear, from the city of Hodeidah, which was a target of U.S.-UK strikes in recent days,” Hanna said.

“So, the ante is rising in terms of what is happening ... the situation is very dire and something that U.S. intelligence is watching very closely.”

Omar Rahman, a fellow with the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, said one-off strikes targeting Houthi installations would not reduce the group's capability or deter them from attacking ships in the Red Sea.

“What the U.S. and UK are doing is not strategically justifiable. It's only justifiable if you look at what the Houthis are doing in the Red Sea in isolation from what's happening in Gaza and in the rest of the region,” he told Al Jazeera.

“The U.S. and UK are ignoring the source of the crisis, which is the genocide in Gaza, but they're also enabling it,” Rahman said. “They're trying to prevent a wider regional escalation by taking military action against the flashpoints that are occurring as a result of what's happening in Gaza.”



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