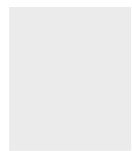# ISSUE DESCRIPTION

COMMITTEE   Security Council
ISSUE   Addressing the Red Sea Crisis
SUBMITTED BY   Barnabás Nagy, President of the Security Council
APPROVED BY   Vilmos Eiben, President of the General Assembly

Introduction

Recently, the Red Sea – a crucial maritime route that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal – has emerged as a focal point for security risks and geopolitical instability. However, due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen and the geopolitical conflicts involving regional and international actors, this crucial region has become more unstable, with growing security challenges. The Yemeni crisis is escalating tensions in the region and influencing the security climate. Since it started in 2014, the battle has grown into an intricate, complex struggle involving foreign players, regional powers, and domestic factions. A more thorough description of how the Yemen conflict fuels instability in the Red Sea may be found below. Attacks on commercial shipping by the Houthi movement, which is purportedly supported by Iran, have brought attention to the precarious security situation since late 2023. International military reactions, heightened regional tensions, and disruptions to global commerce routes have all resulted from these activities. Operation Aspides, Iran's alleged support for the Houthis, and companies rerouting vessels to the Cape of Good Hope are all examples of how this regional tension influences the globe.

Definition of Key Terms

Houthis - A Yemeni rebel group officially known as Ansar Allah, primarily composed of Zaidi Shia Muslims, engaged in an ongoing conflict with Yemen's internationally recognized government.

Bab el-Mandeb Strait - A strategic chokepoint between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Operation Prosperity Guardian - A U.S.-led international military initiative launched in December 2023 to protect commercial shipping in the Red Sea from Houthi attacks.

Operation Aspides - An EU naval mission initiated in February 2024 to enhance maritime security in the Red Sea, providing surveillance and escort services to merchant vessels.

General Overview

Approximately 20% of the world's container traffic and 40% of trade between Asia and Europe pass through the Red Sea, which is a vital maritime commercial route that links the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal. Its significance goes beyond the economies of the neighbouring nations; it affects international trade in general. However, the protracted crisis in Yemen and rising geopolitical tensions, particularly with Iran, have made the region a centre for expanding maritime security challenges in recent years.

The Houthi rebel group in Yemen has been attacking commercial ships since late 2023 using drones, ballistic missiles, and sea mines, endangering both international trade and regional stability. A complicated geopolitical element is added to the issue by this battle, which is allegedly being fuelled by Iran's assistance for the Houthis. The world economy is currently concerned about the Red Sea, a vital hub for international trade, particularly oil shipments from the Middle East. The United States initiated Operation Prosperity Guardian in December 2023 to safeguard freedom of navigation and maritime traffic in response to these concerns. Operation Aspides, which focused on surveillance and escorting commerce vessels, was the European Union's response in February 2024.

The international community's dedication to tackling the escalating security issues in the Red Sea is demonstrated by these activities. However, neither long-term stability nor the resolution of the conflict's root causes can be achieved by these actions alone. With Iran's help, the Houthi group has been utilising the area to increase its power and interfere with international shipping.

A layer of regional rivalry has been added by Iran's interest in the Red Sea and its control over strategic choke points like the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, especially with Saudi Arabia. The Houthi attacks have been denounced by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which has also urged for international collaboration to safeguard maritime channels. The UN Security Council now has to deal with the political facets of the Yemeni war as well as maritime security. Addressing the long-term geopolitical dynamics as well as the current challenges requires an all-encompassing, coordinated strategy that also supports diplomatic attempts to stabilise the area.

Major Parties Involved

Houthis: Northern Yemen is ruled by the Houthis (Ansar Allah), who have intensified their attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea. They attack ships associated with Israel, the United States, and its allies with missiles, drones, and naval mines. They seek to increase their power and sabotage marine traffic, allegedly with Iranian help. They carry out attacks in spite of resolutions from the UN Security Council denouncing them, which leads to global reactions such as Operation Prosperity Guardian and Operation Aspides. In an effort to defuse tensions, the United States and its allies have launched airstrikes on Houthi targets. Diplomatic engagement, military deterrence, and addressing the larger causes of the Yemen conflict are all necessary for a lasting solution.

Iran: According to some sources, Iran supports the Houthis with missiles, drones, and military training, aiming to extend its regional influence in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Iran's policy focuses on backing the Houthis as a proxy force to challenge Saudi Arabia and U.S. interests. While the country denies direct involvement, evidence suggests its continuous military support. Iran rejects ceasefire calls, instead pushing for a political solution to the conflict. Their backing of Houthi attacks destabilizes the region and undermines peace efforts. Iran seeks to maintain control over strategic waterways, especially the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and continues efforts to influence regional power dynamics despite international pressure.

United States: Through Operation Prosperity Guardian in particular, the United States has taken the lead in global efforts to protect marine commerce routes. By carrying out attacks on important Houthi sites in Yemen, the United States offers military intervention against the Houthi threat. Additionally, they have advocated for diplomatic actions at the UN and more stringent sanctions against Iran. The United States has backed regional allies like Saudi Arabia in their efforts to thwart Houthi violence in

addition to launching military measures. In an effort to find a lasting solution to Yemen's political obstacles as well as maritime dangers, the United States supports a dual strategy of diplomatic talks and military deterrence.

European Union: The EU prioritises diplomatic initiatives and maritime security in the Red Sea. The EU protects commercial vessels from Houthi threats by escorting them and improving surveillance through Operation Aspides. In an effort to lessen hostilities in Yemen, the EU has backed the Stockholm Agreement and UN-led peace negotiations. Their strategy blends humanitarian assistance, defensive actions, and a resolute demand for a political settlement of the dispute. The EU seeks to address both maritime security and more general geopolitical concerns in the region while promoting regional collaboration to guarantee the safe movement of trade.

International Maritime Organization (IMO): The IMO is attempting to guarantee freedom of navigation and has denounced the Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea. In order to protect marine trade routes and uphold maritime law, the IMO has urged for increased international collaboration. They have passed resolutions requiring nations to abide by global shipping laws and safeguard ships from growing dangers. The IMO backs the UN's and regional organisations' initiatives to enhance security coordination. They advocate for well-rounded policies that support maritime safety while taking into account regional humanitarian concerns, placing a strong emphasis on using the law to stop shipping attacks.

Timeline of Events

March 2, 2024 - A major increase in attacks on commercial vessels occurs when a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile strikes the British-owned bulk tanker Rubymar, causing it to sink.

March 6, 2024 - Three crew members are killed after a Houthi missile strikes the Liberian-owned bulk tanker True Confidence, the first maritime deaths in the Red Sea crisis.

March 11, 2024 - One of the biggest strikes to date is thwarted when a coalition led by the United States intercepts 28 drones fired by Houthi rebels targeting vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

June 18, 2024 - After being attacked by Houthi missiles, the Greek-owned bulk carrier Tutor sinks, becoming the second ship to be lost to such attacks; one crew member is still unaccounted for.

June 21, 2024 - Amid continuous Houthi strikes, the LNG tanker Asya Energy makes history by becoming the first vessel to pass through the Red Sea since January. This suggests a cautious return of some maritime activities despite security concerns.

December 22, 2024 - While responding to Houthi threats, the USS Gettysburg, a guided missile cruiser, unintentionally shoots down Super Hornet over the Red Sea; both pilots escape unharmed.

December 30, 2024 - After intercepting a missile fired from Yemen, Israel warns the Houthi insurgency in Yemen to stop their missile attacks on Israel or face dire repercussions.

December 31, 2024 - In response to the Houthi group's attacks on Israel and marine vessels, U.S. forces launch precision strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, including command centres and weapons dumps.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

As the risks in the region have changed, so too have efforts to address security issues in the Red Sea. International efforts initially centred on fighting piracy, with operations like the EU's Operation Atalanta and the multinational Combined Task Force 151 effectively lowering piracy incidents through shipping escorts and patrols. The emergence of Houthi violence and other wider geopolitical tensions, however, were not addressed by these initiatives.

The 2018 Stockholm Agreement, which sought to lessen hostilities in Yemen, particularly in the area of Hodeidah, a crucial Red Sea port, was one of the major ways the UN has contributed. Although fighting was temporarily reduced as a result of this deal, the fundamental dispute was not resolved. Resolutions passed by the UN Security Council also denounced attacks on ships and demanded that international maritime law be followed, though execution of these resolutions has been patchy.

For instance, the followings documents could be mentioned related to the cause:

- ✓ UNSC Resolution 2216 (2015),

- ✓ UNSC Resolution 2624 (2022),

- ✓ UNSC Resolution 2722 (2024)

New naval operations, such as the EU's Operation Aspides in 2024 and the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian in 2023, were started in response to the growing Houthi maritime threats. Deterring attacks, safeguarding vessels, and securing shipping channels are the main goals of these missions. The ongoing Houthi assault highlights the need for comprehensive solutions that address both the immediate threats and the larger political drivers of instability, even though these steps have improved marine security.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

ENHANCED NAVAL PATROLS

To guarantee the security of this vital maritime route, multinational naval patrols in the Red Sea must be strengthened. Protecting maritime routes and countering Houthi threats are the main goals of cooperative initiatives like the EU's Operation Aspides and the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian. Advanced technologies like drones and satellite surveillance, along with armed escorts, improve the capacity to identify and eliminate threats instantly. In order to facilitate coordinated patrols and intelligence sharing, regional cooperation with countries that border the Red Sea, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Djibouti, is also essential. When combined, these actions provide a strong defence structure that can prevent aggression and protect international commerce lines.

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

A thorough diplomatic approach addressing the crisis' underlying causes is necessary to resolve it. It is imperative that the Houthis, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the Yemeni government, and other foreign countries engage in inclusive negotiations. These initiatives can be directed by forums such as UN-mediated peace negotiations, and trust can be developed by initiatives such as ceasefires, access to humanitarian aid, and prisoner exchanges. Addressing Iran's support for the Houthis and reducing regional tensions require direct engagement. Long-term peace and stability in the Red Sea can be achieved through diplomacy by addressing these political dynamics.

SANCTIONS AND ARMS EMBARGOES

Stricter enforcement of arms embargoes, and targeted sanctions are essential for reducing the Houthis' military prowess. While increased surveillance at transit locations can obstruct smuggling routes, sanctions should target the people and organisations that provide weapons and resources. To improve enforcement, international task teams and more national coordination are essential. Exemptions must guarantee that vital help reaches civilians in order to strike a balance between security and humanitarian demands. These actions can reduce the Houthis' operational capability while fostering regional stability when paired with diplomatic initiatives.

SOME USEFUL YOUTUBE VIDEOS ABOUT THE CRISIS:

Red Sea Attacks
https://youtu.be/Ve7Yatn4cXA?si=jtJ1V7e8NdRSL_-z

Overview of the Red Sea
https://youtu.be/d6o-nKO7aR4?si=txmPyu8IxG1OgX-0

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