

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL



STUDY GUIDE



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Agenda

**Deliberating Upon Threats to Maritime
Security Arising from Developments in the
Red Sea Region.**

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

It is our absolute pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Security Council at Sri Sri Academy Model United Nations, 2026. We are enthralled to have you join us for what we hope will be an engaging simulation of one of the most consequential bodies of the United Nations.

The agenda for this committee, Deliberating Upon Threats to Maritime Security Arising from Developments in the Red Sea Region, places the Council at the intersection of international peace and security, freedom of navigation and the security of one of the world's most strategically significant maritime regions. Developments in the region have increasingly exposed these maritime routes to risks including attacks on commercial vessels, disruptions to shipping, piracy and armed groups operating in and around strategically important waterways.

Questions surrounding freedom of navigation, territorial sovereignty, the use of force and collective security are closely connected to the Council's responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. At the same time, the interconnected nature of the Red Sea region means that developments at sea cannot always be considered in isolation from the political and security dynamics on land.

We look forward to a committee characterised by rigorous debate, substantive negotiation and legal-propelled discussion. We encourage delegates to approach the agenda not merely as a question of responding to individual maritime incidents, but as an opportunity to examine the evolving state of maritime security and the ability of the Security Council to address today's emerging threats while upholding the principles of international law. Good luck to each and everyone of you.

The Executive Board,
United Nations Security Council,
Sri Sri Academy Model United Nations, 2026

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

In 1945, the United Nations Charter established the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) under Chapter V as the organ vested with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unlike the General Assembly, the Security Council is not a body of universal membership. It is composed of 15 member states: five permanent members (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for staggered two-year terms.

The Council's powers are vested in the following main Chapters:

- Chapter V (defines composition of the UNSC, mandate (Art. 24), etc.)
- Chapter VI (Peaceful Settlement of disputes, such as negotiation, mediation)
- Chapter VII (Which, allows UNSC to enforce sanctions, embargoes, an even full scale military operations in collective security. Also has Article 51 concerning Self-Defence, very important)
- Chapter VIII (regional arrangements, and UNSC's relationship with regional organisations)

What sets the Council apart is enforcement. Its decisions are legally binding on every UN member state under Article 25 of the Charter, not just recommendations. That power comes with a catch: the five permanent members can veto any substantive resolution. One "no" vote from a P5 state and the resolution dies, no matter how the other 14 members vote. This is what makes the Council both effective and politically fraught.

Because its resolutions carry real legal weight, the Council ends up dealing with the heaviest issues on the UN's plate: armed conflict, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian emergencies. It can authorize peacekeeping missions, impose sanctions, and, in extreme cases, approve the use of force. Article 24 of the Charter gives it the authority to act on behalf of the entire UN membership in

matters of peace and security, and every member state agrees in advance to abide by what it decides. According to the Charter, the United Nations has four purposes: This encompasses as the UNSC Mandate, elucidating the power and scope of this body;

- to maintain international peace and security;
- to develop friendly relations among nations;
- to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;
- and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

All members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.

Today, as the Council confronts renewed conflict in the Middle East alongside deepening divisions among its permanent members, the responsibility of you delegates, as members of the United Nations Security Council, is to navigate the tension between national interest and collective security, working within a body that alone among UN organs can turn words into binding international obligation.

The current members of the United Nations Security Council are as follows:

Five permanent members: China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly (with end of term year):

- Bahrain (2027)
- Colombia (2027)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (2027)
- Denmark (2026)

- Greece (2026)
- Latvia (2027)
- Liberia (2027)
- Pakistan (2026)
- Panama (2026)
- Somalia (2026)



OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA

The Red Sea is roughly 1,400 miles long, stretching between northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. It is among the if not the most important waterways of the world, for roughly 12 to 15 percent of global maritime trade, worth more than a trillion USD annually, transits its waters owing to the fact that it is the only link between the Suez Canal and the rest of Asia. This also means that about 30 percent of global civilian container traffic also passes through it. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, at its southern end, handles roughly by itself handles about 11 percent of maritime oil and 8 percent of liquefied natural gas. It is estimated that about 4.9 million barrels per day of crude and products moved through Suez and the SUMED pipeline in the first half of 2025, with 4.2 million passing through of course the Bab el-Mandeb.

Brief History

The origins of the becoming of the Red Sea as a trade route can be traced back to Britain capturing Aden in 1839. By 1857, the British had built a coaling station on Perim Island and expanded infrastructure so that the transit of ships can be more convenient. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869, the trip between Europe and Asia became significantly shorter and cheaper, which meant that ships more and more preferred transit through the Red Sea as the better route. The Bab el-Mandeb quickly became a main choke point for European-Asian trade. To manage this new traffic was one of the main reasons why the 1888 Convention of Constantinople was signed.

There have been many conflicts that have disrupted trade through the Red Sea in the twentieth century. The most notable is probably Egypt's shutting down of the canal during the Six-Day War. With the Suez Canal and most transit through the region closed for 8 or so years, shipping companies had to send their vessels around the southern tip of Africa. To make this longer trip profitable, the industry built massive supertankers.

Another notable example is that during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Egyptian naval forces worked with South Yemen to stop tankers bound for Israel from passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The region has also been rocked by disputes over land near the shipping lanes. In 1995, Eritrea and Yemen fought a brief battle over the Hanish islands, located just north of the Bab el-Mandeb. The issue was taken up by the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Between 2008 and 2012, pirate attacks surged across the Gulf of Aden. At the peak of this wave, pirates mainly originating from Somalia owing to a breakdown of civil order hijacked dozens of ships and collected an estimated 400 million dollars in ransoms. The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1838, allowing foreign navies to enter Somali waters to suppress the attacks which were detrimental to regional security.

The outbreak of the civil war in Yemen would become the pivotal cause of disturbance around the region for years to come. In June 2015, Saudi Arabia led a coalition blockading Yemeni ports to stop weapons shipments to Houthi fighters. This blockade, however, severely limited food and fuel imports, creating a massive humanitarian crisis. After Houthi forces attacked two large oil tankers in July 2018, Saudi Arabia temporarily stopped sending crude oil through the Red Sea. A truce in 2022 quieted the fighting for a short time, and maritime incidents dropped significantly.

This would change following October 7, 2023. Houthi forces began firing missiles and launching drones at commercial ships passing near Yemen, citing the war in Gaza and Israel's actions as their cause, demanding a complete cessation of hostilities. Major shipping companies stopped using the Suez Canal and went back to routing their cargo around Africa. This added weeks to delivery times and drove up global shipping costs.

The Houthis and Attacks on Shipping

The Houthis or Ansar Allah are a Zaydi movement led by the Houthi family of Yemen, who are their namesake. Currently occupying Sanaa and controlling the

majority of Yemen's population, they are a significant political and military force in Yemen and although Iran provided little support during their earlier conflicts, it has since given increasing aid. The Council on Foreign Relations describes them as an independent partner of Iran, with Tehran as their primary benefactor through weapons transfers, training and intelligence support. The United States designated the group as a terrorist organisation in January 2024.

By themselves, the Houthis have been responsible for a majority of attacks on maritime shipping especially since October 2023. For example, the Houthis hijacked the first commercial vessel following October 7 on 19 November 2023 and had attacked at least 33 others by late January 2024. The Houthis themselves were responding to the November 2023 call by Supreme Leader Khamenei for an economic blockade of Israel. Another vessel seized in November was the Galaxy Leader, its crew were held for 14 months and released on 22 January 2025 in a deal mediated by Oman.

The Rubymar, struck in February 2024, became the first vessel sunk, on 2 March, and the True Confidence attack later that month killed three seafarers, the first fatalities. The Rubymar carried about 21,000 tons of fertiliser, and Yemeni specialists linked the wreck to marine pollution and fish deaths on the coast. The Tutor was sunk in June 2024. In August 2024 the tanker Sounion was disabled and left burning, prompting CENTCOM to warn of a possible environmental disaster, and in September the Houthis struck the Saudi-flagged tanker Amjad, carrying about two million barrels. After a Houthi drone killed one person in Tel Aviv on 19 July 2024, Israel struck Hodeidah port the following day, killing 14 people. By July 2025, Reuters counted more than 100 merchant ships targeted since November 2023, four vessels sunk, one seized and at least eight sailors killed. Human Rights Watch has characterised the July 2025 attacks as ‘apparent war crimes’

American Intervention and American-Iran-Israeli War

The Houthis put on hold attacks following the Gaza ceasefire in January 2025, and US strikes on the groups also ceased. This came to change between 15 March and 5 May, when the United States carried out more than 1,100 strikes during the course of Operation Rough Rider, hitting command facilities, weapons stores and air defences. The campaign also struck a migrant detention centre and. According to reports, dozens of civilians were killed at the Ras Isa oil terminal which was also struck. The United States lost two FA 18 aircraft and seven MQ9 drones. The campaign ended on 6 May with an Oman-mediated truce under which the Houthis stopped attacking US vessels. The Houthis maintained that the arrangement did not apply to Israel, and that Iran encouraged them to accept it and continue to fight Israel. Israel struck Sanaa airport on 6th May, and 3 months later in late August, Israeli strikes killed twelve senior Houthi officials.

Attacks on shipping resumed in July. The Magic Seas and Eternity C were both sunk within two days, and the Joint Maritime Information Center assessed that targets were selected on the basis of owners' earlier calls at Israeli ports. The Eternity C attack killed at least four crew, and eleven were reported missing. War-risk premiums for Red Sea transits more than doubled within days. Russia told the Security Council that no incidents involving commercial vessels in the Red Sea have been recorded since September 2025. The Houthis halted their attacks when the Gaza peace plan took effect on 10 October 2025. The reduction in violence did not restore confidence: after roughly 100 days without an incident in early 2026, Suez traffic remained about 60 percent below pre-crisis levels.

The Iran war began on 28 February 2026 with US and Israeli strikes that included the killing of Ali Khamenei, and Iran responded by closing the Strait of Hormuz to foreign shipping. Mojtaba Khamenei is now Supreme Leader. The Houthis did not join immediately. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi declared that the group stood with Iran

and was prepared to act, but hostilities did not resume at once. Reporting attributed the delay to a reluctance to open multiple fronts while seeking to resolve the conflict with Saudi Arabia, and it also indicated that Iran and Hezbollah were pressing the group to enter the war. On 28 March the Houthis fired a ballistic missile at Beersheba and later targeted Eilat, and a Houthi official described closure of Bab el-Mandeb as a likely option should Gulf states join the war. In April, the senior Iranian adviser Ali Akbar Velayati said publicly that Iran's "Resistance front" regarded Bab el-Mandeb in the same way as Hormuz. The Houthis' maritime posture followed these breakdowns: on 8 June, after an exchange of fire between Israel and Iran, they launched missiles at Israel and announced a complete ban on Israeli navigation in the Red Sea.

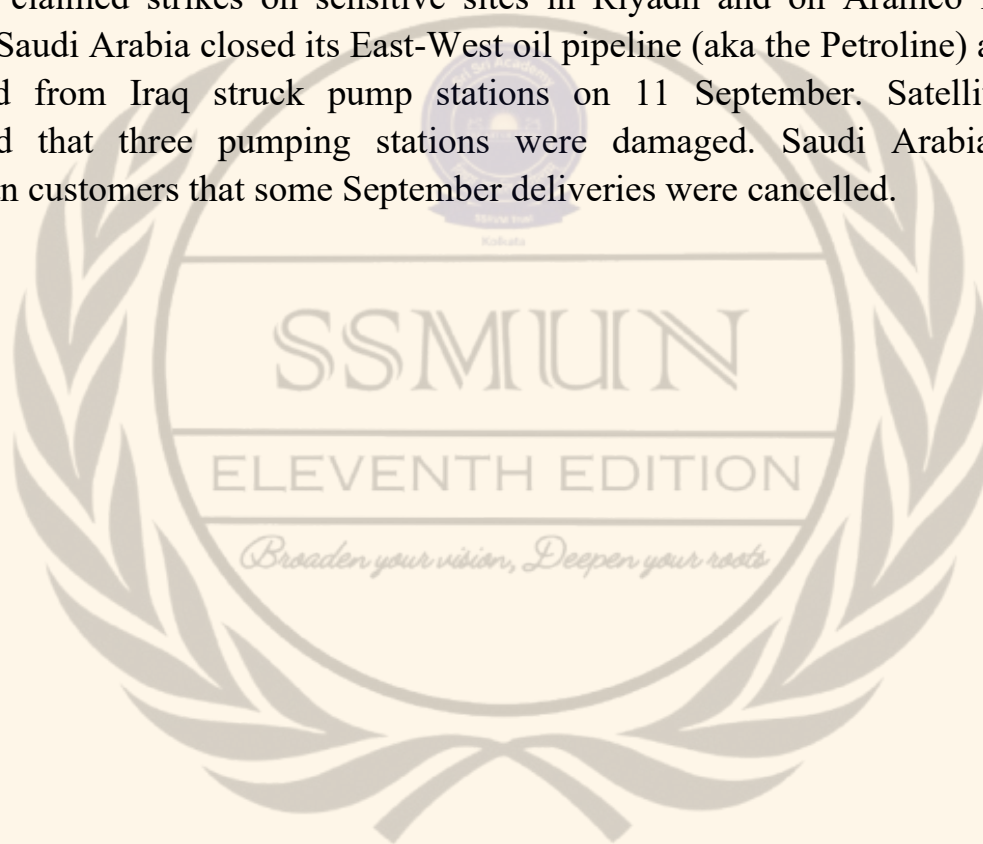
Saudi-Houthi Escalation

On 20 July the Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree announced a maritime embargo on Saudi Arabia, framed as reciprocity for the restrictions Riyadh imposes on Yemen. Two days later the group claimed strikes on two Saudi tankers; the Institute for the Study of War reported that at least seven vessels changed course to avoid Bab el-Mandeb, and President Trump said the United States would hold Iran responsible for future Houthi attacks. On 25 July the Houthis claimed attacks on facilities at Yanbu and at the Jazan refinery, which processes about 400,000 barrels per day, and by 6 August they had claimed attacks on eight Saudi-linked vessels, including a missile strike on the tanker Wafa near Yanbu. Yanbu is the Red Sea export hub through which roughly four million barrels per day are shipped.

Intensified fighting in September produced the first changes in frontline control since 2022. The Houthis captured the port city of Mokha and overran Perim island, completing their control of Yemen's Red Sea coastline and placing their forces about 20 kilometres from the African coast. They subsequently seized the Greater and Lesser Hanish islands. Heavy fighting has taken place around Marib, and Taiz

is threatened, Houthis looking to extend their control to Yemen's oil fields in the East.

Attacks on Saudi territory have expanded accordingly. Houthi strikes have targeted Jeddah, Yanbu, Taif, and King Khalid Air Base, and Saudi debris from an intercepted drone killed one person in Taif. The BBC confirmed that a Saudi F-15 was shot down over Marib by a Houthi surface-to-air missile. Saudi Arabia called an alleged strike on Mecca a red line, which the Houthis denied. On 19 September, the Houthis claimed strikes on sensitive sites in Riyadh and on Aramco facilities in Yanbu. Saudi Arabia closed its East-West oil pipeline (aka the Petrolina) after drones launched from Iraq struck pump stations on 11 September. Satellite imagery indicated that three pumping stations were damaged. Saudi Arabia informed European customers that some September deliveries were cancelled.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The Red Sea is not a sea that history has ever allowed to be ordinary. It is a narrow, 2,250-kilometre corridor of water hemmed in by desert on both flanks, pinched at its northern end into two slender gulfs and closed at its southern end by a strait barely twenty-nine kilometres across. Through that thin ribbon passes something in the order of twelve per cent of world seaborne trade in normal years, roughly a third of global container traffic, and a volume of oil and liquefied natural gas whose interruption is felt in petrol stations and electricity tariffs on four continents within weeks. Geography has made it indispensable; politics has repeatedly made it impassable.

What follows is an expanded chronology of the maritime security of the Red Sea and its approaches, beginning with the founding of the State of Israel and the first closure of the Straits of Tiran, and running to the Bab-el-Mandeb emergency of September 2026.

14 May 1948 :Declaration of the State of Israel

In the late afternoon of 14 May 1948, in the modest hall of the Tel Aviv Museum on Rothschild Boulevard, David Ben-Gurion read out the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. The timing was dictated by the clock as much as by politics: the British Mandate for Palestine was due to lapse at midnight, and the departing Mandatory administration had made clear it would not supervise any orderly transfer of authority. The United Nations General Assembly had adopted Resolution 181 the previous November, recommending partition into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under international administration. The Jewish Agency accepted the plan; the Arab Higher Committee and the member states of the Arab League rejected it, regarding it as an illegitimate disposal of territory by an external body.

Within hours of the declaration, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon entered the territory of the former Mandate, opening the first Arab–Israeli

war. The fighting lasted, with truces, into the spring of 1949 and ended not in a peace treaty but in a series of armistice agreements negotiated on the island of Rhodes under the mediation of Ralph Bunche. The distinction matters enormously for everything that follows: an armistice suspends fighting without settling the legal state of war, and Egypt would later rely precisely on that continuing state of belligerency to justify interfering with shipping bound for Israeli ports.

For maritime security, the decisive consequence of 1948 was one that few observers noticed at the time. The partition plan had allocated the arid southern triangle of the Negev to the Jewish state, and that triangle terminated at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. A state hemmed in on the Mediterranean by hostile coastlines and denied passage through the Suez Canal would need an independent southern outlet if it were ever to trade with Asia, East Africa and the Persian Gulf. Access to the Red Sea therefore entered Israeli strategic doctrine at the very moment of the state's birth, and the contest over that access would shape the region's maritime politics for the next three-quarters of a century.

10 March 1949:Israeli capture of Umm Rashrash (Eilat)

Operation Uvda ,literally 'Operation Fact' ,was designed to establish on the ground what diplomacy might not concede. Units of the Negev and Golani Brigades advanced southwards through largely waterless terrain in the closing weeks of the war and reached the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba on 10 March 1949, days before the armistice with Jordan was concluded. At the fishing hamlet of Umm Rashrash they found two mud-brick buildings and no garrison. Having no flag to hand, the soldiers reportedly improvised one from a bedsheet with hand-drawn markings; the photograph of its raising became one of the founding images of the Israeli state, deliberately echoing the iconography of flag-raising elsewhere in the 1940s.

The hamlet became the city of Eilat. Its transformation was rapid and expensive: a deep-water port, desalination capacity, a road link to Beersheba, and eventually an oil terminal connected by pipeline to Ashkelon on the Mediterranean, allowing crude to cross Israel overland and bypass the Suez Canal altogether. Eilat was never a commercially efficient port in the way that Haifa or Ashdod were. Its

significance was strategic redundancy ,a guarantee that Israel could not be entirely severed from the Indian Ocean economy by a single hostile decision in Cairo.

But redundancy purchased at the head of a gulf is redundancy hostage to a strait. To reach the open Red Sea from Eilat, a vessel must pass through the Straits of Tiran, a channel roughly thirteen kilometres wide between the Sinai Peninsula and the Saudi coast, further narrowed by the islands of Tiran and Sanafir and by coral reefs that reduce the navigable passage to two shallow channels of a few hundred metres each. Whoever holds Sharm el-Sheikh and the islands can close that passage with shore artillery alone. From March 1949 onwards, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran were therefore not merely a waterway but a permanent lever ,and one of the most closely watched chokepoints in the world.

1950:Egypt closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping

Egypt's position rested on a chain of legal claims. First, that the Gulf of Aqaba was a closed or historic bay whose entrance lay wholly within Egyptian and Saudi territorial waters, and which was not therefore an international strait at all. Second, that even if a right of innocent passage existed, Egypt remained in a state of war with Israel by virtue of the armistice's failure to conclude peace, and a belligerent was entitled to exclude enemy shipping and contraband. Egyptian batteries were installed at Ras Nasrani, overlooking the navigable channel, and Israeli-flagged vessels and Israel-bound strategic cargoes were barred.

The same logic was applied simultaneously at the other end of the country. Egypt restricted Israeli use of the Suez Canal, notwithstanding the Constantinople Convention of 1888, which declared the canal free and open to vessels of commerce and of war without distinction of flag in time of war as in time of peace. In September 1951 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 95, calling on Egypt to end its restrictions on shipping through the canal and rejecting the argument that belligerent rights could be exercised indefinitely under an armistice. Egypt did not comply, and the Council did not enforce. The episode taught a lesson

that would echo through every subsequent Red Sea crisis: declaratory legality unaccompanied by enforcement does not reopen a waterway.

The practical consequences for Israel were severe. Cut off from direct maritime trade with Iran, India, Japan and East Africa, Israel was compelled to route cargoes the long way around Africa or through Mediterranean transshipment at much higher cost, and to import oil through politically exposed channels. The blockade thus became not an irritant but a central grievance of Israeli foreign policy, and the reopening of Tiran became a standing war aim.

26 July 1956 :Nasser nationalises the Suez Canal

Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in a long extemporaneous speech in Alexandria's Manshiya Square, using the name of Ferdinand de Lesseps as a pre-arranged signal for Egyptian personnel to seize the company's offices and installations as he spoke. The immediate trigger was the withdrawal, a week earlier, of American and British financing for the Aswan High Dam, itself a response to Egypt's arms purchases from Czechoslovakia and its recognition of the People's Republic of China. Nasser's declared purpose was to fund the dam from canal revenues.

For Britain and France the issue was not law but standing. Roughly two-thirds of Western Europe's oil passed through the canal, and Anthony Eden in particular framed Nasser in the language of 1930s appeasement. Secret tripartite planning began with France and, in the Protocol of Sèvres of late October, with Israel ,an arrangement of such political sensitivity that the British copy of the document was reportedly destroyed. For the Red Sea, the significance was structural: the canal is the northern door to the Red Sea, and whoever controls it determines whether the Red Sea functions as a global artery or a dead end.

29 October : 7 November 1956 ,Suez Crisis / Sinai War

The operation unfolded according to the Sèvres script. Israeli paratroopers dropped at the Mitla Pass on 29 October; Britain and France issued an ultimatum to both sides to withdraw from the canal zone, a demand Israel could accept and Egypt could not; and Anglo-French forces then bombed Egyptian airfields and landed at Port Said on 5 November. Israeli forces overran Sinai in under a week, took Sharm el-Sheikh on 5 November, and lifted the Tiran blockade. Nasser responded by scuttling some forty ships in the canal, blocking it completely.

Out of the crisis came the first United Nations Emergency Force, conceived by Lester Pearson of Canada and Dag Hammarskjöld and the birth of modern peacekeeping as a distinct instrument. UNEF deployed along the Egyptian side of the armistice line and at Sharm el-Sheikh, with the specific function of guaranteeing freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran. Crucially, and this would matter enormously in 1967, UNEF was present only with Egyptian consent, on Egyptian territory, and could be asked to leave.

March 1957 :Straits of Tiran reopened

Israel withdrew from Sinai and Gaza in March 1957 under heavy American pressure, but not unconditionally. In an exchange of understandings, the United States declared that it regarded the Gulf of Aqaba as comprising international waters in which no nation had the right to prevent free and innocent passage, and Israel stated that it would regard any future interference with its shipping through the straits as an act of aggression entitling it to act in self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter. Golda Meir set out this position before the General Assembly on 1 March 1957. It was, in effect, a publicly filed casus belli, a tripwire laid a decade in advance.

The 1958 Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone codified a right of non-suspendable innocent passage through straits used for

international navigation, a principle later carried forward and strengthened as 'transit passage' in Part III of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Delegates should note the tension that runs through the entire chronology: the legal regime for straits has grown steadily more protective of navigation, while the practical capacity of small armed actors to interfere with navigation has grown at least as quickly.

16–22 May 1967 :Egypt remilitarises Sinai and expels UNEF

The 1967 crisis was assembled from misinformation. In mid-May, Soviet intelligence passed to Egypt and Syria a report that Israel was massing divisions on the Syrian border for an imminent attack. The report was false, and UN observers said so, but Nasser was under sustained rhetorical attack from Arab rivals for sheltering behind UN peacekeepers while Syria bore the pressure, and a substantial part of his army was bogged down in the civil war in Yemen. On 16 May Egypt requested the withdrawal of UNEF from the armistice line.

In Israel the effect was immediate. Reserves were mobilised on a scale the small economy could not sustain for long, which itself created pressure for early action. The waiting period, known in Hebrew as the *hamtana*, was experienced domestically as an existential emergency, complete with the preparation of public parks as emergency burial grounds. The strategic logic of a chokepoint was operating exactly as designed: possession of a few square kilometres of coastline overlooking a channel had placed an entire national economy and political system under acute duress without a shot being fired.

22–23 May 1967 :Egypt re-closes the Straits of Tiran

Speaking to airmen at Bir Gifgafa on 22 May, Nasser announced that the Gulf of Aqaba constituted Egyptian territorial waters and that Israeli flag vessels and strategic cargoes ,explicitly including oil ,would not be permitted to pass. He framed it as restoring the situation to what it had been before 1956, and added that if Israel wanted war, it was welcome. The announcement was broadcast on 23 May.

Israel's response invoked precisely the commitment Meir had lodged in 1957: the closure was an act of aggression, and the right of self-defence was engaged. Diplomatic efforts followed ,a proposed 'Regatta' plan under which a multinational flotilla of maritime powers would assert the right of passage, and Abba Eban's mission to Paris, London and Washington ,but the flotilla never materialised, de Gaulle imposed an arms embargo on the region that in practice fell hardest on Israel, and President Johnson, deeply committed in Vietnam and unable to secure congressional backing, was unable to deliver the international escort he had privately hoped to organise.

5–10 June 1967 :The Six-Day War

At a quarter past seven on the morning of 5 June, Israeli aircraft flew low over the Mediterranean, turned south and struck Egyptian airfields in Operation Focus, destroying the bulk of the Egyptian Air Force on the ground within hours. Jordan, acting on inaccurate Egyptian reports of victory, opened fire on Israeli positions and lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem; Syrian shelling from the Golan Heights was answered by an Israeli assault on 9 June. Within six days Israel had taken the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, quadrupling the territory under its control.

Sharm el-Sheikh fell on 7 June, and the Straits of Tiran reopened. Israeli naval control of the Gulf of Aqaba would hold until the Sinai was returned under the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty, which resolved the question in a way that no armistice had managed: the treaty expressly recognised the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international waterways open to all nations for unimpeded and non-suspendable freedom of navigation, and created the Multinational Force and

Observers to supervise the arrangement. That regime, notably, was still functioning in 2026 ,one of the few durable settlements in the whole chronology.

The war also produced Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967, with its carefully ambiguous formula on withdrawal from territories occupied in the conflict, which remains the reference point for every subsequent negotiation. And it produced a second, less discussed consequence. The Suez Canal, now a front line between two armies dug in on either bank, was blocked by scuttled vessels and mines and would not reopen for eight years.

June 1967 – June 1975 :The Suez Canal closure and the "Yellow Fleet"

Fifteen merchant ships were in transit when the canal closed, and they were trapped in the Great Bitter Lake for the entire eight years. Their crews, drawn from Britain, West Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, France and the United States, moored the ships together and organised what they called the Great Bitter Lake Association, complete with its own stamps, a church service rota, football matches, film screenings and a lifeboat 'Olympic Games' held in 1968 in parallel with the Mexico City games. Crews were rotated home, but the ships themselves stayed, gradually acquiring the coating of windblown desert sand that gave them their collective name, the Yellow Fleet. Two of them were eventually sailed out under their own power in 1975.

The economic consequences of the closure were far more durable than the closure itself. Denied the canal, shippers rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope, and because that route is longer, the only way to restore unit economics was to build much larger vessels. The result was the era of the very large and ultra-large crude carrier ,hulls too big for the canal even after it reopened. When the canal did reopen on 5 June 1975, after a joint Egyptian, American, British and Soviet clearance operation

1991 :Gulf War naval operations

Operation Desert Storm was, among other things, the largest maritime interdiction operation since the Second World War. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and Security Council Resolution 665, which authorised states to use measures commensurate to the circumstances to enforce the embargo, a multinational interception force conducted many thousands of queries, boardings and diversions of merchant traffic in the Gulf, the northern Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman. It established, in practice, the template that every later coalition would borrow: a lead nation, a numbered task force, a rotating command arrangement, and a legal mandate anchored in a Chapter VII resolution.

The environmental dimension was unprecedented. Iraqi forces opened valves at the Sea Island terminal and released crude from tankers, producing an oil spill estimated in the millions of barrels ,among the largest in history ,which fouled Saudi coastline and killed enormous numbers of seabirds and marine organisms. Set alongside the retreating army's ignition of some six hundred Kuwaiti oil wells, it demonstrated that deliberate environmental destruction had become an instrument of war in enclosed seas, a precedent directly relevant to later anxieties over the Rubymar's fertiliser cargo and the decaying FSO Safer off Yemen.

For the Red Sea specifically, the war mattered in a subtler way. It normalised standing multinational naval architecture in the region: Combined Maritime Forces would eventually be headquartered in Bahrain with dozens of contributing nations, and the habits of coalition escorting, convoying and information-sharing developed in the 1990s were available off the shelf when Somali piracy erupted in the 2000s and again when the Houthi campaign began in 2023.

12 October 2000 :USS Cole bombing in Aden

The USS Cole, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, had put into Aden for a routine refuelling stop when a small fibreglass boat approached along her port side. The two men aboard were reportedly seen to stand and salute moments before detonating a charge estimated at several hundred kilograms of explosive. The blast tore a hole roughly twelve metres across in the hull, killed seventeen sailors and wounded some three dozen more. The crew fought flooding for days to keep the ship afloat; she was eventually carried home aboard a heavy-lift vessel and returned to service in 2002.

Al-Qaeda claimed the operation, which had been preceded by a failed attempt against USS The Sullivans the previous January, when the attack boat sank under the weight of its own explosives. The Cole attack exposed a category of vulnerability that conventional naval architecture was not designed for: a warship optimised to defeat aircraft, submarines and anti-ship missiles could be crippled by an object costing a few thousand dollars, indistinguishable from the dozens of small craft that surround any port in the developing world.

Strategically, the attack established Yemen ,and specifically the Aden and Bab-el-Mandeb approaches ,as a theatre of maritime militancy, and it established the asymmetric small-boat attack as a reproducible technique. The Houthi campaign two decades later would use recognisably the same idea, industrialised: skiffs replaced by remotely operated uncrewed surface vessels, and a single spectacular attack replaced by sustained volume.

6 October 2002 : Attack on the MV Limburg

The Limburg was a French-flagged double-hulled very large crude carrier, loaded with Iranian crude and approaching a terminal off Ash Shihr on the Hadramawt coast to take on more cargo, when an explosives-laden boat rammed her starboard side. One crew member, a Bulgarian, was killed. The double hull limited the spill to roughly 90,000 barrels, but the slick still contaminated a long stretch of Yemeni coastline and the fishing grounds on which coastal communities depended.

The economic aftershock was out of all proportion to the physical damage. War-risk insurance premiums for Yemeni ports reportedly tripled, shipping lines diverted to Djibouti and Oman, and the port of Aden ,which had been attempting to rebuild itself as a regional transshipment hub ,lost the bulk of its container traffic essentially overnight, with thousands of associated job losses. This is the clearest early demonstration in the chronology of what might be called the insurance multiplier: the attacker does not need to sink ships in quantity, only to make underwriters reprice the risk.

The choice of target also marked a conceptual shift. The Cole was a warship and a legitimate target in the attackers' own framing; the Limburg was a civilian tanker crewed by merchant seafarers of several nationalities carrying cargo for the world market. Osama bin Laden's subsequent statement explicitly framed the

attack on commercial shipping as economic warfare against the West. Two decades later the Houthis would articulate an almost identical rationale, arguing that pressure on global commerce was a legitimate instrument to compel political change in a conflict elsewhere.

2 June 2008 :UN Security Council Resolution 1816

By 2008 Somali piracy had escalated from opportunistic robbery of fishing vessels into an organised ransom industry, with investors, negotiators, guards, cooks and accountants attached to hijacking syndicates based at Eyl, Hobyo and Harardhere. The core legal obstacle was jurisdictional: the customary law of piracy, codified in Articles 100 to 107 of UNCLOS, permits any state to seize a pirate vessel on the high seas, but pirates could evade warships simply by retreating into Somali territorial waters, where only Somalia had authority and Somalia had no functioning navy.

Resolution 1816, adopted unanimously and with the express consent of the Transitional Federal Government, authorised cooperating states to enter Somali territorial waters and use all necessary means to repress piracy, initially for six months. It was followed by Resolutions 1838, 1846 and, in December 2008, 1851, which went further and permitted operations ashore in Somalia. To forestall any argument that a precedent had been created for eroding sovereignty elsewhere, every resolution stated that the authorisation applied only to Somalia, was granted with the TFG's consent, and established no rule of customary international law.

A parallel and less glamorous problem was disposal: warships that captured pirates frequently had no state willing to prosecute them, leading to the practice unkindly known as catch and release. The eventual answer was a patchwork of transfer agreements with Kenya, the Seychelles and Mauritius, supported by UNODC prison-building programmes in Somaliland and Puntland, plus the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia established in January 2009 and the Djibouti Code of Conduct on regional information-sharing, later broadened in the 2017 Jeddah Amendment to cover a wider range of maritime crime.

8 January 2009 :Combined Task Force 151 established

CTF-151 was created as a dedicated counter-piracy command under Combined Maritime Forces in Bahrain, separating that mission from CTF-150's broader maritime security and counter-terrorism remit. Its command rotated among contributing nations including the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Denmark and New Zealand ,a genuinely unusual coalition in which states with sharply divergent politics cooperated because piracy offended all of them equally.

Alongside it operated the European Union's Operation Atalanta, launched in December 2008 as the EU's first naval mission, with the twin tasks of escorting World Food Programme and AMISOM shipping and deterring piracy; and NATO's Operation Ocean Shield from August 2009. Independent deployers added a further dimension: China, India, Russia, Japan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia all sent warships, coordinating through the informal SHADE ,Shared Awareness and Deconfliction ,meetings in Bahrain. For China, the Gulf of Aden deployments from 2008 onwards were the People's Liberation Army Navy's first sustained out-of-area operations and a direct precursor to the opening of its base at Djibouti in 2017.

The operational innovations proved as important as the hulls. The Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor through the Gulf of Aden channelled merchant traffic into escorted group transits at scheduled speeds; the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa coordinated registration and reporting; and UKMTO in Dubai became the merchant fleet's primary reporting point. Delegates should note that this architecture ,corridors, reporting, group transit, deconfliction between navies that do not otherwise cooperate ,is exactly the architecture reactivated in the Red Sea after 2023.

8–12 April 2009 :Hijacking of the Maersk Alabama

Four young Somali pirates boarded the Maersk Alabama roughly 440 kilometres off the Somali coast, the first successful seizure of a United States-flagged vessel in about two centuries. The crew had rehearsed for the contingency: most retreated to a secure citadel, disabled the engines, and captured one of the boarders. In the confused exchange that followed, the pirates took Captain Richard Phillips into the ship's enclosed lifeboat and set off for the Somali coast.

A four-day standoff ensued involving the destroyer USS Bainbridge and the frigate USS Halyburton. With the lifeboat under tow and Phillips's life judged to be in immediate danger, President Obama authorised the use of lethal force. On 12 April, marksmen from a Navy SEAL team fired from the Bainbridge's fantail and killed the three pirates in the lifeboat simultaneously; the fourth, Abduwali Muse, had already come aboard the destroyer and was later convicted in a New York federal court and sentenced to more than thirty years.

The episode's importance was less tactical than political. It gave the piracy problem a narrative and a face in the United States, later amplified by the 2013 film, and it converted a technical maritime security file into a matter of presidential attention and public resolve. It also crystallised the contested question of armed guards aboard merchant vessels, which shipowners, flag states and seafarers' unions had resisted, and which within three years had become near-universal practice on high-risk transits.

2019–2021 :The Israeli–Iranian "shadow war" at sea

From roughly 2019 a pattern of tit-for-tat attacks on merchant shipping emerged that neither party formally acknowledged. Vessels connected to Israeli owners or charterers suffered mysterious explosions at or near the waterline in the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea; Iranian tankers, particularly those carrying crude or fuel to Syria in contravention of sanctions, suffered similar damage in the Mediterranean and Red Sea. Reporting by the Wall Street Journal and others indicated a campaign of limpet mines and small charges designed to damage rather than sink, to impose cost and communicate capability without producing mass casualties that would force escalation.

The context was the American withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018 and the ensuing maximum-pressure sanctions regime. Denied normal export channels, Iran developed an elaborate shadow fleet of ageing tankers practising ship-to-ship transfers and transponder switch-offs, and that fleet became the natural target set for interdiction and sabotage. In May and June 2019 a series of attacks on tankers near Fujairah and in the Gulf of Oman, including the Front Altair and Kokuka Courageous, were attributed by the United States to Iran; the

downing of a US Global Hawk drone followed in June 2019, and the strike on Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq and Khurais facilities in September 2019.

February 2021: The Marib Offensive Begins

In early February 2021, the Houthi movement launched a major ground offensive to seize Marib, the last significant stronghold of Yemen's internationally recognized government in the north of the country. Marib was strategically vital because it held key oil and gas infrastructure and, if captured, would have given the Houthis near-total control over northern Yemen and a stronger negotiating position in any eventual peace talks. The offensive quickly became the deadliest ground campaign in the Yemeni civil war since 2018, with hundreds of fighters killed within the first weeks. Houthi attack frequency rose sharply that year: monthly attacks averaged 78 during the first nine months of 2021, compared with 38 per month over the same period in 2020, with roughly 199 of those attacks concentrated around Marib alone. August 2021 alone saw 133 recorded Houthi attacks, the highest single-month total since at least 2016. The Saudi-led coalition responded with intensified air strikes on Sanaa and other Houthi-held areas. The Marib campaign, and the cross-border missile and drone fire it triggered, set the pattern of escalation that would define the following two years.

March–April 2021 : Cross-Border Missile and Drone Strikes on Saudi Arabia

As the Marib offensive intensified, the Houthis expanded their campaign of missile and drone strikes deep into Saudi territory. In early March 2021, Houthi forces launched missiles and drones at the southern city of Jazan and toward oil tankers and facilities, while attacks on Riyadh and Jeddah's Aramco distribution sites were also claimed. On April 12, 2021, Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree announced drone strikes on Aramco refineries in Jeddah and Jubail using ten Samad-3 drones. Three days later, on April 15, the group claimed a follow-up strike using eleven drones and missiles against Aramco facilities, a Patriot missile battery, and other targets in Jazan; the Saudi-led coalition said it intercepted four drones and five ballistic

missiles, though falling debris started a fire at Jazan University. In February that year, the Houthis had also struck Abha International Airport, damaging a civilian aircraft on the tarmac and injuring eight people from several nationalities, an attack the Saudi-led coalition characterized as a war crime. These strikes reflected the Houthis' evolving strategy of pairing ground gains in Yemen with long-range strikes on Saudi economic infrastructure.

November 2021, Houthi Forces Enter the U.S. Embassy Compound in Sanaa

In November 2021, Houthi forces breached the compound of the former U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, which had been vacated by American diplomatic staff years earlier but still employed local Yemeni personnel. Houthi fighters detained several locally employed embassy staff during the incursion, prompting swift condemnation from the United States government. The incident underscored the Houthis' consolidation of control over the capital and their willingness to act against symbols of Western diplomatic presence even without a full-scale confrontation with Washington. It came against the backdrop of the stalled June 2021 peace initiative, in which the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis had made limited progress on lifting the blockade of Houthi-held ports and Sanaa's airport in exchange for further talks, but which ultimately failed to produce a durable ceasefire. The embassy breach added to a deteriorating security picture in Sanaa as the war ground on through its seventh year.

January 17, 2022 : Drone and Missile Attack on Abu Dhabi

On January 17, 2022, the Houthis carried out their first major lethal attack on the United Arab Emirates, striking Abu Dhabi with a combination of drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles. The attack hit three fuel tanker trucks near the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) storage facility in the Musaffah industrial zone and an under-construction extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport. The resulting explosions and fires killed three civilians, two Indian nationals and one Pakistani national and injured six others, despite several of the incoming projectiles being intercepted. The Houthis said the attack was retaliation for the

UAE's role, through the Saudi-led coalition and allied Yemeni militias such as the Giants Brigades, in recent battlefield gains against them in Shabwa province. The UN Security Council unanimously condemned the strike as a terrorist attack, and the UAE called for an emergency session to address it. The attack marked the first time Houthi weapons had struck deep inside the UAE with confirmed civilian deaths, significantly widening the geographic scope of the conflict beyond Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

January 24, 2022: Second Missile Attack on Abu Dhabi

One week after the initial January 17 strike, the Houthis launched a second attack on Abu Dhabi on January 24, 2022, firing two ballistic missiles toward the Emirati capital. Both missiles were intercepted before impact by a combination of UAE air defenses and U.S. forces stationed at Al Dhafra Air Base, where American personnel took shelter and fired Patriot interceptors during the attack. No casualties or significant damage were reported from this second strike, but it underscored that the January 17 attack had not been an isolated incident and that the Houthis retained the capability to threaten Emirati territory on a recurring basis. The attack further escalated tensions across the Gulf at a time when Washington and Tehran were separately engaged in efforts to salvage the Iran nuclear deal. In response, the Saudi-led coalition launched counter-strikes that destroyed a Houthi missile launcher in Yemen's Al Jawf province, continuing the cycle of cross-border retaliation that characterized this period of the war.

March 20, 2022: Barrage of Strikes on Saudi Energy and Water Facilities

In the early hours of March 20, 2022, the Houthis unleashed a large barrage of drone and missile strikes against multiple targets across Saudi Arabia, including natural gas facilities, water desalination plants, and Aramco oil infrastructure. A drone strike on the Yanbu Aramco Sinopec Refining Company facility caused a temporary reduction in the refinery's production output, though Saudi authorities said the shortfall would be offset from existing inventory. The Saudi-led coalition

said the attacks caused no direct casualties but damaged nearby civilian vehicles and homes; separately, the coalition also reported intercepting a Houthi remote-controlled explosive boat in the southern Red Sea. The strikes came just as Aramco announced record 2021 profits of \$110 billion, a contrast that drew significant international attention. This barrage was among the largest and most geographically dispersed Houthi strikes on Saudi infrastructure to that point in the war, hitting energy, water, and petrochemical targets simultaneously. Weeks later, in April 2022, a UN-brokered nationwide truce took hold, ushering in roughly four years of relative calm in direct Houthi–Saudi hostilities.

October–November 2023: Houthis Enter the Israel–Gaza Conflict

Following the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel and the subsequent Israeli military campaign in Gaza, the Houthis declared solidarity with Palestinians and began launching ballistic missiles and drones toward Israel from Yemen, roughly 1,900 kilometers away. Early attacks, including one intercepted by the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Carney on October 19, 2023, signaled the Houthis' intent to open a new front in the regional conflict despite the significant distances involved. Houthi leaders framed these actions explicitly as support for Hamas and warned that any vessel linked to Israel would become a target. This period marked the transition of the Houthis from a primarily Yemen-focused armed faction into a regional actor within the broader Iran-aligned "Axis of Resistance," directly tying the Yemeni conflict to the Gaza war for the first time. It set the stage for a far larger campaign against international shipping that would begin within weeks and reshape global trade routes through the Red Sea.

November 19, 2023: Hijacking of the Galaxy Leader

On November 19, 2023, Houthi fighters staged a helicopter-borne raid to seize the Galaxy Leader, a Bahamian-flagged, Japanese-operated cargo vessel linked to

Israeli businessman Abraham "Rami" Ungar, as it transited the Red Sea near the Yemeni port of Hodeidah. Roughly ten armed Houthi militants boarded the ship and took its 25-member crew hostage, later diverting the vessel to Hodeidah, where it remained moored with its crew held captive for over a year. The Houthis said they targeted the ship because of its Israeli ownership links, and they subsequently used the vessel and captured crew extensively in propaganda, including staged video content. This hijacking is widely regarded as the opening act of the Houthis' broader Red Sea shipping campaign, which expanded within weeks to strikes on dozens of commercial vessels regardless of flag or ownership, prompting most major shipping lines to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope. The Galaxy Leader's crew was not released until January 22, 2025, following mediation by Oman after a Gaza ceasefire took hold, and the ship itself remained held by the Houthis afterward.

January 11–12, 2024 :U.S. and UK Launch Retaliatory Strikes

By early January 2024, Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden had escalated to dozens of missile, drone, and small-boat strikes, prompting the United States and United Kingdom to launch a joint bombing campaign, later named Operation Poseidon Archer, against Houthi military infrastructure inside Yemen on January 11–12, 2024. The strikes targeted radar systems, missile and drone storage and launch sites, and command infrastructure in Sanaa, Hodeidah, and other Houthi-controlled areas, using warships, submarines, and fighter aircraft. The Houthis vowed to continue their campaign despite the strikes and framed the U.S.–UK response as proof of Western complicity in the Gaza war. Far from deterring the group, the campaign was followed by continued and in some cases intensified Houthi attacks on commercial and naval vessels throughout the winter and spring of 2024. This marked the beginning of a sustained, more-than-year-long air campaign by Western naval forces against Houthi targets that would continue on and off through the U.S. change of administration in early 2025.

February 18 – March 2, 2024: Sinking of the Rubymar

On February 18, 2024, Iranian-backed Houthi forces struck the MV Rubymar, a Belize-flagged, UK-owned bulk carrier transporting more than 41,000 tonnes of combustible fertilizer through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, with two anti-ship ballistic missiles. One missile struck the vessel directly, forcing the crew to abandon ship and be evacuated to safety by a nearby merchant vessel and a coalition warship. The damaged Rubymar drifted, slowly taking on water, for nearly two weeks despite efforts to arrange a salvage tow to a safe port. On March 2, 2024, Yemen's government confirmed the ship had fully sunk in the Gulf of Aden, making it the first vessel completely destroyed in the Houthis' Red Sea campaign since it began the previous November. The sinking also raised environmental concerns given its fertilizer cargo and fuel load, and it demonstrated that Houthi strikes, even against unarmed commercial vessels with no Israeli affiliation, could permanently take ships out of commission and further disrupt Red Sea shipping traffic.

June 12–19, 2024: Sinking of the MV Tutor

On June 12, 2024, the MV Tutor, a Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned coal carrier, was struck in the southern Red Sea by a Houthi unmanned surface (explosive) boat and subsequently hit again by an airborne projectile near the port of Hodeidah, marking the first successful Houthi use of a remote-controlled naval drone in the campaign. The attack caused severe flooding and forced the crew to abandon ship; the U.S. Navy's Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group airlifted 21 surviving crew members to safety, though one Filipino engine-room crew member was left missing and presumed dead, becoming the fourth seafarer killed in the campaign. By June 18–19, the U.K. Maritime Trade Operations center confirmed debris and an oil slick at the vessel's last known position, concluding that the Tutor had sunk the second vessel fully lost to Houthi attacks after the Rubymar in March. A day earlier, on June 13, the Houthis had also struck the MV Verbena with two missiles, causing fires and damage. The Tutor's sinking reinforced concerns that the Houthis

were diversifying their weaponry to include naval drones alongside missiles, complicating naval defenses in the corridor.

July 19–20, 2024 :First Fatal Houthi Strike on Israel and Israeli Retaliation on Hodeidah

On July 19, 2024, a Houthi drone ,identified as an Iranian-designed Samad-3 modified for extended range at the cost of a smaller warhead, struck an apartment building on Ben Yehuda Street in central Tel Aviv, near a U.S. Embassy branch office. The drone was not intercepted and no air-raid siren sounded due to what Israel described as human error in its detection systems; the strike killed one Israeli civilian, a 50-year-old man named Yevgeny Ferder, and injured at least ten others. It was the first Houthi attack to cause a fatality on Israeli soil, despite the group having launched more than 200 drones and cruise missiles toward Israel since the war in Gaza began the previous October. In direct retaliation the next day, July 20, Israeli fighter jets conducted a strike roughly 1,800 kilometers from Israel against Houthi military and oil infrastructure at the port of Hodeidah, targeting fuel depots and a power station; the strike killed at least six people and wounded around 87 others according to Houthi-reported figures. I

January 22, 2025:Release of the Galaxy Leader's Crew

Following the January 2025 Gaza ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the Houthis signaled they would scale back their maritime campaign to attacks solely on Israeli-linked vessels, and on January 22, 2025, they released the 25-member crew of the Galaxy Leader, more than fourteen months after the ship's hijacking. The crew, mediated out via Oman, included Filipino, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Mexican nationals; two of the Filipino crew members were reported to have contracted malaria during their captivity but recovered. The release came as U.S. President Donald Trump, newly inaugurated, moved to reinstate a terrorism

designation on the Houthis that had been revoked under the Biden administration, raising concerns about renewed confrontation even as this particular hostage situation was resolved. Industry groups such as the International Chamber of Shipping welcomed the release but noted that a year of hostage-taking underscored the human cost borne by ordinary seafarers caught in a geopolitical conflict entirely outside their control. The Galaxy Leader vessel itself remained impounded by the Houthis in Hodeidah.

March 15 – May 6, 2025: Renewed U.S. Bombing Campaign and Ceasefire

After Israel ended the Gaza ceasefire by resuming bombardment of the Gaza Strip in March 2025, the Houthis resumed their attacks on shipping, prompting the Trump administration to launch a large, near-daily campaign of air and naval strikes against Houthi targets beginning March 15, 2025.

The operation, carried out from carrier strike groups including the USS Harry S. Truman, targeted radar systems, air defenses, and ballistic missile and drone launch sites over a period of roughly seven weeks, and according to an AFP tally of Houthi-reported figures, killed around 300 people. On May 6, 2025, President Trump announced at the White House that the United States would halt the bombing campaign "effective immediately," stating that the Houthis had "capitulated" and agreed to stop targeting American vessels in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Oman, which brokered the deal, confirmed the ceasefire and said it would ensure freedom of navigation for international shipping, though the agreement notably did not address Houthi attacks on Israel, and Houthi officials said support for Gaza, including strikes on Israel, would continue. The ceasefire blindsided Israel, which had escalated its own strikes on Yemen's main airport on the very day the deal was announced.

July 3–14, 2026: Sanaa Airport Strike Ends Four-Year De-escalation

Tensions that had remained largely dormant since the 2022 truce reignited after an Iranian flight from Tehran landed in Houthi-controlled Sanaa on July 3, 2026 — the first publicly acknowledged Iranian flight to the capital in over a decade — which Yemen's internationally recognized government said it viewed as cover for weapons transfers. On July 13, 2026, strikes attributed by the Houthis to Saudi Arabia hit Sanaa International Airport's runway; Yemen's government said the strike was intended to prevent an Iranian aircraft carrying a Houthi delegation from landing after a funeral.

Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree declared the strike had ended the "de-escalation phase" that had held since 2014, and Yemen's defense minister warned that "patience has run out." In direct response on July 14, the Houthis launched missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia's Abha International Airport in the kingdom's southwest, a senior Houthi official simultaneously threatened to impose a "siege" on Saudi Arabia in retaliation.

July 20, 2026: Houthi Naval Blockade of Saudi Arabia Declared

On July 20, 2026, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree announced in a televised statement that the group was imposing a maritime and aerial embargo on Saudi Arabia, describing it as based on the principle of "an eye for an eye" in reference to Saudi Arabia's own long-standing restrictions on Houthi-controlled ports and airspace.

The declaration did not immediately specify which categories of vessels would be targeted, but it formally ended the roughly four-year period of relative calm that had persisted since the 2022 UN-brokered truce and signaled the Houthis' intent to

extend their Red Sea shipping campaign to include Saudi-linked commercial traffic specifically, rather than only Israel-linked vessels.

September 3–8, 2026: Houthi Ground Offensive and Multi-City Strikes on Saudi Arabia

On September 3, 2026, the Houthis launched a significant ground offensive attempting to push through western Taiz and southern Hodeidah toward the strategic Red Sea port city of Al-Makha (Mocha), near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, as Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces launched a counteroffensive aiming to retake territory and, ultimately, Sanaa itself.

Days later, on September 8, 2026, Saudi Arabia accused the Houthis of striking multiple civilian and economic sites inside the kingdom including in Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jizan, and Najran, wounding at least 73 civilians, among them women and children. The attacks ignited fires at oil facilities in the Jizan region, home to a roughly 400,000-barrel-per-day refinery that ranks among Saudi Arabia's largest, with firefighters battling the blazes into the following morning. Saudi coalition spokesman Major-General Turki al-Maliki called the strikes a "serious escalation" and a "flagrant violation" of Saudi sovereignty. By this point, roughly 125,000 Yemeni civilians had been internally displaced by the renewed fighting, and Djibouti reported a sudden influx of over 2,000 Yemeni refugees within a single 24-hour period, illustrating the rapidly worsening humanitarian toll of the reignited war.

September 16–17, 2026: Mecca Interception Accusation and F-15 Shootdown Claim

On September 16, 2026 (reported September 17), Saudi air defenses intercepted a Houthi drone approaching the vicinity of Mecca, Islam's holiest city, an incident Saudi authorities publicly characterized as a Houthi attempt to target the site directly an accusation Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi dismissed as "slander

and fabrication." On the same day, the Houthis claimed to have shot down a Saudi F-15 fighter jet over Yemen's Marib province using a domestically manufactured missile, a claim that, if true, would represent a significant escalation in the group's air-defense capabilities against the Saudi-led coalition's air force.

Separately, on September 17, debris from an intercepted Houthi drone killed a Yemeni resident in the Saudi region of Taif, marking the first fatality publicly announced by Riyadh from the renewed campaign that began in July. These incidents, occurring within roughly 48 hours of each other, sharply raised regional alarm, prompting explicit statements of security solidarity from Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, and Lebanon, and pushing China and Pakistan to publicly press Iran to restrain its Houthi allies.

September 19–20, 2026: Missile and Drone Attack on Riyadh and Yanbu

In the early hours of Saturday, September 19, 2026, the Houthis launched a barrage of missiles and drones targeting Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, along with an Aramco oil facility at Yanbu on the Red Sea coast where a key Saudi pipeline terminates, and additional targets in Taif, Baysh, and Farasan. Saudi Arabia confirmed on Saturday that its air defenses had intercepted a ballistic missile aimed at Riyadh, the first time in this renewed conflict that a Houthi weapon had been aimed directly at the Saudi capital after residents reported hearing an explosion at dawn and later seeing a plume of smoke rise near Riyadh's main airport; no casualties or damage were reported.

In response to the attempted Riyadh strike, regional governments including Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, and Lebanon issued fresh statements of solidarity with Saudi Arabia, while Pakistan's military and foreign ministry reiterated defense commitments and Turkey said it stood ready to help meet Saudi military needs under a trilateral defense agreement. Reports also emerged, via Hezbollah-affiliated outlet Al-Akhbar, that Riyadh had transmitted a two-week ceasefire proposal to the Houthis through Oman, though neither side had confirmed this publicly. As of this attack the most recent confirmed Houthi strike as of

YEMEN ISSUE

Historical Context

During British administration, while Aden was administered as a Crown Colony from 1937 onward, being more developed with better infrastructure, the surrounding areas were organized into nineteen tribal polities known as the Western and Eastern Aden Protectorates. Britain governed these protectorates through indirect rule, leaving the interior parts considerably underdeveloped. This division still remains to this day.

In June 1969, radical Marxist elements within the NLF ousted moderate President Qahtan al-Shaabi, establishing the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Governed by the Yemeni Socialist Party, the PDRY realigned its foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, the GDR, and Cuba. The Soviet Union constructed naval support facilities at Aden, and built infrastructure around Perim Island, and communication stations on Socotra Island, integrating the southern Red Sea into Warsaw Pact naval planning.

On 22 May 1990, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen unified to form the Republic of Yemen, with Sana'a made the capital. The transitional power-sharing agreement was made such that Northern President Ali Abdullah Saleh assumed the presidency of a five-member Presidential Council, southern leader Ali Salem al-Beidh became Vice President, and executive posts and parliamentary seats were split fifty-fifty between the GPC and the Yemeni Socialist Party. Between 1991 and 1993, political relations between the GPC and the YSP deteriorated into outright violence. Over 150 southern political figures and senior YSP officials were assassinated in Sana'a and other northern urban centers by unidentified gunmen, operations that southern leaders blamed on the northern forces and radical Islamist fighters returning from the Soviet-Afghan war.

The Document of Pledge and Accord was signed by Saleh and al-Beidh in Amman, Jordan, in February 1994, which outlined constitutional reform. The agreement was never implemented, and clashes between northern and southern forces

escalated into total warfare in April 1994. On 21 May 1994, al-Beidh announced the secession of the south and the creation of the Democratic Republic of Yemen, securing diplomatic support and financing from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Saleh deployed northern regular armed forces alongside southern defectors led by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and utilized armed Islamist tribal auxiliaries, including veteran Arab-Afghan fighters. Northern forces executed a three-pronged advance on Aden, capturing the city on 7 July 1994 and forcing the southern leadership into exile. The northern victory fundamentally changed the character of the state. Saleh did away with the power-sharing agreement, and changed the constitution to replace the Presidential Council with an autocracy led by Saleh, that would remain in place till the Arab Spring.

In November 2009, Houthi fighters crossed the frontier and seized Jabal al-Dukhan, killing a Saudi border guard. Saudi Arabia entered the war directly, carrying out bombing campaigns, and even a blockade along the Red Sea coast. Coming to be known as the Saada Wars, they ended in February 2010 with a fragile ceasefire. The campaigns left Saada outside effective central government control, and marked direct Saudi intervention.

The Arab Spring reached Yemen in January 2011, when demonstrators demanded the immediate resignation of President Saleh. The crisis escalated dramatically on 18 March 2011, known as the Friday of Dignity, when snipers and armed loyalists positioned on rooftops opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing fifty-two and wounding hundreds. On 3 June 2011, an assassination attempt targeted Saleh presidential compound mosque during Friday prayers. An explosive charge killed several senior government ministers and critically wounded Saleh, who was evacuated to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. The Gulf Cooperation Council , supported by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations Security Council, began putting pressure. In November 2011, Saleh signed the GCC Initiative. The agreement required him to transfer authority to his Vice President, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, in exchange for absolute judicial immunity for himself and his associates, alongside the formation of the National Dialogue Conference.

The Houthis rejected the boundaries because the Azal region, comprising the Zaidi highlands of Saada, Amran, Sana'a, and Dhamar, was landlocked, stripped of commercial access to the Red Sea port of Hodeidah (placed in Tahama), and deprived of natural resource revenues from the oil and gas reserves of Marib and Shabwah (placed in Saba).

At the same time, southern factions rejected the partition of the south into two separate administrative zones. Following popular resentment against the Hadi government, which culminated on 30 July 2014 when the Houthis mobilized armed supporters around Sana'a. They formed an alliance with Abdullah Saleh, who had remained leader of the GPC.

Between July and September 2014, Houthi-Saleh forces captured the strategic northern city of Amran, defeated the military brigades loyal to Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, and advanced into Sana'a. On 21 September 2014, Houthi fighters seized key government buildings, the Central Bank, and state television stations. In January 2015, Houthi fighters abducted Hadi's chief of staff, besieged the presidential palace, and placed President Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah under house arrest.

On 6 February 2015, the Houthis issued a "Constitutional Declaration," dissolving parliament and establishing a Revolutionary Committee chaired by Mohammed Ali al-Houthi to govern the country. Hadi escaped house arrest on 21 February 2015, fled to Aden, and declared Aden the temporary national capital, and appealed to the United Nations and the GCC for military assistance against the armed coup.

In March 2015, Houthi forces and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh, launched a southwards offensive and seized Taiz, captured the al-Anad Airbase, and reached into the outskirts of Aden, even bombing Hadi's presidential palace and forcing the president to flee by sea to Oman, and subsequently to Riyadh. On 26 March 2015, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched Operation Decisive Storm, leading a military coalition that originally comprised the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan, supported by the United States and the United Kingdom.

The coalition cited Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and claimed that the intervention was an operation to restore the internationally recognized government and therefore enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216.

In July 2015, during Operation Golden Arrow, UAE armored forces and southern resistance groups liberated Aden and cleared Houthi-Saleh forces from the southern areas. However, when coalition forces attempted to advance into the interior, the ground campaign became a sort of stalemate.

In December 2017, the tactical partnership between the Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh fractured. Saleh broadcast a speech expressing willingness to "turn a new page" with the Saudi-led coalition if it lifted its economic blockade. The Houthis denounced the move as treason. And within four days, Houthi forces overran Saleh's compound and executed the former president on 4 December 2017 as he attempted to escape toward his ancestral village in Sanhan.

Saleh's nephew, Brigadier General Tareq Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, fled south to build the National Resistance forces, establishing an anti-Houthi military base on the Red Sea coast with direct backing from the United Arab Emirates.

In June 2018, the coalition launched Operation Golden Victory, a combined offensive designed to capture the city of Hodeidah. Commanded by the UAE-backed Giants Brigades, Tareq Saleh's National Resistance, and the Tihama Resistance, the offensive advanced up the western coastal strip, encircling Hodeidah Airport and advancing within kilometers of the port.

Under heavy diplomatic pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom, the offensive was suspended to allow United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to convene formal peace consultations in Sweden. In December 2018, the parties signed the Stockholm Agreement, establishing a local ceasefire, mandating the redeployment of forces from Hodeidah, Salif, and Ras Isa ports, and establishing the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA).

Between 2020 and 2022, the conflict centered on the Battle of Marib. Marib represented the last northern stronghold of the internationally recognized

government, home to the national headquarters of the Ministry of Defense, extensive natural gas and crude production facilities at Safer, and over one million internally displaced persons sheltering in formal and informal camps.

The Houthis launched an offensive to seize the city. The offensive was kept at bay by sustained Saudi Royal Air Force close air support, stiff resistance by local tribal forces allied with the Islah party, and the late redeployment in early 2022 of the heavily armed Giants Brigades from the western coast to Shabwah and southern Marib. Following the liberation of Aden in 2015, the UAE constructed a network of 'local security forces' outside the formal command of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense. This included the Security Belt Forces in Aden, Lahj, and Abyan, the Elite Forces in Shabwah and Hadhramaut, and the Giants Brigades along the western coast.

In April 2017, President Hadi dismissed al-Zubaidi from his post as Governor of Aden. In direct response, al-Zubaidi announced the formation of the Southern Transitional Council, basically making a parallel presidency and a 303-member Southern National Assembly. The STC declared itself the sole representative of the southern people, formally seeking the dissolution of the 1990 union and the re-establishment of the independent state of South Arabia.

To prevent the total collapse of the anti-Houthi alliance, Saudi Arabia mediated the Riyadh Agreement in November 2019. The framework provided for the return of the prime minister to Aden, the establishment of a cabinet split equally between northern and southern representatives, and the formal integration of all STC forces under the command of the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

While a government under Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed was formed in December 2020, the military provisions of this agreement were never implemented. The STC maintained autonomous command over its armed formations, continued to collect local customs and tax revenues, and routinely prevented northern government officials from exercising administrative authority in Aden. Eventually, there was the creation of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), chaired by former interior minister Rashad al-Alimi.

ISSUE OF PIRACY

Piracy is defined under UNCLOS Article 101 as:

(a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:

(i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;

(ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;

(b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;

(c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b).

The collapse of the Somali state in January 1991, following the overthrow of Major General Mohamed Barre dismantled the government of the country. The following dissolving of the Somali National Army, the Coastal Police, and the Somali Navy left 3,300 kilometers of coastline, the longest in continental Africa, without central law enforcement.. In the absence of a functioning government outside the capital Mogadishu, the exclusive economic zone and territorial waters of Somalia became entirely without governance.

What happened next was locals, armed with assault rifles, began intercepting foreign fishing to extract money. However, as the revenues derived from this extortion was lucrative and thus individual incidents at sea began becoming more common. By 2005, what had started as localised actions turned into an organized

practical racket attacking commercial shipping transiting the the Red Sea adn Gulf of Aden.

Between 2005 and 2008, Somali piracy expanded from simple attacks within twenty nautical miles of the shore into the deep sea. Approximately twelve percent of global maritime trade and over twenty thousand merchant ships passed annually through the narrow maritime funnel leading to the Bab el-Mandeb strait.

On 25 September 2008, three pirate skiffs boarded the Belize flagged cargo vessel MV Faina off the coast of Somalia. The vessel was carrying a military cargo comprising battle tanks, heavy mortars, artillery ammunition, and AA missile systems, bound for the Kenyan port of Mombasa. United States Naval vessels, alongside a Russian frigate, converged on the Faina. The standoff lasted five months, concluding in February 2009 following a USD 3.2 million ransom in cash, after which the vessel was released. This would not be the last major boarding, as other victims would include MV Sirius Star in 2008, and the MV Maersk Alabama, the United States Navy playing the primary role to resolve the matters.

On 18 February 2011, nineteen Somali pirates boarded the SV Quest, an American sailing yacht heading toward Oman. A United States Navy carrier strike group led by the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise intercepted the yacht, initiating negotiations to rescue the four American civilians on board. During negotiations, a pirate launched an RPG at the USS Sterett. Shots were fired inside the cabin as the pirates executed the four hostages. United States Navy SEALs boarded the yacht, killing two pirates and capturing the remaining fifteen, being the first direct lethal attack of the kind.

The UNSC passed Resolution 1816 (allowing cooperating states in coordination with the Somali Transitional Government to enter territorial waters for anti-piracy operations, Resolution 1838 (calling upon member states to use military action against piracy in the region), Resolution 1846 (expanding scope of operations to include Somali territory and airspace) and Resolution 1851 (creating the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia for intelligence sharing purposes) as a response to the issue of piracy.

In December 2008, the Council of the European Union created the European Union Naval Force Somalia, under Operation Atalanta. This included providing close naval escorts to vulnerable World Food Programme cargo vessels delivering emergency relief to Mogadishu, supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia , and conducted patrols across the Gulf of Aden.

Combined Task Force 151 was established in January 2009 by the Combined Maritime Forces headquartered in Bahrain, as a multinational coalition focused on counter-piracy operations, rotating its naval command from the United States, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Turkey, Japan, and Singapore.

With the expiry of UNSC Resolution 2608 in March of 2022, the Somali government argued that after 14 years of foreign naval operations, piracy had been suppressed and opted to discontinue the permission of foreign navies to enter Somali territorial waters to carry out anti piracy operations, instead there being the need for explicit authorisation from Somalia to do the same.

In context of this, on 14 December 2023, a pirate boarding team seized the Maltese bulk carrier MV Ruen roughly 380 nautical miles east of Socotra Island, marking the first successful hijacking of a commercial merchant vessel by Somali pirates since 2017. The pirates took control of the vessel, directed it to the coastal waters near Eyl, and used it as a ship to carry out piracy across the Arabian Sea. This was intercepted in an operation conducted by the Indian Navy.

On 12 March 2024, twenty armed pirates boarded the Bangladeshi bulk carrier MV Abdullah, transiting from Mozambique to the UAE, approximately 600 nautical miles east of Mogadishu. The pirates held the 23 Bangladeshi crew members hostage until 14 April 2024, when the shipowners paid an estimated five million USD ransom.

The resurgence of Somali piracy has theories ranging from involvement of the Islamist Group called Al-Shabaab, and also has been linked to the smuggling of small arms through the Gulf of Aden, or rise of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing who are the usual victims of piracy attacks.

RED SEA CRISIS

Beginning on 19 October, the Houthis launched cruise missiles and drones from Yemen towards southern Israel, particularly the port city of Eilat, stating that these attacks are part of a response to the Gaza conflict and aligning themselves with the “Axis of Resistance”. Most of the missiles launched towards Israel were intercepted, including several missiles and drones intercepted by the USS *Carney* in the Red Sea, marking the first direct US military action against the Houthis.

When attacks at Israeli territory were mostly futile, the Houthis shifted their attention towards commercial shipping and the Bab el-Mandeb. On 19 November 2023, Houthi forces carried out a helicopter attack on the *Galaxy Leader*, boarding the vessel and taking its 25 crew members hostage before diverting the ship towards the Yemeni coast. The vessel was subsequently held near Hodeidah, where it remained for more than a year..

Further incidents followed in the Gulf of Aden and southern Red Sea. On 25 and 27 November, missiles were fired towards the USS *Mason* and the chemical tanker *Central Park*, although the attacks did not result in the loss of either vessel, while on 11 December the Norwegian tanker *Strinda* was struck and set on fire and the French navy ship *Languedoc* intercepted drones directed towards it. On 14 December, a missile narrowly missed the *Maersk Gibraltar*, after which Maersk temporarily suspended Red Sea operations and other shipping companies began making similar decisions. The United States announced *Operation Prosperity Guardian* on 18 December, while Reuters reported that activity at Israel's Red Sea port of Eilat had fallen by approximately 85 percent.

The attacks continued despite the formation of the naval coalition as under *Prosperity Guardian* consisting of forces from the USA, UK, Bahrain, France, Canada, Norway, etc. Maersk attempted to resume Red Sea transits on 30 December, but the *Maersk Hangzhou* was attacked on the same day, prompting another suspension of operations after US helicopters engaged and sank three boats involved in the attack.

First Incidents

On 3 January 2024, the United States and United Kingdom issued a joint warning to the Houthis that continued attacks on commercial shipping would lead to consequences, but attacks continued. On 9 January, the Houthis launched their largest missile barrage to that point, with US and UK naval and air forces intercepting 18 drones and three missiles. The UNSC adopted Resolution 2722 the very next day as a result, condemning attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and reaffirming the importance of freedom of navigation and international trade.

The United States and United Kingdom carried out their first direct strikes against Houthis in Yemen on 11 and 12 January, Operation Poseidon Archer. Further strikes continued throughout January, including an attack near Sanaa airport on 22 January, while the Houthis continued to target commercial vessels. On 24 January, two Maersk vessels carrying US government cargo were targeted near Bab el-Mandeb despite naval protection, and on 26 January the tanker Marlin Luanda, carrying Russian naphtha, was struck by a missile in the Gulf of Aden and caught fire.

A further escalation occurred on 18 February, when the British carrier Rubymar was struck by a ballistic missile in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The vessel suffered serious damage and its crew abandoned ship, after which the Rubymar drifted for almost two weeks before sinking on 2 March. The vessel was carrying approximately 22,000 tonnes of ammonium phosphate fertiliser, creating both a safety hazard and the possibility of environmental damage in an area with corals.

The European Union launched Operation Aspides on 19 February as a defensive maritime mission intended to protect commercial shipping. On 6 March, the Barbados bulk carrier True Confidence was struck near Aden, killing three seafarers and marking the first confirmed civilian fatalities among ship crews during the entire conflict.

The attacks became more complex during the middle of 2024, with the Houthis increasingly combining missiles and unmanned systems. On 12 June, the Greek

ship Tutor was struck by missiles and an USV in the southern Red Sea. One crew member remained missing; the ship was confirmed sunk on 18 June, making it the second commercial vessel lost during the conflict. The incident was significant because it demonstrated the increasing use of Unmanned Surface Vessels against merchant shipping rather than relying solely on missiles and drones launched from land. This would be a pattern that would be seen more often.

The confrontation with Israel also became more direct. Following a Houthi drone attack on Tel Aviv on 19 July that killed one person, Israel carried out strikes against Hodeidah port on the following day, killing 14 people according to reports at the time. Israel subsequently continued to conduct strikes against Houthi areas.

On 21 August, the Greek crude oil tanker Sounion was attacked while transiting the southern Red Sea. The vessel, carrying approximately 150,000 tonnes of crude oil, or about one million barrels, was struck by several unmanned aerial devices and lost engine power and caught fire, forcing its 25 crew members to evacuate. Houthi fighters later boarded the abandoned vessel and placed explosive charges on its deck, causing further fires and creating the possibility of a major oil spill in the Red Sea.

The vessel was eventually towed away under the protection of Operation Aspides, and salvage crews were able to prevent the release of its entire cargo into the sea. Israel continued to conduct strikes against Yemeni ports and infrastructure during September and December, while on 16 October US B-2 bombers attacked hardened underground weapons-storage facilities. By late 2024, more than 100 maritime incidents had been recorded since the seizure of the Galaxy Leader.

The Gaza ceasefire announced in January 2025 was followed by a lessening in Houthi attacks, and the crew of the Galaxy Leader were released on 22 January after approximately 14 months in hostage through an arrangement mediated by Oman. This reduction in attacks was obviously short lived, as the Houthis announced in March that they would resume attacks on shipping to/from Israel in response to restrictions on humanitarian aid entering Gaza through the Rafah crossing.

On 15 March, the United States launched Operation Rough Rider and conducted a wide campaign against Houthi territory, including command facilities, weapons storage sites and air-defence systems. The operation continued for 52 days and involved more than 1,100 strikes according to US reporting, while civilian casualties were also reported, including at the Ras Isa oil terminal and a migrant detention facility in Saada. The United States also lost two FA-18 aircraft and seven MQ-9 drones during the campaign.

On 6 May, Oman announced a truce under which the Houthis agreed to stop attacking US vessels, although the group continued to regard Israel as a legitimate target. Israel carried out a strike against Sanaa airport on the same day, and a Houthi missile subsequently landed near Ben Gurion Airport in early May. Between 6 and 9 July, the Houthis attacked and sank the bulk carriers Magic Seas and Eternity C, both Greek. At least four crew members were killed, while others were reported missing or taken captive, and insurance premiums increased sharply.

Israel also intensified its strikes against Houthi leadership and infrastructure, while the Houthis continued targeting vessels that they associated with Israel through ownership, management or previous port calls. On 1 September, the Israeli-owned tanker Scarlet Ray was targeted near Yanbu, while on 23 and 29 September the Dutch-flagged cargo ship Minervagracht was attacked in the Gulf of Aden. The second incident caused a fire, forced the evacuation of its 19 crew members by helicopter and resulted in the death of a Filipino crew member.

The Gaza peace plan that took effect in October was followed by another reduction in Houthi attacks.

Iran-Israel-USA War

The conflict began on 28 February with US and Israeli strikes against Iran in Operation Epic Fury and Operation Roaring Lion respectively, while the Houthis initially refrained from direct military action before launching a ballistic missile towards Beersheba on 28 March and subsequently targeting Eilat. A Houthi official

stated that closing Bab el-Mandab remained an option if Gulf states entered the conflict, linking the security of the Red Sea directly to the wider confrontation involving Iran and the Gulf states.

Following the US-Iran ceasefire in early April, maritime activity around the Red Sea remained comparatively limited until June, when the Houthis again launched attacks following renewed exchanges between Israel and Iran and announced restrictions on Israeli navigation through the Red Sea. The situation became more serious in July after the United States reimposed a naval blockade of Iran, with Reuters reporting that Iran had asked the Houthis to prepare for a possible closure of Bab el-Mandab if the United States attacked Iranian infrastructure. Subsequent reporting also indicated that Iranian personnel and missile equipment had been transferred to Houthi-controlled Yemen, although the extent of Iranian operational control over Houthi decision-making remained disputed.

The confrontation between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis escalated following an incident involving a Mahan Air flight from Iran that attempted to land at Sanaa on 13 July. The runway was struck before the aircraft could land and the aircraft subsequently diverted to Hodeidah, with responsibility for the strike disputed between the Yemeni government and other actors. The Houthis subsequently declared the previous truce over and announced a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia on 20 July, followed by claims of attacks against Saudi tankers.

Saudi Arabia struck Hodeidah on 24 July, while the Houthis subsequently claimed attacks against the Jizan refinery and Yanbu on 26 July. Further maritime incidents were reported during August, including the reported missile attack against the Saudi-flagged chemical tanker NCC Ghazal, although Saudi authorities did not publicly confirm the incident. On 3 August, the Indian-flagged sailing vessel Faize Noore Oliya sank approximately 13 nautical miles south of Hodeidah following what appeared to be an attack involving an explosives-laden boat; all 14 crew members were rescued and no group claimed responsibility.

The Houthis subsequently claimed attacks against the tanker Wafa near Yanbu on 5 August and against the cargo ship Tihamah near Bab el-Mandab on 11 August. The latter vessel was carrying food and was struck by ballistic missiles, killing four crew members, while a subsequent attack killed two Yemeni rescuers. The Houthis

stated that the ship was carrying Saudi military equipment, although the vessel itself was not Saudi owned. On 24 August, the group claimed another strike against the Bahri tanker Amzan near Yanbu.

Houthi forces advanced along Yemen's western coast and captured the port of Mokha on 10 September, bringing them closer to Bab el-Mandab. Reports also indicated Houthi control over parts of the Hanish island group, although the precise territorial situation remained contested. The United Nations in the Yemen Emergency Briefing of the UNSC described the situation around Bab el-Mandab as increasingly volatile.

International Responses

Operation Prosperity Guardian was announced on 18 December 2023 under the Combined Maritime Forces' Task Force 153, with the stated purpose of protecting commercial shipping from attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. It operated alongside national naval deployments and the subsequent US-UK strikes against Houthis, while European states had a more cautious, indirect approach through Operation Aspides, launched in February 2024 with a mandate focused on protecting merchant vessels rather than conducting offensive operations against Houthis in Yemen.

Operation Aspides was extended into 2026 and continued to provide protection for commercial shipping, while India maintained Operation Sankalp and France, Pakistan and other states deployed naval vessels too. Saudi Arabia established the Multinational Maritime Defence Coalition MMDC with regional and international partners including Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Djibouti and Somalia.

FOREIGN, REGIONAL AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Yemen

Yemen is the ground zero of this crisis: a fractured state where the Houthis control Sanaa and much of the north/west coast, while an internationally recognized government, backed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, holds the south and east, including Aden. A Saudi-led coalition has fought the Houthis since 2014, with a UN-brokered ceasefire holding from 2022 until it began unraveling in 2026. Since July 2026, fighting has reignited: a Saudi/government strike on Sanaa airport triggered a Houthi naval blockade of Saudi Arabia, tanker strikes, a Saudi bombing of Hodeidah, and Houthi strikes on Jizan refinery and Yanbu. By September 2026 Houthis launched a general coastal offensive to seize control of Bab al-Mandeb, and captured the Greater and Lesser Hanish Islands, tightening their grip on the strait. Yemen is thus simultaneously the site of a civil war and the base from which Red Sea shipping attacks are launched, treat "Yemen" and "the Houthis" as distinct actors with overlapping but not identical interests to the internationally recognized government.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia leads the coalition backing Yemen's government against the Houthis and is now in direct confrontation with them. Since March–July 2026, Saudi seaborne crude exports through Bab al-Mandeb rose roughly eightfold versus 2025, since Iran's restrictions on Hormuz forced Riyadh to reroute exports via the Red Sea making the strait newly vital to the Saudi economy. In September 2026, Houthi strikes on southern Saudi Arabia wounded over 70 civilians, following a Saudi-linked strike on Sanaa airport. MBS has coordinated with UAE's Mohamed bin Zayed warning against further regional escalation, and Saudi Arabia expelled Iranian defense officials in March 2026. Saudi Arabia is now weighing a renewed

ground/naval offensive in Yemen, balancing its Vision 2030 economic diversification.

United States of America

The US led the primary multinational maritime security response: Operation Prosperity Guardian ran from December 2023 to May 2025, with the US and allies, conducting large-scale airstrikes on Houthi territory under Operation Poseidon Archer and Operation Rough Rider. A 2025 US–Houthi ceasefire saw the Houthis agree not to target US vessels, while continuing to target Israel-linked and other commercial shipping. US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) continues to run a 24-hour maritime security watch and coordinate voyage planning for US-flagged vessels. The US framework combines direct strikes, naval escort/deterrence, sanctions on Houthi financing networks, and diplomatic pressure on Iran, while now also being a direct belligerent in the wider 2026 Iran war, which is entangled with the Houthis' resumed campaign.

Iran

Iran is the principal external patron of the Houthis, supplying weapons, missile/drone technology, and financial support, though Tehran officially denies direct operational control and calls the Houthis "independent actors." Yemeni National Resistance forces claimed to have seized documents detailing a four-stage IRGC plan to help the Houthis capture Bab al-Mandeb, though Iran's foreign ministry denied involvement. Iran's own confrontation with the US and Israel escalated into the "2026 Iran war," Iran reportedly asked the Houthis to be ready to close the strait if the US struck Iranian power infrastructure. Iran uses the Houthis as a "forward" leverage point against Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Western shipping without direct exposure. Iran's own Strait of Hormuz posture is also entangled with

this crisis, since Iranian restrictions on Hormuz have forced Saudi Arabia to route far more crude exports through the Red Sea/Bab al-Mandeb instead.

Egypt

Egypt is the most economically exposed "neutral" actor, since Suez Canal transit fees are a critical hard-currency earner. Annual Suez revenue fell from a record \$10.3 billion in 2023 to about \$4 billion in 2024 as shipping diverted around Africa. Egypt has told the IMO the Red Sea crisis cost it roughly \$6 billion since the first Houthi attack, in November 2023, with Suez traffic down around 60%. Losses briefly eased with the Gaza ceasefire, 2025/26 fiscal year revenue actually rose 23% to \$4.67 billion as regional tensions eased but renewed Houthi attacks and tanker traffic shifts have kept revenue volatile since. Egypt has largely stayed diplomatically cautious, avoiding direct military involvement, prioritizing canal security and regional stability, and pushing for de-escalation and a Gaza/Yemen political track rather than joining Western strike coalitions.

UAE

The UAE is a smaller but strategically important actor: it backs anti-Houthi forces in southern Yemen, giving it a somewhat separate agenda from Saudi Arabia. MBZ has coordinated closely with Saudi Arabia's MBS in warning against Iranian strikes spreading to other Gulf states. The UAE's core interest is protecting its own shipping/logistics hub role and countering Iranian-aligned expansion near the Bab al-Mandeb chokepoint, while avoiding being pulled into a full re-escalated ground war in Yemen.

Oman

Oman plays the mediator/back-channel role rather than a combatant one. A ceasefire between US forces and the Houthis in 2025 was brokered by Oman, consistent with Muscat's long-standing neutral diplomatic tradition . Oman's coastline gives it direct exposure to Arabian Sea/Gulf of Aden spillover, so it has strong incentive to keep communication channels with Iran, the Houthis, and the US open, positioning itself as an indispensable back-channel for de-escalation and prisoner/ceasefire negotiations rather than a security-provider.

Gulf Countries

Beyond Saudi/UAE/Oman, the wider GCC , has been drawn in unevenly: Bahrain hosts the US Fifth Fleet and joined Operation Prosperity Guardian, giving it direct military exposure. Qatar and Kuwait have stayed more diplomatically focused, emphasizing mediation and economic exposure through shipping/insurance costs rather than direct military commitments. Collectively, the GCC states share an interest in protecting energy exports and freedom of navigation, but differ on how confrontational to be with Iran, Saudi and Bahrain more hawkish, Oman/Qatar more conciliatory, UAE calibrating between commercial interests and anti-Houthi military support.

Houthis and the Axis of Resistance

“Axis of Resistance” is a term referring to the loose network of Iran and allied or aligned Non-State Actor Groups and political actors that has developed across the Middle East over several decades, having in common an ideological opposition to Israeli influence, United States and wider Western influence in the region. The United Nations Panel of Experts on Yemen has described the “axis of resistance” as a geopolitical alignment of actors opposed to perceived Western influence and supporting one another across different conflicts. They go by the concept of “collective action and the unity of battle fields”.

This loose alliance came to be in the context of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The new Islamic Republic under the Ayatollahs has been firmly against the United States and Israel, and combined this with support for Palestinian resistance. Iran developed a strategy of what is described as “forward defence”: rather than relying exclusively upon its own territory and official armed forces, it wished to create relationships with armed and political movements located in other parts of the Middle East without any centralisation.

Hezbollah came to be in light of the Lebanese Civil War, the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Iran, mainly through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, gave financial, military assistance to Lebanese Shia fighters who joined forces into Hezbollah. This relationship became the first partnership of the later Axis of Resistance. Hezbollah was not simply an Iranian proxy; it developed from local political conditions and has since become deeply embedded in Lebanese society and politics

The Houthi movement originated among Zaydi communities in northern Yemen,, where a movement for religious and cultural revival emerged during the late 1980s and became increasingly political during the 1990s and early 2000s. Its early development was therefore mainly a Yemeni phenomenon without Iranian assistance. The movement was influenced by dissatisfaction with the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and opposition to the growing influence of Saudi Arabia and the United States in Yemen.

The movement became quite militant after 2003, when its leadership opposed Saleh's support for the American invasion of Iraq. Between 2004 and 2010, the Houthis fought a series of armed conflicts with the Yemeni Government, while Saudi Arabia became directly involved in the later stages of the fighting. With the resignation of Saleh, the Houthis expanded their political influence considerably

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS and FRAMEWORKS

Security Council Resolution 2722 (2024)

The most important resolution dealing with the post-2023 Houthi attacks. It calls on the Houthis to “immediately cease all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels” in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and calls upon all Member States to ensure the release of the seized car carrier *Galaxy Leader* and its crew. Also reaffirms Resolution 2624, which put an arms embargo on the Houthis.

Security Council Resolution 2801 (2025)

This resolution renewed the Yemen sanctions regime originally set by Resolution 2140. It extended for one year the targeted financial and travel bans on individuals (Houthis and associates) and other measures, alongside reaffirming the arms embargo.

Security Council Resolution 2722 (2024)

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Security Council Resolution 2216 (2015)

This resolution imposed a comprehensive arms embargo on the Houthi/Saleh leadership and created targeted sanctions. It decides “that all Member States shall take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply... of arms and related materiel to the Houthi elements or individuals”, and also sets up an asset freeze and travel ban on senior Houthi officials.

Security Council Resolution 2140 (2014)

Established a committee and sanctions regime aimed at curbing the financing of terrorism and illegal trade in Yemen. This regime was later expanded into a consolidated sanctions regime with Resolution 2216 and its renewals.

Djibouti Code of Conduct 2009, Jeddah Amendment 2017

The Djibouti Code of Conduct is a regional agreement among Red Sea and Indian Ocean states the signatories of which pledge to “co-operate to the fullest extent” in suppressing piracy and armed robbery against ships. They agree to cooperate in investigating, arresting and prosecuting piracy offenders seizing suspect vessels (b), rescuing shipboard victims (c), and conducting joint patrols (d). The 2017 Jeddah Amendment expanded the Code to include other crimes at sea.

Council of Arab and African States Bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden – Charter 2020

In January 2020 Saudi Arabia invited foreign ministers from 8 countries (Egypt, Jordan, Eritrea, Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Saudi Arabia) who signed the Charter of the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. This Charter aims to enhance cooperation on maritime security, piracy, smuggling, and other threats in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

EU Operation Aspides (2024 to today)

Established by the Council of the EU (Decision 2024/583), Aspides is a defensive operation to protect merchant shipping in the Red Sea. Its mandate is to “contribute to safeguarding freedom of navigation and the protection of maritime traffic, including through deterrence and response to unlawful acts in accordance with international law”. It was later expanded to include tasks such as intelligence sharing on submarine cable threats, Djibouti Coast Guard training, and cooperation with Yemen’s Coast Guard.

Combined Maritime Forces Task Force 153 (2023 to today)

The CMF is an organisation based in Bahrain for Indian Ocean maritime security. In December 2023, CMF announced the creation of Combined Task Force 153 to coordinate international naval operations to protect shipping in the Red Sea, often referred to as “Operation Prosperity Guardian”.

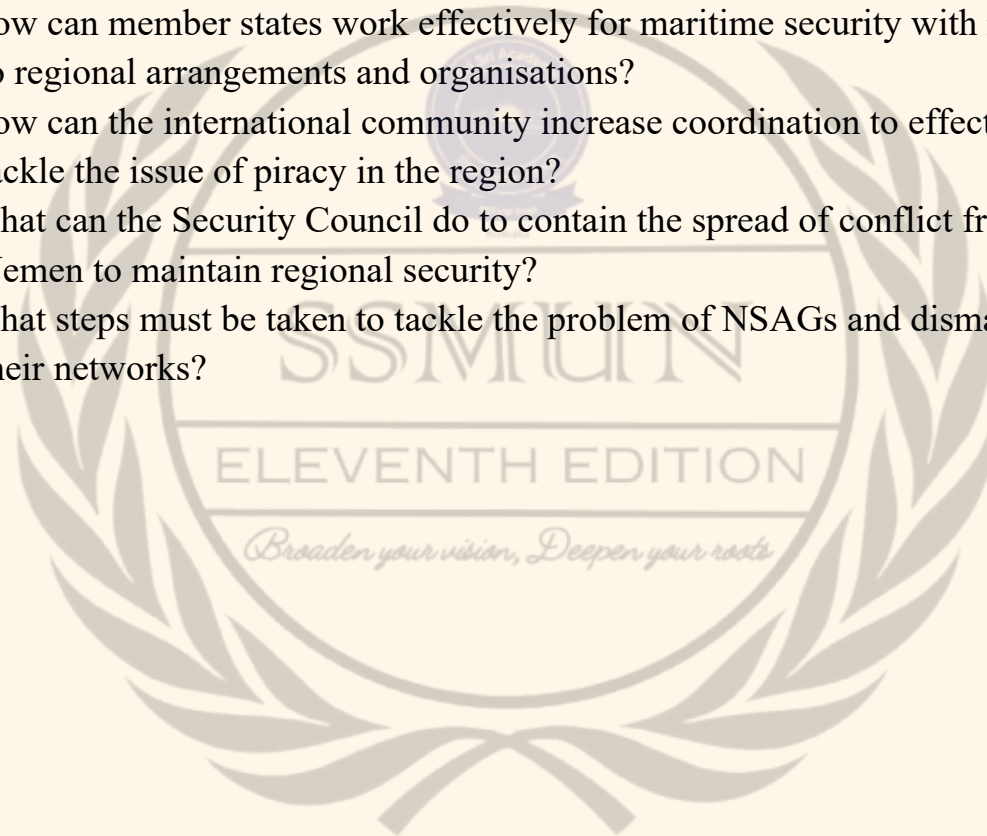
Multinational Maritime Defence Coalition (2026)

This coalition, convened in Saudi Arabia, has 14 members (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Djibouti, Somalia). Its founding statement emphasizes coordination to defend shipping and “respond to any security threats” in the Red Sea.

WHAT THE EB EXPECTS

The Executive Board expects well-researched delegates who are always on their feet, ready to contribute to discussion happening in committee. By the end of committee, we hope to have the following questions answered:

1. Are the current frameworks for maintaining maritime security in the Red Sea adequate?
2. How can member states work effectively for maritime security with respect to regional arrangements and organisations?
3. How can the international community increase coordination to effectively tackle the issue of piracy in the region?
4. What can the Security Council do to contain the spread of conflict from Yemen to maintain regional security?
5. What steps must be taken to tackle the problem of NSAGs and dismantle their networks?



PAPERWORK GUIDE

In the Security Council at SSMUN, we shall be accepting the following paperwork:

- 1.Position Papers
- 2.Public Communiques
- 3.Private Communiques
- 4.Presidential Statements

And final paperwork, to be specified by the Executive Board.

Information regarding these and samples for the same have been provided in the conference handbook.

All paperwork has to be mailed to the committee mail ID
(unsc.ssmun2026@gmail.com)

The deadline for position papers is on 7th October, 11:59 P.M.

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