

RISING TENSIONS: US-HOUTHI ESCALATION IN THE RED SEA

On December 1, 2024, the Houthis executed a coordinated attack on three U.S.-flagged merchant vessels transiting the Red Sea under the escort of U.S. Navy destroyers. The targeted vessels were identified as Stena Impeccable (IMO 9693020), Maersk Saratoga (IMO 9289207), and Liberty Grace (IMO 9228148).

Houthi forces claimed to have launched 16 ballistic missiles and suicide UAVs toward the vessels. In response, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that U.S. naval forces successfully intercepted three anti-ship ballistic missiles, three suicide UAVs, and one anti-ship cruise missile, ensuring the safety of the vessels and their crews.

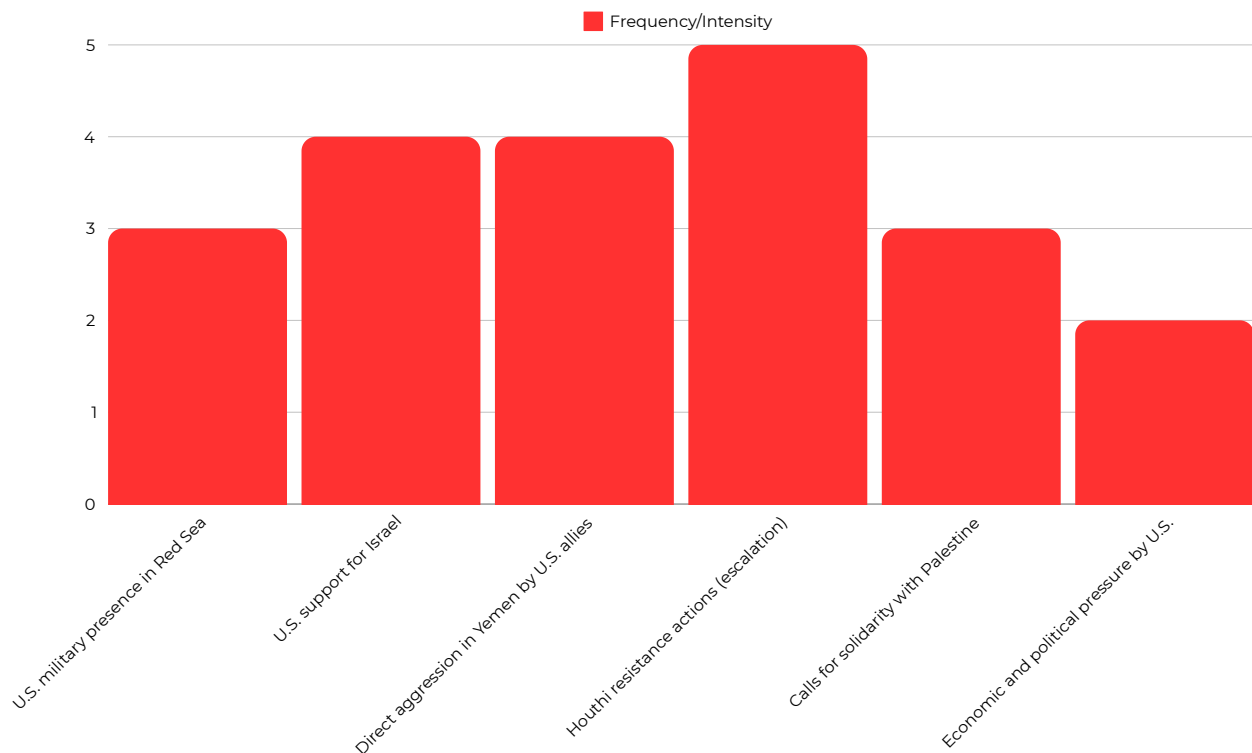
Based on the sensitivity of the targets, it is assessed that the Houthis likely employed Tankeel ASBMs, Samad-2/3 UAVs, and Al Mandab-2 (Houthi version of Iranian Qader) ASCM in the attack.



Illustrative image of Samad-2/3 / Source: Houthi Military Media

U.S. AIRSTRIKES AND HOUTHI RHETORIC:

- On November 28, 2024, U.S. military aircraft conducted two airstrikes targeting Houthi positions in the Bajil District of Yemen's Al Hudaydah Governorate, located along the Red Sea coast. Simultaneously, two prominent Houthi leaders, Abdul Malik Al-Houthi and Mahdi Al-Mashat, delivered speeches signaling potential future escalation despite the ongoing ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel



Analysis of the Frequency

- The graph underscores the thematic priorities from the speeches, with Houthi resistance actions (5 mentions) as the central focus. These references predominantly relate to military escalations, including missile strikes and naval blockades, highlighting an assertive posture against perceived US, Israeli, and allied aggression.
- Equally significant are mentions of direct aggression by US allies (4 mentions) and US support for Israel (4 mentions), which underline the Houthis' perception of a strategic linkage between US actions in Yemen and its broader Middle East policies.
- Additionally, references to solidarity with Palestine (3 mentions) and the U.S. military presence in Yemen (3 mentions) align the Houthis' narrative with regional resistance movements, particularly in Gaza and Lebanon.
- Comparatively, mentions of economic and political pressure by the US (2 mentions) receive less prominence, reflecting the prioritization of immediate military and resistance-related themes over broader geopolitical critiques.

In essence, the speeches emphasize the importance of escalation and assertive resistance, while contextualizing the overarching conflict as a collective struggle for sovereignty and justice within the region.

ANALYSIS

The Houthis are assessed to likely sustain operational activity in the Red Sea, undeterred by the increased presence of U.S. naval assets in the area or the ongoing ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. Recent patterns indicate that air and naval strikes have not effectively disrupted their capability or intent to target vessels in the region.

Commercial shipping is advised to implement heightened situational awareness, adjust transit routes to mitigate exposure to high-risk zones, and maintain robust communication protocols to ensure rapid response to emerging threats.

SOURCES

SeaHawk Maritime Intelligence provides actionable, land-based intelligence on Somali piracy and other emerging threats in the region.

Houthi Military Media

"<https://t.me/MilitaryMediaY/41939>"

Al Mashhad

"<https://www.almashhadnews.com/296776>"

CENTCOM

"<https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1863415891980882282>"

UKMTO

"https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/1863185157957541895"

Yemen Presidency (Houthi)

"<https://t.me/YemenPresidency/7603>"

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