

Casualties

Houthis issue veiled threat against shipping as US amps up Iran pressure

Unusual message comes as US assembles warships and planes to possibly strike Iran



Dramatic pictures show a fire on a JP Morgan product tanker, the Marlin Luanda, hit by Houthi missiles off Yemen on 26 January, 2024.

Photo: French Navy



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Yemen's Houthi rebels released a video on Monday to remind the world that they can strike vessels passing by their shores.

According to the Houthi-controlled Saba Net agency, the group released video material related to the 110,000-dwt Marlin Luanda (built 2018) — a tanker it struck exactly two years ago.

“This operation demonstrated the Yemeni Armed Forces’ ability to conduct precise operations against strategic enemy targets,” Saba said about the video that it said “revealed new details” of the attack, releasing for the first time footage of the missiles being launched against the LR2, as well as how Houthi forces had tracked it.



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A 17-second clip released by the group on social media shows images of the assault but no meaningful additions to what was already known about it.

The Saba report describing the video made no direct mention of the Houthis considering resuming the attacks against commercial shipping, which they suspended in the second half of last year in the wake of the [ceasefire between Hamas and Israel](#) in Gaza.

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The unusual reminder of the attack on the Marlin Luanda, however, could be a signal by the Houthis that they are ready to resume action as the fragile and patchy ceasefire in Gaza and elsewhere in the Middle East is showing signs of collapse.

The US is gathering naval and aerial forces in the Middle East amid threats to start bombing and trying to topple the government of Iran, which is a Houthi ally.

Iranian officials have warned that if they are attacked, they will retaliate by launching missiles against US forces and possibly close the [Strait of Hormuz](#), blocking seaborne oil traffic.

Houthi leader Mohammed Ali al-Houthi last week suggested he is losing faith in the Gaza ceasefire, which underpins his own group's truce in the Red Sea.

According to al-Houthi, “the Israeli enemy continues daily killings in the Gaza Strip ... the siege persists, and ... all forms of oppression, injustice and torture against the Palestinian people continue”.



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The Houthis did threaten US commercial ships and warships when [Washington bombed Iran](#) last June. The veiled threat on Monday, however, seems to have a wider radius.

The Marlin Luanda, which is linked to interests advised by US bank JP Morgan and was chartered by Trafigura to carry a Russian naphtha cargo, has been described by the Houthis as a “British” ship.

Some shipping companies are already getting cold feet. [CMA CGM, one of the most daring liners in sending ships through even during hostilities](#), this month backtracked on early Suez return plans, citing a “complex and uncertain international context”.

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