

## Industry Releasable Threat Assessment



Issued on 25 MAR 25  
ICOD 20 MAR 25



This Threat Assessment has been released to the maritime community in confidence.  
It should not be disseminated further without permission.



UNCLASSIFIED

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction .....	3
Yemen Threat Environment.....	3
Piracy Related Threat.....	4
Terrorism .....	5
Maritime Security Events (Suspicious approach).....	5
Maritime Security Events (Others) .....	5
Non-Maritime Security Events .....	6
CMF Activity .....	7
EU NAVFOR Activity .....	7
Conclusion.....	8
Feedback .....	8
ANNEX A .....	10
Threat Assessment and Probability Yardstick.....	10
ANNEX B .....	11
Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	11
ANNEX C .....	14
LEXICOM .....	14

## **Introduction**

1. The Industry Releasable Threat Assessment (IRTA) has been prepared by the European Union Naval Force Operation ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA) and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).
2. The purpose of the IRTA is to articulate the maritime security threat to merchant and large fishing vessels transiting the Red Sea (RS), Bab al Mandeb Strait (BAM), Gulf of Aden (GOA) and the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). It replaces the previous IRTA released on 01 December 24, which had an intelligence cut-off date (ICOD) of 15 November 24. Please note that this IRTA is complementary to any post-ICOD information provided after its publication by the CMF Joint Maritime Information Centre (JMIC) uploaded on the UKMTO website (<https://www.ukmto.org/indian-ocean/jmic-products>) and the Piracy Threat Update uploaded on the MSCIO website (<https://www.msco.eu/mscio-products/eunavfor-atalanta/>).

## **Yemen Threat Environment**

3. The maritime security situation in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is largely influenced the ongoing situation in Houthi controlled Yemen.
  - a. **Recent Events.** The security situation in Yemen remains tense following U.S. strikes against Houthi-controlled areas, which began on March 15, 2025. These strikes have prompted Houthi forces to resume maritime operations in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Sea. As of the Initial Cut-Off Date (ICOD) of this report, no attacks on merchant vessels (MVs) have been recorded in the Red Sea, possibly due to a Houthi focus on targeting warships (WS). However, this tactical shift does not eliminate the potential for future attacks on MVs. The absence of incidents may reflect a strategic pause rather than a diminished capacity or intent, given the Houthis' demonstrated resilience in the region.
  - b. **Capability.** Houthi forces continue to exhibit the ability to launch Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles (ASCMs), Ballistic Missiles, and unmanned one-way attack drones targeting vessels near the Bab al-Mandeb (BAM) Strait. Although their precision is limited, their arsenal, including long-range weaponry and enhanced targeting logistics, remains a credible threat. U.S. strikes have targeted this capability, but it is currently unclear whether it has been degraded to a level that no longer poses a significant risk to industry. The Houthis' operational adaptability and ongoing development of maritime strike capabilities suggest they retain the potential to disrupt shipping, even under pressure from military actions.

c. **Industry Impact.** The escalation of hostilities with Houthi forces has increased volatility in the region's maritime security environment. The Houthi target list has likely expanded to include U.S.-linked commercial vessels, in addition to Israeli-owned or linked vessels transiting the BAM, as a retaliatory response to the recent U.S. strikes. This shift aligns with their historical adaptability to changing regional dynamics. The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) have not identified new indications of intent to target merchant shipping from regional countries, suggesting a focused rather than broad escalation. However, the brake of the ceasefire and renewed tensions elevate risks for industry, particularly for vessels perceived as affiliated with U.S. or Israeli interests. The threat level is assessed as follows:

- i. **SUBSTANTIAL**; it is **LIKELY / PROBABLE** that Israeli & US owned/ affiliated vessels transiting the SRS, BAM and GoA will be targeted by the Houthi's.
- ii. **MODERATE**; due to the possibility of collateral damage it is a **REALISTIC POSSIBILITY** for vessels transiting through the SRS, BAM and GoA or entering any Yemeni TTW to be attacked.
- iii. **LOW**; an attack is **HIGHLY UNLIKELY** for vessels transiting through the North Red Sea (NRS) and central Red Sea (CRS).

### **Piracy Related Threat**

4. The threat of piracy and armed robbery continues to simmer mainly in Somalian waters. Related contours are as follows:

a. **Recent Events.** On 27 November 24, a Chinese flagged fishing vessel was hijacked by unknown personnel in somali TTW's. The Chinese embassy in Somalia negotiated for the release of the fishing vessel. Consequently, on 13 January 25, the fishing vessel was released. There were no confirmed reports about the payment of any ransom. Since the event, there have been three similar incidents that have occurred between Feb and Mar 25. In all three instances, robbers were able to hijack Yemeni owned FVs close to the somali coast, hold for few days and then release the boat without further information regarding ransom. These event indicate the presence of active pirate groups along the Somali coast exploiting the vulnerability of foreign fishing vessels operating in Somali waters, exacerbating the piracy threat in the area.

b. **Capability.** The capability of Somali pirates is characterized by over a decade of experience navigating the local maritime terrain and leveraging the

region's complex coastal geography. While piracy along the Somali coast was largely suppressed by 2012 due to robust onshore and offshore countermeasures, the threat persists, sustained by the pirates' adaptability and operational knowledge. Rather than maintaining strong, direct operational ties to terrorist groups, Somali pirates have historically engaged in pragmatic, transactional relationships with entities like Al-Shabaab. These interactions have typically involved paying harbor fees or exchanging resources, such as weapons or logistical support, rather than forming a unified command structure. It is assessed that hijacked fishing vessels can still be utilized as motherships to launch piracy attacks further offshore, extending their reach beyond Somalia's immediate coastal waters. This enduring capability highlights their resilience despite past counter-piracy efforts.

c. **Industry Impact.** The piracy threat level is assessed as **LOW** in the Gulf of Aden, Somali Basin and Western Indian Ocean. Various unconfirmed reports mention that there are pirate groups on the coast of Somalia with the capacity to set sail to attack vulnerable merchant vessels directly from the shore. Therefore, the armed robbery threat in Somali TTW's is assessed as **MODERATE**.

## **Terrorism**

5. No terrorism incidents were reported in the maritime domain during the reporting period. Houthi forces were recently redesignated as a terrorist organisation by the US. Houthi actions & corresponding impact were covered in paragraph 3 of this report. The threat from terrorism (excluding the Houthi threat) in the maritime domain is assessed as **BENIGN**. A terrorist attack in the region is **UNLIKELY**.

## **Maritime Security Events (Suspicious Activity)**

6. There was no suspicious approach reported during the reporting period.

## **Maritime Security Events (Other Crimes on the Maritime Environment)**

7. On 21 November 2024, the master of a Yacht reported suspicious activity when approached by several small crafts in Gulf of Aden. The vessel increased speed and conducted evasive maneuvers. All crew and the vessel were safe and proceeded to the next port of call.

8. On 24 January 2025, the master of a vessel sailing in the Persian/Arabian Gulf reported that the vessel was approached by a small military craft, which began flashing a green laser light towards the bridge. The small military craft kept hailing the vessel to turn to port towards Iranian territorial waters.

## **Non-Maritime Security Events – Other Crimes on the Maritime Environment / Cyber Attacks**

9. In the second week of March, UKMTO twice received corroborating reports from vessels experiencing GPS interference in the Strait of Hormuz, with disruptions lasting several hours, affecting navigation systems and requiring vessels to rely on backup methods. Non-Maritime Security Event had no occurred. JMIC and UKMTO are closely monitoring the situation and request the masters who experience disruption to electronic navigation systems (GPS / AIS / Other PNT) anywhere within the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) to contact UKMTO watchkeepers via watchkeepers@ukmto.org or 02392 222065.

### **Operations/ MSCIO Analysis**

10. MSCIO is further enhancing its comprehension of the maritime domain in the Southern Red Sea, GoA, the Somali Basin and now also the Strait of Hormuz, since AGENOR (military track of EMASoH) turned in dormant mode since 2024. During the reviewing period, MSCIO along with UKMTO have been working within the SIF (Single Information Framework (SIF) established during SHADE, in the frame of the Information Sharing Working Groups (ISWG). Common templates facilitates reporting and information exchange between MSCIO and UKMTO.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. CMF and EU NAVFOR ATALANTA encourages MVs to:

- a. Ensure registration with MSCIO and UKMTO prior to entering the VRA (as indicated in Maritime Security Chart Q6099).
- b. Implement protection measures as detailed in the Best Management Practices (BMP) document including a Private Armed Security Team (PAST).
- c. Opt for trade routes outside Houthi controlled and Somali TTW's (>12NM). This will enable EU NAVFOR ATALANTA and CMF respond more efficiently in the event of an incident.
- d. Promptly report incidents to MSCIO, UKMTO, and the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), to facilitate a quick and effective response by naval assets patrolling the region.
- e. Send suspicious/irregular activity reports and related imagery to the UKMTO website. In addition, this report is also to be shared with MSCIO to aid military appreciation of the situation.

f. It is requested that the crews of attacked merchant ships share with UKMTO and MSCIO all the information they gather during an attack (videos, photos, names, locations, etc.), in order to analyse each event and to be able to establish courses of action in response to such attacks.

### **CMF Activity**

12. Since the last IRTA CMF has now completed a handover of the Focused Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN (OPG) on the 1 February 2025 to the US Task Force 55. While conducting OPG, CMF provided support and reassurance in the Red Sea and GOA through continued presence operations and reinforced an international rules based order.

13. CTF Commands are national led from CMF member nations. The following updates are provided with respect to current CTF commands:

- a. CTF 150 under New Zealand command e.f 14 Jan 25. Prior this it was led by Pakistan.
- b. CTF 151 under Pakistan command e.f 22 Jan 25. Prior this it was led by Turkiye.
- c. CTF 152 has, during the period under review, under command of Kuwait.
- d. CTF 153 has, during the period under review, been commanded by an Australia-led team.
- e. CTF 154 under command of Sri Lanka w.e.f 26 Jan 25. Prior this it was led by an Egyptian team.

### **EU NAVFOR Activity**

14. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA continued its counter-piracy operations in the GoA and in the Somali Basin, whilst monitoring and protecting World Food Program (WFP) ships and vulnerable vessels that requested it. In addition, it has established a Maritime Security presence in the area to provide assistance to the region. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA continues to coordinate with relevant Somali authorities in the fight against counter-piracy, thereby, bolstering deterrence against potential pirates.

15. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA continues to improve coordination and information exchange with relevant partners in the Indian Ocean, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture in the AOO and operate more efficiently with available resources against all kinds of illicit activities. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA also continues to work in close coordination with the shipping industry to ensure its safety.

16. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA is consistently adjusting its procedures to play a role in suppressing piracy and increase maritime security in a safe and effective manner.

17. EU NAVFOR ATALANTA maintains its maritime security presence by conducting Focus Operations aimed at addressing illicit activities such as drug trafficking, charcoal smuggling and weapons trafficking. EUNAVFOR ATALANTA is also continuing to develop its procedures to counter other illegal activities.

18. Focus Operations aim to better overview and monitor fishing activities, focusing on those that could be Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) in the AOO.

## **Conclusion**

19. The security situation in Yemen remains volatile, with the ongoing conflict and instability having a profound impact on maritime security in the region, especially in the Red Sea. This, beside other factors, has created a permissive environment for pirates and armed robbery groups to operate in Somali waters, posing a credible threat with low likelihood to merchant vessels and crew.

20. Despite the efforts of international naval forces and regional authorities, maritime security risks persist. However, this report also demonstrates the value of collaborative efforts between CMF, EUNAVFOR, and industry stakeholders in assessing and mitigating these threats. By sharing intelligence, best practices, and expertise, we can reduce the risk of maritime threats and promote a safer, more secure operating environment for all.

21. As we move forward, it is essential that we continue to work together to address the complex and dynamic nature of maritime threats in the region. This includes enhancing information-sharing mechanisms, developing more effective counter-measures, and promoting a culture of security awareness and cooperation throughout the maritime community."

## **Feedback**

22. Enquiries about the content of this threat assessment should be directed to CMF and EU NAVFOR ATALANTA.

CMF:

Tel: 00973 1785 9629 // 00973 1785 8933

Website: [www.combinedmaritimeforces.com](http://www.combinedmaritimeforces.com)

Email: [cmf\\_info@me.navy.mil](mailto:cmf_info@me.navy.mil)

EU NAVFOR ATALANTA:

Tel: 0033 (0) 298 220 220 (24/7) // 0033 (0) 298 220 170.

UNCLASSIFIED



Website: [www.mscio.eu](http://www.mscio.eu)  
Email: [postmaster@mscio.eu](mailto:postmaster@mscio.eu)

**Annexes to this IRTA:**

- A. Threat Assessment and Probability Yardstick.
- B. Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms.
- C. Lexicon.

**Threat Assessment and Probability Yardstick**

The threat assessment and probability yardstick used in this document is as under for ready reference.

<b>THREAT ASSESMENT</b>	<b>BENIGN</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>SUBSTANTIAL</b>	<b>SEVERE</b>	<b>CRITICAL</b>
<b>PROBABILITY YARDSTICK</b>	Attack is <b>HIGHLY UNLIKELY</b> (10% - 20%)	Attack is <b>UNLIKELY</b> (>25% - 35%)	Attack is a <b>REALISTIC POSSIBILITY</b> (40% - <50%)	Attack is <b>LIKELY / PROBABLE</b> (55% - <75%)	Attack is <b>HIGHLY LIKELY</b> (80% - 90%)	Attack is <b>ALMOST CERTAIN</b> (>95%)

**Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>AaS</b>	Ansar al-Sunna: Terrorist Group operating in Mozambique
<b>AG</b>	Arabian Gulf
<b>AOO</b>	Area of Operation
<b>AOR</b>	Area of Responsibility
<b>AQAP</b>	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
<b>AS</b>	Arabian Sea
<b>AS</b>	Al Shabaab: Terrorist Group operating in Somalia
<b>ASBM</b>	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile
<b>ASCM</b>	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile
<b>ATMIS</b>	African union Transition Mission in Somalia
<b>BAM</b>	Bab-al-Mandeb strait
<b>BMP5</b>	Best Management Practice (Version 5): IMO and industry sponsored suggested planning and operational practices for ship operators and Masters of ships transiting the Indian Ocean
<b>BM</b>	Ballistic Missile
<b>CMF</b>	Combined Maritime Forces: 38 nation multi-national maritime force operating in Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Gulf of Aden.
<b>COA</b>	Course Of Action
<b>CRS</b>	Central Red Sea
<b>CTF</b>	Combined Task Force
<b>EMASOH</b>	European Maritime Awareness Operation in the Strait of Hormuz
<b>EU NAVFOR</b>	European Union Naval Force Somalia (Operation ATALANTA)
<b>FO</b>	Focused Operation
<b>FV</b>	Fishing Vessel
<b>GOA</b>	Gulf of Aden
<b>GOO</b>	Gulf of Oman
<b>HOA</b>	Horn Of Africa
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters

<b>HRA</b>	High Risk Area: Industry defined area where it is considered there is a higher risk of piracy and within which self-protective measures are most likely to be required
<b>IMB</b>	International Maritime Bureau
<b>IMSC</b>	International Maritime Security Construct
<b>ICOD</b>	Intelligence Cut-off Date
<b>IOT</b>	In Order To
<b>IRTA</b>	Industry Releasable Threat Assessment
<b>IRTB</b>	Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin
<b>IRTC</b>	Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor
<b>IUU</b>	Illegal Unreported and Unregulated
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>Kts</b>	Knots
<b>KSA</b>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum Of Understanding
<b>MSCHOA</b>	Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa): The maritime industry control centre for the EU's Op ATALANTA.
<b>MSO</b>	Maritime Security Operation
<b>MSTC</b>	Maritime Security Transit Corridor
<b>MT</b>	Motor Tanker
<b>MV</b>	Merchant Vessel
<b>NM</b>	Nautical Mile
<b>NRS</b>	North Red Sea
<b>OSINT</b>	Open Source Intelligence
<b>PAG</b>	Pirate Action Group
<b>PAST</b>	Private Armed Security Team
<b>PCASP</b>	Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel
<b>POB</b>	Persons on Board
<b>RS</b>	Red Sea
<b>SBM</b>	Single Buoy Mooring
<b>SLC</b>	Saudi-Led Coalition
<b>SNA</b>	the Somali National Army

<b>SRS</b>	South Red Sea
<b>SSF</b>	Somali Security Force
<b>STC</b>	Southern Transitional Council
<b>SV</b>	Sailing Vessel
<b>TTPs</b>	Tactics, Techniques And Procedures
<b>TTW</b>	Territorial Waters
<b>UAS</b>	Unmanned Aerial System
<b>UAV</b>	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UKMCC</b>	United Kingdom Maritime Component Commander
<b>UKMTO</b>	United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (Based in Dubai)
<b>USV</b>	Unmanned Surface Vehicle
<b>VRA</b>	Vessel Registration Area
<b>WBIED</b>	Water Borne Improvised Explosive Device
<b>WIO</b>	Western Indian Ocean
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

Lexicon

Category	Industry Definition	EUNAVFOR ATALANTA Additional Considerations
<b>Attack</b>	Aggressive approach with weapons discharged.	<b>Conflict-related:</b> The threat of or the use of violence related to conflict or conflict spillover.
<b>Attempted Boarding</b>	Close approach with visible boarding paraphernalia, thwarted by defensive measures.	No additional categorization
<b>Boarding</b>	Boarding with intent to steal or harm without taking control.	No additional categorization
<b>Hijack</b>	Attackers take control of a ship against the crew's will for purposes such as robbery, cargo theft, or kidnapping.	No additional categorization
<b>Piracy</b>	As per UNCLOS Article 101: - Illegal acts on high seas - Against ship/persons outside state jurisdiction - Operating pirate vessel - Facilitating such acts	No additional categorization
<b>Armed Robbery</b>	As per IMO Resolution A.1025(26): Acts within state waters, including violence/detention/depredation.	No additional categorization

<b>Suspicious Activity</b>	Unaccountable actions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unusual crew numbers</li> <li>- CPA considerations</li> <li>- Unusual equipment</li> <li>- Multiple skiffs</li> <li>- Unusual vessel type</li> <li>- High-speed operations</li> <li>- Unmanned appearance</li> </ul>	No additional categorization
<b>Other Crimes in the Maritime Environment</b>	Basic categorization: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sea theft (without violence)</li> <li>2. Sea robbery (with violence/arms)</li> </ol>	Expands categories to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kidnap</li> <li>2. Human Trafficking</li> <li>3. Sea Theft/Robbery</li> <li>4. Smuggling (Human, weapons, narcotics, cargo)</li> <li>5. IUU Fishing</li> <li>6. Maritime Pollution</li> <li>7. Sabotage</li> <li>8. Cyber Attacks</li> <li>9. Underwater Cable Tampering</li> <li>10. Other (disputes, harassment)</li> </ol>