

## Top container lines reroute from Red Sea to avoid attacks



The MSC Isabella is deployed on the Asia - Europe trade

**MSC, CMA CGM, Maersk, and Hapag-Lloyd have all paused their vessels transiting the Red Sea and are rerouting via the Cape of Good Hope as Houthi militia step up attacks on commercial shipping.**

Marcus Hand | Dec 18, 2023

The world's largest container line MSC announced on Saturday that it was stopping all Red Sea vessel transits following an attack on the *MSC Platinum III* a day earlier. The vessel on sub-charter to Messina Line was attacked on 15 December and according to MSC suffered "limited fire damage" and had been taken out of service. There were no injuries to the vessel's crew all whom are reported to be safe.

“Due to this incident and to protect the lives and safety of our seafarers, until the Red Sea passage is safe, MSC ships will not transit the Suez Canal Eastbound and Westbound. Already now, some services will be rerouted to go via the Cape of Good Hope instead,” MSC said.

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CMA CGM has also stopped all of its vessels transiting the Red Sea which it announced on 16 December saying the situation in the Red Sea was further deteriorating and concern for safety was increasing.

“As such we have decided to instruct all CMA CGM containerships in the area that are scheduled to pass through the Red Sea to reach safe areas and pause their journey in safe waters with immediate effect until further notice,” the company said.

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The *CMA CGM Symi*, chartered from Ofer family controlled Eastern Pacific Shipping (EPS), was one of the earliest vessels to be attacked in the region and was struck by a drone on 24 November.

The move by MSC and CMA CGM to suspend vessel transits of the Red Sea follow similar announcements by Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd. Maersk paused vessel movements on 15 December following a near miss of drone strike on the containership *Maersk Gibraltar*.

Lines including ZIM, had already been diverting some services from the region to take the much longer route around the Cape of Good Hope. A diversion by the Cape of Good Hope on a voyage from Shanghai to Rotterdam at a speed of 18 knots would increase the transit time from 25 to 33 days.

Large scale diversions could cause in the supply chain echoing the closure of the Suez Canal by the *Ever Given* in March 2021.

Houthi Militia have vowed to attack any vessel headed to Israeli ports, having previously targeted what it claimed to be Israeli-linked vessels.

Meanwhile Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL), part of Cosco Shipping Group, has stopped accepting Israeli cargo until further notice citing “operational issues”.

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