

Industry associations call for urgent action to protect shipping in the Red Sea



As Houthi militia in Yemen step up attacks on shipping in the Red Sea the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the World Shipping Council (WSC) have called for urgent action.

Marcus Hand | Dec 18, 2023

Since the hijacking of car carrier the Galaxy Leader by Houthi militia on 19 November, of which all 25 crew remain held hostage, attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea have become increasingly frequent.

“ICS deplores the actions of the Houthis in the strongest terms and calls for the immediate cessation of these attacks. These are unacceptable acts of aggression

which threaten the lives of innocent seafarers and the safety of merchant shipping," the ICS stated.

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"These attacks are a flagrant breach of international law. States with influence in the region should, as a matter of urgency, work to stop the actions of the Houthis in attacking seafarers and merchant ships, and de-escalate what is now an extremely serious threat to international trade."

There was a similar message from the World Shipping Council (WSC), which represents the container shipping sector, and has seen a number of its members vessels come under attack.

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"The right of freedom of navigation stands as a fundamental right under international law, and must be safeguarded. The World Shipping Council urgently calls upon the global community to take decisive action to protect seafarers and freedom of navigation," WSC said.

"The time for resolute international engagement is now," it added.

US Central Command reported that the US Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Carney had successfully shot down 14 one-way attack drones in the early hours (local time) on 16 December fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. It said there was no damage to ships reported in the area or injuries.

"ICS lauds the actions and presence of naval forces so far in intervening against the aggressors and hopes and expects further commitments of the same nature in the very near future. Furthermore, the full maritime security architecture in the region should be brought to bear to end these attacks and protect our seafarers and merchant shipping," the international shipping representative body said.

Some companies have started to reroute vessels via the Cape of Good Hope and top container lines MSC, Maersk, CMA CGM, and Hapag-Lloyd have all paused their ships from transiting the Red Sea.