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Houthi show no sign of backing down in tense Red Sea standoff

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Houthi attacks against naval and merchant ships carried on over the weekend with more than one in five vessels electing to avoid the Suez Canal on routes between Asia and Europe.

Yemen's Houthi militia have been targeting ships with drones and missiles in the southern Red Sea and beyond for the past two months in retaliation for Israel's ongoing war with Hamas. More than 25 ships have been targeted, and one car carrier remains in Yemeni waters having been hijacked in November.

Yesterday, the leader of the Houthis, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, urged all ships planning to transit the Red Sea to notify his militia in advance with details of their destinations as well as declaring no connections with Israel to avoid being attacked.

The US Central Command reported on Saturday that the USS Laboon naval destroyer shot down a drone launched by the Houthis near commercial ships in Red Sea international waters.

Also over the weekend, six small craft approached a merchant ship some 50 nautical miles southeast of Mocha in Yemen. Naval ships in the region were quick to respond and the small vessels quickly moved away.

"What this shows is essentially that the threat to shipping in the area is unchanged, and as such we might expect carriers to continue on their round-Africa deployments with the usual exceptions," commented Lars Jensen, via LinkedIn. Jensen is the head of container advisory Vespucci Maritime and has been carrying out detailed, daily updates on the unfolding Red Sea shipping crisis.

In Israel, the daily evening financial newspaper *Globes* is reporting that COSCO, the world's fourth largest containerline, has stopped visiting Israeli ports, although there has been no confirmation if this is correct.