

Houthi targeting US and UK owned ships



Tanker Marlin Luanda on fire following Houthi missile strike

Houthi militia are increasingly targeting US and UK-owned vessels transiting the Red Sea with at least three ships from the two countries hit by missiles in the last two weeks, while several others have come under fire.

Marcus Hand | Jan 29, 2024

The 109,991 dwt tanker Marlin Luanda, owned by UK-based Oeconix Services, was struck by a missile of 26 January causing a fire on the vessel which was carrying a cargo naphtha.

Indian, US, and French naval vessels came to assistance the Marlin Luanda and according to charterers Trafigura the fire in the cargo tank was fully extinguished

on 27 January and the vessel was sailing towards safe harbour. There were no injuries to the crew of 22 Indian and one Bangladeshi national.

Related: [Houthi target US-flagged Maersk ship in failed missile strike](#)

The Houthi claim to be targeting Israeli-linked vessels in solidarity with the Palestinians over the conflict in Gaza since first launched attacks in mid-November. However, US and UK-owned ships would appear also to be in their sights since the two countries launched a series of strikes earlier this month on Houthi positions in Yemen in an effort to degrade their ability to attack commercial shipping.

Following the attack on the Marlin Luanda, Yahya Sare'e, Spokesperson for the Yemini Armed Forces, said it was, "In vindication of the oppressed Palestinian people and in support and solidarity with our brothers in the Gaza Strip, and within the response to the American-British aggression against our country."

Related: [US and UK launch new strikes on Houthis in Yemen](#)

The attack on the Marlin Luanda follows a number of successful and attempted strikes by the Houthi on US-owned vessels in the Red Sea over the last two weeks.

On 15 January a Houthi-fired missile struck the Marshall Islands-registered bulker Gibraltar Eagle owned by owned by US-listed dry bulk shipping firm Eagle Bulk with no significant damage or injuries reported.

Two days later on 17 January the 2005-built, supramax, Genco Picardy, owned by US-based Genco Shipping and Trading was hit by a drone damaging the vessel.

On 18 January two anti-ship ballistic missiles were launched at US-owned chemical tanker Chem Ranger with both landing in the water near the vessel.

On 24 January three missiles were fired towards the US-flagged container ship Maersk Detroit. The US Navy shot down two of the missiles while a third landed in the sea. A second vessel Maersk Chesapeake, also owned by [Maersk Line Ltd](#) (MLL), the US-flag operations of Maersk, was part of the same convoy.

Following the attack on the Marlin Luanda on 26 January UK Secretary of Defence stated on social media platform X: "This intolerable and illegal attack on maritime shipping is the latest on innocent people and global trade. It is our duty to protect freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and we remain as committed to that cause as ever."

Meanwhile US Central Command stated: "These unlawful actions have nothing to do with the conflict in Gaza. Neither the vessel nor its crew have any affiliation to Israel. The Houthis have fired indiscriminately into the Red Sea, targeting vessels impacting over 40 countries around the world."

Despite the strikes by the US and UK on Houthi positions in Yemen designed to destroy weapons and equipment being used to target shipping in the Southern Red Sea there is no sign in slow down of attacks by the Houthi rebels.

The Houthi have stated their intent to continue strikes on shipping and their naval spokesperson said: "Yemeni Armed Forces persist with their military operations: enforcing a blockade on Israeli navigation in the Red and Arabian seas until a ceasefire is achieved in Gaza, and food and medicine are allowed in to the besieged Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip."

It remains to be seen how insurers react the images of the fire onboard the Marlin Luanda and how this impacts shipowners, mainly in the tanker and bulker sectors, that have continued to transit the Red Sea and the Suez Canal despite the threat to shipping.

Marlin Luanda charterer Trafigura said at the weekend, "No further vessels operating on behalf of Trafigura are currently transiting the Gulf of Aden and we

continue to assess carefully the risks involved in any voyage, including in respect of security and safety of the crew, together with shipowners and customers.”