

Houthi attacks target MSC boxships and tankers

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Houthi rebels have allegedly assaulted another of MSC vessels. On 14 July, the 1999-built 5,652 TEU MSC Unific VI was apparently hit with anti-ship ballistic missiles and drones in the Gulf of Aden.

EconDB's data shows that MSC Unific VI serves MSC's Petra service that connects Djibouti, Colombo and Salalah.

Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed that MSC Unific VI was targeted because it was an "Israeli" ship, although S&P Global's data shows the Liberia-flagged vessel is owned by MSC, which acquired the ship from Evergreen Marine Corporation in early 2023.

Yahya said on 14 July that the Houthis attacked the ship and military targets in Eilat at Israel's southern tip, using drones. Since last November, the Iran-backed Houthis have been terrorising the Red Sea in response to Israel's strikes against Palestine. He said the attacks were retaliation for Israel's strike on Khan Younis the previous day.

MSC did not respond to *Container News'* request for comment.

While the assault on MSC Unific VI could not be verified, it appears to be the second time that Houthis have targeted the ship, which had just departed Djibouti for Colombo.

On 1 July, Saree claimed that missiles were fired at MSC Unific VI, along with chemical tankers Delonix and Lucky Sailor, and a UK naval vessel. On the first occasion, MSC Unific VI escaped without any damage to the vessel.

However, S&P Global now lists the status of MSC Unific VI as "in casualty", and that the ship is now anchored off Djibouti.

MSC ships have sustained nearly five Houthi attacks since November 2023, causing the Swiss-Italian operator to move all Israel-linked ships away from the Persian Gulf. In April, Iranian forces detained the MSC Aries, although the crew were released.

Besides the alleged attack on MSC Unific VI, the US Central Command said on 15 July, Houthis assaulted Swiss ship owner Navimar's products tanker Bentley I, which was carrying vegetable oil from Russia to China. One seaborne drone and two small boats were used to carry out the attack. No damage or injuries were reported and the tanker is continuing its voyage.

Greek owner Vafias' Aframax oil tanker Chios Lion, was also attacked by a seaborne drone and sustained some mild damage, with no assistance requested. The tanker had also set out from Russia, but its destination was undisclosed.

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