

Two Destroyers Defend U.S. Merchant Ships From Houthi Missile Barrage



An SM-3 interceptor launched by a U.S. Navy destroyer (USN file image)

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Over the course of Saturday and Sunday, two U.S. Navy destroyers shot down half a dozen Houthi-launched munitions while escorting U.S.-flagged merchant ships through the Gulf of Aden. The successful transit illustrates the service's defensive capabilities, but also shows the Houthis' continued ability to target passing shipping at will - despite multiple rounds of U.S. airstrikes on the group's bases in Yemen.

According to U.S. Central Command, destroyers *USS Stockdale* and *USS O'Kane* were escorting three U.S. merchant ships through the Gulf of Aden on Saturday when they came under fire. The destroyers shot down three anti-ship ballistic missiles, three attack drones and one anti-ship cruise missile over the course of two days.

"These actions reflect the ongoing commitment of [Central Command] forces to protect U.S. personnel, regional partners and international shipping against attacks by Iran-backed Houthis," CENTCOM said in a statement.

Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree identified the target vessels as the product tanker *Stena Impeccable*, the boxship *Maersk Saratoga* and the bulker *Liberty Grace*. As of Monday morning, all three vessels were in port at Djibouti, where the U.S. maintains a military base.

"The strikes were accurate and direct," said Saree. "The [Houthis] will continue to carry out their military operations at an escalating pace . . . [and] will not stop except by stopping the aggression and lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip."