

Forum: UN Security Council

Issue 1: The question of Addressing Attacks by the Houthi Movement on International Shipping and Ensuring Maritime Security in the Red Sea

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The question of Addressing Attacks by the Houthi Movement on International Shipping and Ensuring Maritime Security in the Red Sea

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- [The Red Sea Attacks in 10 Charts | What Impact Have the Houthi on Shipping & the Economy?](#)
- [How the West Is Countering Houthi Rebels in the Red Sea | WSJ](#)
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- [New Houthi tactics exposed: Boarding, sabotage and deadly strikes in the Red Sea](#)
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- [UN Security Council Report, “The Red Sea” Monthly Forecasts \(2026\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Report, “What’s In Blue” — draft resolution previews and voting analysis](#)
- [UN Meetings Coverage, press releases on Resolutions 2722, 2768, 2787, 2812, 2826](#)
- [OESGY \(Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen\), full resolution archive](#)
- [EEAS / Council of the EU, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES mandate documents and press releases](#)
- [US Maritime Administration \(MARAD\), Maritime Security Advisories on the Red Sea](#)

Key Terms

Sovereignty: Per Article 2(1) of the UN Charter, “the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.” Sovereignty is commonly understood on two levels: internal sovereignty, a state’s authority to govern its own territory and population free from outside interference, and external sovereignty, the principle that a state’s territorial integrity is inviolable.

Self-Determination: Referenced in Article 1(2) of the Charter alongside sovereign equality; the UN frames it as “respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”

Self-Defence (Article 51): “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

Use of Force / Prohibition on Force (Article 2(4)): The general rule of self-defence is an exception to. Article 51 recognises member states’ right of self-defence against an armed attack, and action taken in exercise of this right is one of only two exceptions to the general prohibition on the use of force in Article 2(4), which the International Court of Justice has called “the cornerstone of the United Nations Charter.”

Human Rights: OHCHR’s definition: “Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings, they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.”

Freedom of Navigation: Defined under international law as “freedom of movement for vessels, freedom to enter ports and to make use of plant and docks, to load and unload goods and to transport goods and passengers,” and codified in Article 87(1)(a) of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) .

Territorial Integrity: “Borders are not to be redrawn at the whim of great Powers. Territorial integrity and sovereignty are sacrosanct, for small States just as for large.”

Overview

Introduction:

The Security Council holds primary responsibility, under Article 24 of the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. Its fifteen members: five permanent members holding veto power (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ten elected members serving two-year terms: can adopt legally binding resolutions under Chapter VI (peaceful settlement) or Chapter VII (enforcement, including sanctions and authorised force).

Background and context:

The Houthi group (Ansar Allah), which is based in Yemen, has engaged in continuous attacks on commercial and naval vessels crossing the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait since November 2023. These attacks include missiles, drones and small boats. The total volume of world trade that normally passes through these waterways is estimated at about 10-12 percent, while the amount of international container ship traffic passing through them represents some 30 percent. The Houthis began their attack as part of a statement of solidarity with the Palestinian people during the Israel-Hamas conflict in November 2023. Their first targets were commercial shipping companies linked to Israel. They then expanded their attacks to commercial shipping companies affiliated with both the U.S. and U.K., as well as occasionally attacking merchant vessels with no apparent link to either side.

These actions have had a very negative impact throughout the world. In the weeks immediately following the beginning of the Houthis' campaign, major commercial shipping lines, Maersk, MSC, CMA CGM, Hapag-Lloyd and others, stopped using the Red Sea route to avoid potential damage from the Houthis' attacks. Instead they used longer routes around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope which add about 3,500 nautical miles and 10-14 days to each round-trip journey. By mid-January 2024, the Houthis had caused a decline of almost half in Suez Canal traffic compared to previous years. According to data collected by UNCTAD, even after this period of increased traffic due to reduced Houthis' attacks, Suez Canal transit levels were still nearly 70 percent lower than those of 2023 for much of 2025. Attacks by the Houthis on commercial vessels also directly affected seafarer safety. The Houthis sank several vessels including two ships that were destroyed in July 2025 resulting in the deaths of four seafarers. Additionally, the Houthis seized a vessel called Galaxy Leader in November 2023 and held all of its crew members hostage for over one year.

There has been no resolution to this issue; there has been fluctuation. While the Houthis paused their attacks for a time following the end of hostilities in Gaza in October 2025, they again resumed issuing public threats after the United States and Israel launched a series of direct military strikes against Iran on Feb. 28th, 2026. Since then, Houthi leaders along with high-ranking Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers have made public statements indicating that the Houthi will restart their maritime campaign in support of Iran. Through this date, there are no reported incidents of Houthis launching missile or drone

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attacks on commercial vessels. However, because there have been periodic unclaimed attacks (such as one near Hodeida, Yemen in early July 2026), and regular public threats from Houthi leadership, the Security Council does not consider the crisis to be closed. Therefore this Committee convenes at this point when there is neither confirmation of continued or resumption of attacks nor evidence that such attacks are imminent.

Prior UN and International Action: The Resolution 2722 Framework

Resolution 2722 (10 January 2024) continues to be the Council's operational document regarding this subject. It contains three key components: (1) an immediate cessation of all attacks against merchant and commercial vessels by the Houthis; (2) the formal recognition of the rights of member states under international law to take defensive measures against vessels attacked by others; (3) a call upon the secretary-general to provide reports, on a monthly basis, concerning additional attacks that may occur which are expected to maintain the council's focus on the matter without needing new resolutions for each occurrence.

The monthly reporting requirements have since been renewed through six month intervals with no changes to the substance of the previous resolution: Resolutions 2768 (January 2025), 2787 (July 2025), 2812 (January 2026), and 2826 (July 2026). The renewals were all successful but never unanimous; China and Russia abstained at each opportunity while Algeria and Mozambique also abstained when voting on Resolution 2722. The above is the single most important procedural aspect that delegates need to understand. Let it be noted that the council has failed for almost three years to go beyond simply rolling over a technical agreement toward some form of substantive action due to fundamental disagreements among the P5 regarding what would constitute a "stronger" resolution.

The Question

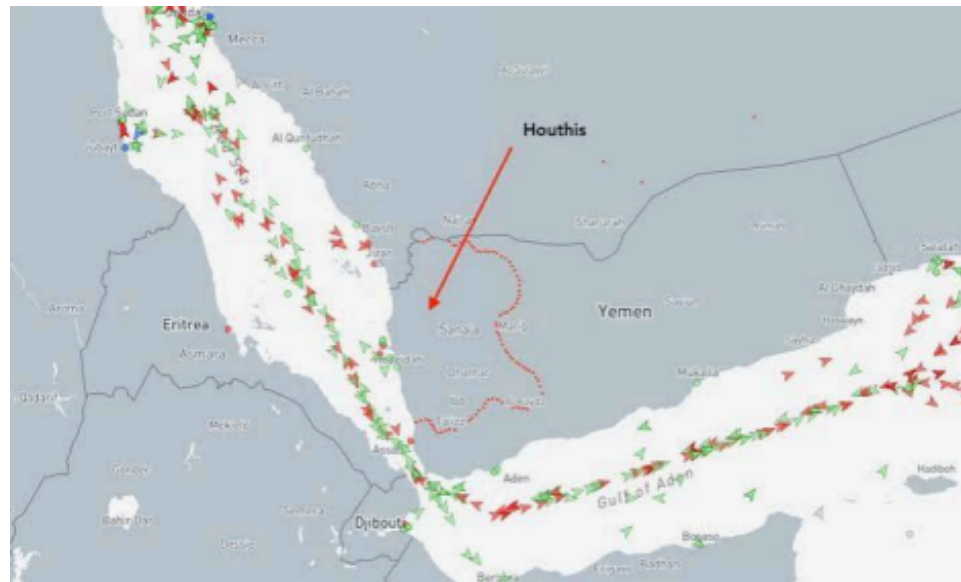
China and Russia's abstentions from voting in favor of Resolution 2722 were not purely symbolic. In fact both countries have argued that the wording of Resolution 2722 regarding the right to defend oneself, was interpreted by the U.S. and U.K., as authorization to carry out air strikes over Yemeni territory that the Resolution did not explicitly authorize. Russia's delegate has stated publicly that neither 2722 nor any of its subsequent resolutions authorized the use of force against Yemen. Additionally both states make direct links between this crisis and the Gaza conflict as well as, most recently, with regard to the U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict; stating that military responses to Houthi rocket attacks treat a symptom of the issue at hand but do nothing to address the root cause of the problem: regional conflicts that stem from the unresolved issue of Palestine.

Additionally Russia has continually called upon the Security Council to shift focus towards the stalled intra-Yemeni political process led by UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg. Russia argues that due to the significant attention being paid to the "Red Sea File" it has displaced the much more manageable Yemen peace process.

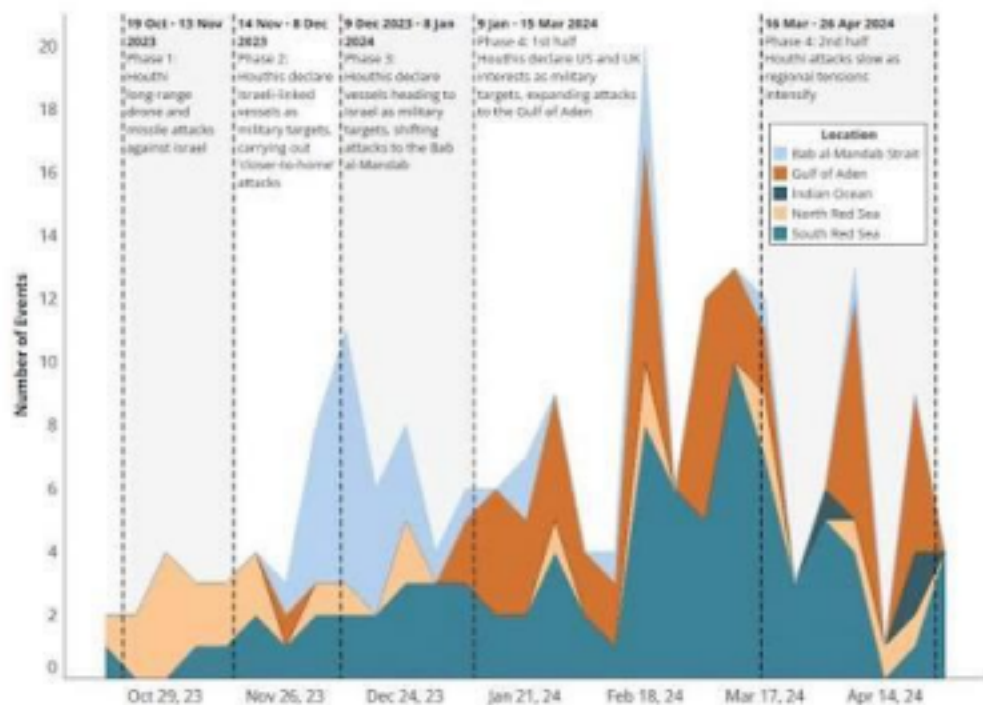
On the other end of the spectrum, the U.S. and U.K. (as well as their co-pen holders on this file, the U.S. and Greece), have taken an entirely opposing stance: they believe that the creation of a very minimalistic reporting mechanism will allow the Security Council to continue to be involved with this issue; and further argue that a more active role by the

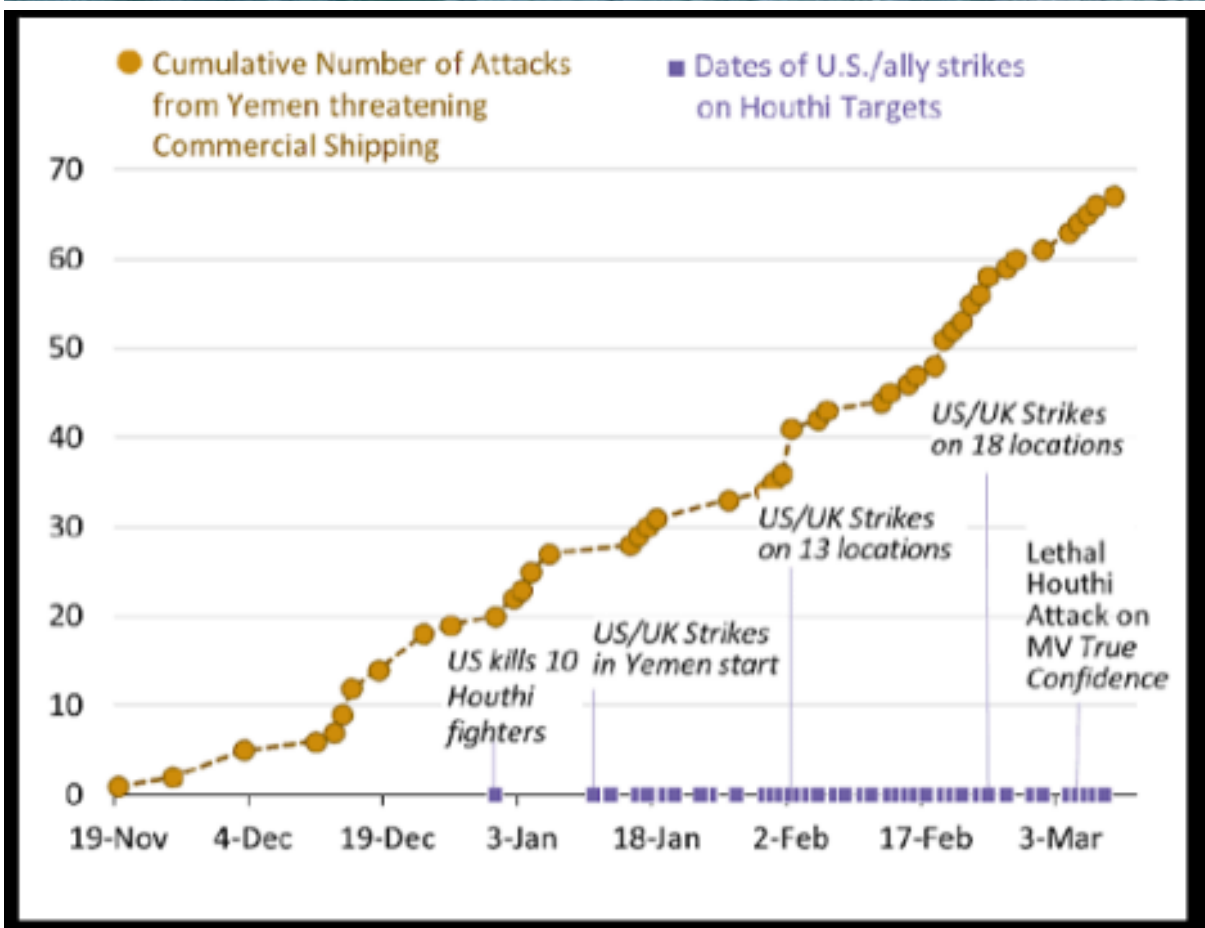
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Security Council possibly through explicit authorization of marine enforcement measures and/or expanding sanctions would be justified based on the level of disruptions to global commerce and the threat to seafarers lives posed by these events. The U.S. has also attempted to directly link Houthi actions with Iranian material support, which Moscow and Beijing see as escalation.

Statistics & Infographics**Houthi Attacks During the Red Sea Crisis by Week**

October 2023 - April 2024





Major Parties

Failure by the Council to progress beyond a series of "technical rollovers" reflects an honest disagreement among members about how to address the issue at hand, rather than simply stalling. At least three different perspectives are evident in contemporary discussions regarding the Houthi's campaign:

- A perspective shared by the United States, the United Kingdom, Greece, etc. which views the conflict solely as a matter of maritime security and anti-proliferation issues therefore calling for enhanced monitoring with an implicit acceptance of self-defense justified strikes against Yemeni targets.
- A position held by Russia, China, etc. which sees the conflict as part and parcel of the larger confrontation between Israel/U.S./Iran and specifically seeks to avoid resolutions that could be interpreted as endorsing unilateral military action on Yemeni soil.
- And a third perspective comprised of various member states within the Gulf region and/or other regions (e.g. Saudi Arabia's coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen), whose focus lies in maintaining Yemeni sovereignty and preventing any renewed escalation of violence in the Red Sea area from undermining the current fragile Yemeni political process.

UNMHA — United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement

OSESGY — Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
OHCHR — Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNCTAD — United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

IMO — International Maritime Organization

EUNAVFOR ASPIDES — European Union Naval Force Operation ASPIDES
UKMTO — United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations

ICJ — International Court of Justice

Related Instruments and Missions

- Resolution 2216 (2015): the original sanctions for Yemen (arms embargo, targeted asset freeze and travel ban on designated individuals) which is also part of the broader 2140 Yemen sanctions framework. Was extended most recently through Resolution 2801 (November 2025) to November 2026.
- UNMHA (UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement) : a very narrow political mission that monitors the Hodeida ceasefire within the larger context of Yemen's Civil War; there have been recent evaluations (as stated by the SG's Nov 2025 Report) regarding UNMHA's feasibility and viability of its mandate; therefore, it should not be confused with Red Sea Maritime Security Architecture.

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- Operation Prosperity Guardian (Combined Task Force 153 US-led): a multilateral coalition whose primary focus is on intercepting incoming ballistic missile(s) and drone(s) over the Southern Red Sea.
- EUNAVFOR ASPIDES: The European Union has operated EUNAVFOR ASPIDES (defensive mission only). February 2024. No strikes allowed onshore. Currently mandated until February 2027, while budgeted annually at nearly €15 million. It has reported having escorted hundreds of vessels and believes that approximately a majority of Houthis' "success" claims posted online are false or grossly exaggerated. However, commanders acknowledge that due to the fact that only 2–3 EU warships can be present at any one time creates significant bottlenecks and numerous unmet vessel escort requests. - India, China and Egypt all operate independently their respective Naval presence throughout the entire area surrounding those above described coalition. And thus is something to be considered in block position research because it makes any narrative of this solely as a Western Verses The Rest an inaccurate representation.

The Military and Maritime Picture

As of July 2026, there have been no confirmed commercial vessel missile or drone strikes attributed to the Houthis since late 2025. There were approximately 3.5 months with no confirmed strikes, beginning in late November 2025, which is the largest period of time with no confirmed strikes during the entire campaign. This should be viewed within the context of a "structured pause under tension" as stated by one regional analyst, versus an actual de-escalation of hostilities. On February 28, 2026, U.S.-Israeli military actions directly targeted Iran, and both the Houthis and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) made explicit signals that they would re-initiate attacks. Although there have been isolated unclaimed incidents, including a cargo ship attacked off Hodeida on July 5, 2026, and other such events, these are being documented by the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) without a formal Houthi claim of responsibility. This fact alone creates a unique complication for any possible UN Security Council response that will take into account whether any given incident can be formally attributed to the Houthis.

While shipping levels in the region are slowly starting to recover, overall levels of shipping remain lower than prior to the crisis. In June 2025, ASPIDES reported that there were approximately 36-37 ships per day crossing the Red Sea; a recovery level of 60 percent compared to the low point of August 2024 when the number had dropped to less than 15 ships per day. However, according to pre-crisis norms (based upon historical trends), approximately 72-75 ships per day typically cross the Red Sea. Data collected through the first half of 2026 continued to show declines in Suez Canal traffic year over year, although especially so for small container ships. While larger container ships (7,500-18,000 TEUs) appear to be

cautiously returning, it is important to recognize that headlining Suez traffic numbers remained soft. It is also noteworthy that while Bab el Mandeb transshipment tonnages declined year over year in most periods through early 2026, January saw a slight increase in

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tonnages indicating that some operators are testing Bab el Mandeb's viability. Therefore, it may be useful to use such nuances in committee discussions to move beyond simplistic statements about "recovery of traffic" or lack thereof.

Committee Objective

This committee's task is to produce a Security Council resolution that moves the Red Sea file beyond the six-renewal pattern of reporting rollovers seen since Resolution 2722. Delegates should aim for a text that genuinely narrows, rather than papers over, the disagreement that has produced abstentions from China and Russia on every vote to date, whilst remaining realistic about what a divided P5 can actually pass.

Possible Solutions

- Clarified self-defence language: a formulation on states' right to protect their vessels that reduces the ambiguity in Resolution 2722, without either explicitly authorizing or explicitly foreclosing strikes on Yemeni territory.
- Expanded multinational naval coordination: a call for broader support extending beyond the 2-3 EU warships currently on ASPIDES station.
- Strengthened sanctions provisions: amendments to the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime addressing Houthi weapons acquisition, with a defined evidentiary standard for any reference to external state support.
- A conditional or attribution-linked reporting mechanism: adjusting the monthly SG reporting mandate to explicitly address unclaimed or unattributed attacks, rather than assuming clear Houthi responsibility in every case.
- Seafarer protection measures: coordination with the IMO on hostage-release mechanisms and engagement with maritime insurers and the Joint War Committee.
- An explicit link to the Yemeni political track: language that reinforces, rather than sidelines, Special Envoy Grundberg's peace process and the UNMHA mission, addressed directly rather than left implicit.
- A built-in escalation or sunset trigger: replacing the current pattern of identical six-month rollovers with a resolution that automatically strengthens measures if attacks resume past a defined threshold.

Sources

Delegates are strongly encouraged to read primary sources (the actual resolution texts and meeting records) rather than relying solely on secondary summaries, including this guide.

- UN Security Council Report, "The Red Sea" Monthly Forecasts (2026) — securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast
- UN Security Council Report, "What's In Blue" — draft resolution previews and voting analysis — securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue

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- US Maritime Administration (MARAD), Maritime Security Advisories on the Red Sea — maritime.dot.gov/msci
- UNCTAD reporting on Red Sea shipping disruption and trade impact
- BIMCO and Lloyd's List maritime industry reporting on transit volumes and risk classification