

Yemen's Houthis Have "Biden by the Shorthairs". Disruption of the Most Important Maritime Trading Routes. Potential Shock to the Global Economy

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, December 26, 2023

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"Yemen has said it would stop the blockade of Israel-bound ships as soon as sufficient food, water and medicine are allowed to enter Gaza. Guess that's asking too much." — Elizabeth Murray@elizabethmurra

Yemen's Houthi militia has shown how [a small army can take on the American Empire](#) and win. They have shown how courage, resolve and commitment to principle can act as a force-multiplier allowing a much weaker military to 'punch above its weight'. They've also shown that a few well-placed missiles in key locations on the world's most critical shipping lanes, can send tremors across the global economy and shake the "rules-based order" to its foundations. In short, the Houthis have shown that David can bring down Goliath without breaking a sweat, provided that David maintains his perch along the Bab-al-Mandab Strait.

Here's what's going on:

The Houthis occupy an area along the narrowest part of the Red Sea that is the most important shipping corridor in the world. It is "responsible for 12% of international trade and almost one-third of global container traffic."

When the movement of ships is disrupted along this waterway, insurance premiums skyrocket, prices on retail merchandise rise, and oil prices go through the roof.

That is why western powers are committed to keeping these shipping lanes open at all times whatever the cost. Here's some background from CNN:

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels are stepping up their strikes on ships in the Red Sea, which they say are revenge against Israel for its military campaign in Gaza.

The attacks have forced some of the world's biggest shipping and oil companies to suspend transit through one of the world's most important maritime trade routes, which could potentially cause a shock to the global economy.

The Houthis are believed to have been armed and trained by Iran, and there are fears that their attacks could escalate Israel's war against Hamas into a wider regional conflict. [Who Are The Houthis, CNN](#)

At present, these shipping lanes are effectively closed due to Houthi attacks on Israeli-bound vessels. This, in turn, has slowed overall traffic to a crawl. If the current situation persists or gets worse, the impact on the global economy could be catastrophic.

Today on UK Column News (1pm UK time) I will cover the latest on Yemen and how Ansarullah is already winning the war against the US-led global coalition destined for failure in the 'graveyard of invaders' which is the Yemen. pic.twitter.com/ZKXhuyiAjO

— vanessa beeley (@VanessaBeeley) [December 20, 2023](#)

Here's more from the *Washington Post*:

On Monday, oil giant BP became the latest company to announce it would be pausing its shipments through the Red Sea. Several shipping companies, including MSC, Maersk, Euronav and the Evergreen Group, have said they are also avoiding the Suez Canal as militants target cargo vessels.

Roughly 10 percent of all maritime oil trade goes through the Red Sea — which connects to the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal. **Without access to the Red Sea route, many ships will have to take the far longer and costlier journey around Africa to reach their destinations....**

It urged "the global community to continue to pursue every possible diplomatic effort in support of security in and safe navigation through this region that is vital to international trade." [New U.S.-led Red Sea task force won't stop shipping attacks, Houthis say](#), Washington Post

It's worth noting that the Houthis have repeatedly said that **ships that are NOT bound for Israeli ports will not be attacked**. But that has not stopped all of the major shipping companies from rerouting their vessels from the Red Sea to the Cape of Good Hope. This alternate route adds weeks to the sailing time forcing carriers to raise their cargo prices and adjust their schedules. Bottom line: The action of the Houthis is going to further boost inflation in western countries pushing their economies into a sharp and protracted nosedive.

Surprisingly, **the Houthis do not stand to gain anything for their efforts.**

In fact, they are putting themselves at great risk (of retaliation by the United States) in order

to **pressure Israel into stopping its relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip and to allow the starving Palestinian people access to food, water and medical supplies.**

The Houthis should probably be applauded for their selfless compassion and humanity, but Washington doesn't see it that way. They don't think see the Houthis' action as laudable, virtuous or just.

They see it as a challenge to American primacy.

They see it as a threat to their regional hegemony and global leadership.

They see it as interference in their Gaza policy in which Israel has been granted carte blanche to kill and maim as many Palestinians as it sees fit in order to achieve its own strategic objective, which is Greater Israel.

So, what we have is an unstoppable force and an immovable object. We have two opposing points of view, and no way to resolve their differences without a direct military confrontation. That means there's going to be trouble in the very near future.

📷📷📷 Yemeni Houthis have prepared NAVAL MINES for American & Israeli ships. pic.twitter.com/niBQsghTmM

— Jackson Hinkle 📷 (@jacksonhinkle) [December 22, 2023](#)

And that is why, last Monday, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced that he had **assembled a ten-member maritime coalition that would patrol the waterways in the Red Sea and defend the “freedom of navigation”** in that area. (Coalition members include: Britain, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain.)

Now a reasonable person might wonder **why Austin would cobble together another makeshift military coalition**—whose strategic goals are far from clear—**instead of first contacting the Houthi leadership** to see if a deal could be worked out and a confrontation avoided. But those who have followed US foreign policy for the last 30 years, know that **the US does not negotiate with people or countries it considers its inferiors.**

So, that option was quickly discarded. Instead, the US has decided to pursue its traditional approach to emerging crises, which involves a fair amount of incendiary rhetoric followed by a military hammer-blow. And, that appears to be the direction that things are now headed. Check out this excerpt from an article by John Helmer:

“... on Monday, in the Moscow newspaper Vedomosti, it was reported that Russian experts expect **“most likely, the Americans will launch missile and bomb attacks on command centres and military depots of the Houthis, or targeted strikes by special forces may follow in order to eliminate the commanders of the movement.** The operation will be roughly comparable to the actions of Western allies in Syria or Iraq.” The newspaper claimed that, according to its source, **“the military forces of Saudi Arabia and the UAE may participate in the operation -**

their armed forces and their proxies have been waging a sluggish war against Iran's allies in Yemen since 2015. [John Helmer](#), *Dancing With Bears*

And respected publications in the western media are calling for a war with the Houthis too. This is from *The World Socialist Web Site*:

The US media is, meanwhile, agitating for the Biden administration to target both Yemen and Iran. In an editorial, the Wall Street Journal wrote, "The press is reporting that **the Biden Administration is contemplating the use of military force in response to continuing attacks on commercial shipping by the Houthi militia in Yemen. It's about time.** The Houthi missile attacks pose the most significant threat to global shipping in decades, and they will continue unless a global coalition unites to stop them."

The Journal continued, "The question is whether the U.S. and other Western navies are merely going to play defense and catch missiles as the Houthis set the terms of battle. Sooner or later a Houthi missile may get past U.S. naval defenses and kill American sailors. Then the White House will have little choice other than to strike back." The Journal demands that the US escalate against Iran, declaring, "Eventually **Iran's rulers have to know that their assets—military and nuclear—are at risk if they continue to foment disorder**, attack U.S. allies, and target American bases or ships." [As Gaza genocide continues, US prepares major escalation of war throughout Middle East](#), World Socialist Web Site

Map of current USN positions in the region FYI pic.twitter.com/kGPF5IQ8LA

— □ Aristophanes □ (@Aristos_Revenge) [December 19, 2023](#)

So, there's definitely an element within the foreign policy establishment that supports the idea of a war on Yemen.

We expect this 'rush to war' will gain momentum in the weeks ahead as more ships are diverted to Africa and hostilities continue to mount. But there's no sign that the Houthis are going to ease up on their demands or abandon the Palestinian cause anytime soon. If anything, they appear to be more resolute than ever as is evident in this quote by Houthi Council member Muhammad al-Bukhaiti,

"Even if America succeeds in mobilizing the entire world, our operations in the Red Sea will not stop unless the massacre in Gaza stops. We will not give up the responsibility of defending the Moustazafeen (oppressed ones) of the Earth."

There's not a lot of wiggle-room here. The Houthis want a cessation of the violence and the distribution of humanitarian aid. And they are willing to go to war with the United States to make sure their demands are met. And no one knows better than the Houthis, what that means. During the 9 years they were at war with Saudi Arabia, Washington provided the weapons and embargo-power that led to the deaths of **an estimated 377,000 people.** **"More than half died due to starvation and disease caused by the siege."** ([Antiwar.com](#))

So, the Houthis know what savagery Washington is capable of. Even so, they are not

backing down and not caving in. **There's going to be a ceasefire or there's going to be a war.** It's up to Biden to decide. But if he opts for war, he should realize that it's not going to be a cakewalk. Oh, no. There are going to be attacks on American bases, American warships and Saudi oil fields and infrastructure. Oil prices will soar, commercial shipping will grind to a standstill, and global equities will tumble. And, all the while, China and Russia will be watching from the sidelines while Uncle Sam drains his last ounce credibility and power down a black hole on the Arabian Peninsula.

This is how Houthi leader Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi summed it up:

“If the US wants to go to war with us, they must know that we are waiting. We want a direct war between Yemen and the US and Israel. We are not afraid of America and all the people of Yemen will stand against them.”

This is a war that the United States can easily avoid by simply ‘doing the right thing’ and approving a ceasefire now. That will bring a swift end to Israel’s atrocities and stop the attacks on commercial shipping at the same time. That’s a solution we can all live with.

Bahrain? Lmfao what a sellout pic.twitter.com/24hSDP6s77

— missfalasteenia (@missfalsteenia) [December 19, 2023](#)

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This article was originally published on [The Unz Review](#).

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