



EUNAVFOR ASPIDES Informational Message to the Shipping Industry

Larissa, 24th July 2026

Incidents in Red sea, Bab-El-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden

Days with no incident: 2

Last reported incident: 22 July 2026

General situation

Since 28 February 2026, the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran has significantly reshaped the regional security environment. The conflict has progressively expanded beyond Iranian territory, with military operations and retaliatory actions affecting multiple theatres.

Following the collapse of the diplomatic momentum generated by the June Memorandum of Understanding, the security situation has deteriorated significantly. The United States has conducted strikes against Iranian military infrastructure, while Iran has responded through direct military action against U.S. interests. The risk of further regional escalation remains high despite ongoing diplomatic contacts.

Houthi forces continue to threaten commercial shipping which could be perceived as having links to the current conflict in the Middle East.

Current Situation

The Houthi announcement of a maritime embargo, on 20 JUL 26, and the subsequent targeting of MV ENCELIA (IMO 9240172), on 22 JUL 26, represents a significant escalation of the group's coercive maritime strategy. The Houthi's naval operations are Highly Likely intended to generate political, military and economic pressure to meet demands, including the reopening of Houthi-controlled ports and airports, salary payments, humanitarian measures and prisoner exchanges.

The shipping volume crossing the Red Sea has not been impacted and remains at about 43 ships per day.

EUNAVFOR ASPIDES continues steadily to cross the Red Sea and protect the shipping within means and capabilities.

Threat Level

Considering Houthis' pattern of behaviour, while announcements of transit bans have served as an indicator of implementing upcoming hostile actions, the threat level for transiting the Red



Sea (RS), Bab el-Mandeb Strait (BaM), Gulf of Aden (GoA), and the Arabian Sea (AS) is assessed as follows:

Category	Threat Level	Description
a.	Medium	North Red Sea.
b.	High	South Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb.
c.	Medium	Gulf of Aden.

Following the Houthi attack against MV ENCELIA, on 22 JUL 26, the regional threat assessment has been updated. The threat level in the North Red Sea remains Medium. In the South Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb, the threat level has been raised from Medium to High, reflecting the increased risk to merchant shipping linked to the conflict in the Red Sea. The threat level in the Gulf of Aden remains Medium.

Recommendations

In light of recent incidents and the elevated threat level, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES recommends that merchant vessels, which could be perceived as having links to the current conflict in the Middle East, transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden exercise heightened vigilance.

In addition, any vessel that has recently called at, loaded cargo in, or discharged cargo at relevant ports should minimize exposure; reducing its electronic footprint by minimizing AIS transmissions and limiting any publicly accessible digital information that could facilitate targeting (info about previous and next port calls). All ships should continue to submit their requests for support to the MSCIO.

While it remains too early to fully assess the scope and duration of the renewed threat, previous patterns indicate that attacks could involve anti-ship missiles, UAVs, USVs and small crafts.

In response to the current threat environment, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES has reinforced protective measures to support vessels. As available military assets remain unchanged, ships requesting Close Protection may experience more waiting times.

EUNAVFOR ASPIDES' recommendations to the maritime community remain unchanged and should continue to be observed rigorously:

- Avoid entry into Yemeni territorial waters at all times.
- When feasible, navigate closer to the African coastline to reduce exposure to potential threats.



- Maintain constant communication with MSCIO and UKMTO and adhere strictly to official guidance, risk-assessment protocols, and best management practices.
- Conduct a voyage-specific risk assessment, taking into consideration any direct or indirect affiliations between the vessel, its ownership, or its cargo and countries of interest.

Communication and Coordination

All vessel masters are reminded that the MSCIO remains available as a point of contact for any incident, suspicious activity, or unusual observation.

Such reporting is vital to ensuring the safety of seafarers, the security of commercial shipping, and the preservation of freedom of navigation under the protection of Operation ASPIDES.

Further information, including operational updates and recommendations, is available on the MSCIO official webpage at <https://mscio.eu>.

For specific enquiries or to obtain pre-transit support, please contact: postmaster@mscio.eu

End of communication.