

# Major Escalation: Biden Launches War on Yemen.

## Mike Whitney

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*"Wait, wait, wait..... the UN voted for a ceasefire in the Red Sea (where the Yemenis harmed 0 humans).... But has yet to pass a cease fire vote after 30,000+ have been killed (in Gaza)???" —Tony Montana @9mmScorpion/X*

On Tuesday, the Houthis launched their largest attack on ships in the Red Sea to date. 21 missiles and drones –that were launched from positions on mainland Yemen– were shot-down by US and British warships patrolling the area. No casualties were reported.

According to a Houthi spokesman, **the attack was retaliation for the killing of 10 Houthi militants who were strafed by US helicopter gunships** while trying to board the Maersk Hangzhou on Sunday. The western media has omitted this critical fact from their reporting in order to conceal the provocation that triggered Tuesday's attack on US and UK warships.

**The Houthis say the Hangzhou refused to respond to radio calls inquiring whether the ship was bound for an Israeli port or not**, which prompted their attempt to board the ship. That's when all hell broke loose. (The Houthis require that commercial ships acknowledge whether they are linked to Israel or not. The Maersk Hangzhou failed to do so.) Here is a brief summary of Tuesday's incident from a post at Sputnik International:

Yemeni Ansar Allah claimed responsibility for an attack on a US Navy ship in the Red Sea, after the US attacked Houthi forces, Houthi spokesperson Yahiah Sariah said in an official statement. What is also known: Navy forces, missile forces and unmanned aircraft of Yemen's Houthis conducted a joint military operation using a large number of ballistic and ship-based missiles and drones, targeting a US Navy ship providing support to Israel; **This operation was the first response to an attack on the Houthi naval**

**forces by the US Navy 10 days ago;** Ansar Allah troops will continue to prevent ships from sailing to Israel, both in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, until the aggression against the Gaza Strip ends.@SputnikInt

And here is a summary of the Houthis demands following the killing of 10 of their fighters by US forces last Sunday: (This was not reported in the western media)

✂BREAKING

The Houthis want the US to hand over the Americans who killed Yemenis in the Red Sea

The Yemeni Chief of Staff warns that if the United States does not hand over these Americans for trial, the consequences will be unprecedented for the United States. [pic.twitter.com/BYdiU8JVZY](https://pic.twitter.com/BYdiU8JVZY)

— Iran Observer (@IranObserver0) [January 6, 2024](#)

**In short, the Houthis attack on Tuesday was a response to a US provocation that took place two days earlier.**

Houthi leaders have repeatedly said they do not want a confrontation with the US but they have also said that they won't back-down if they are attacked. Tuesday's incident proves that they meant what they said and are prepared to sacrifice their lives to force Israel to lift its siege of Gaza and to allow food and medicine to reach the Palestinian people. By attacking and killing the 10 Houthi fighters on Sunday, the US has made itself a party to the genocide that is taking place in Gaza. Washington has effectively declared war on Yemen and cast its lot with a government that is committed to eradicating a civilian population of 2 million people.

The Biden administration has described their actions in the Red Sea as a defense of "freedom of navigation" and 'open seas'. But this is merely an attempt to frame the issue in a manner that best suits the objectives of the perpetrators. To the vast majority of people around the world, the US is defending the horrific depredations of the Israeli state. Not surprisingly, the western media has tried to characterize the goings-on in Gaza as an attempt to "defeat Hamas". Fortunately, few people have been taken in by the ruse. The fact is, there has never been a more vicious bloodletting in the last half century and people everywhere are appalled by the relentless, ethnically-fueled butchery conducted by callous thugs who celebrate their savagery on TikTok. Now, we are told that the same country that is sending 2,000-pound bombs to Israel to kill women and children in their homes, should be revered as the 'guarantor of regional security' in the Red Sea. Naturally, many people see the administration's behavior as hypocritical.

At present, foreign policy elites are focused almost exclusively on escalation. On Wednesday, US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken warned "there will be consequences" if the Houthis persisted with their attacks on commercial vessels implying that the Biden administration is now considering military action.** Keep in mind, the US has already assembled a multinational maritime task force, Operation Prosperity Guardian, to patrol the Red Sea to ensure the safety of commercial ships passing through the vital waterway. But that makeshift coalition has failed to build confidence

among a number of the world's biggest carriers who refuse to transit the Red Sea until the hostilities end. That puts the onus on the Biden administration to find a workable solution that will end the attacks and restore Red Sea traffic to what it was prior to the crisis. Regrettably, all the evidence suggests that Biden and Co. have decided that the only way forward is to intensify the fighting by bombing military sites on the mainland. This is from an article at *Bloomberg News*:

According to more than a dozen people interviewed by Bloomberg including Yemen, shipping and defense and security experts, these options include:

### **Targeted Strikes**

**These would be focused on eliminating or degrading the Houthis' ability to fire ballistic missiles at ships and shipping lanes by striking launch sites, radars, missile warehouses and other supporting infrastructure and logistics.** Since mid-November, the Houthis have fired more than 100 drones and ballistic missiles in two dozen separate attacks, according to the Pentagon. More than 15 vessels have been targeted. [US Braces for High-Stakes Decisions Over Houthi Sea Strikes](#), *Bloomberg*

And here's more from an article by James Kraska at *Lawfare*:

Strikes into Yemen would be a new kind of naval war to counter the Houthis' new method of exercising sea control from the land. The Houthi infrastructure on land that puts at risk commercial ships and warships exercising high seas freedoms should be eliminated. Further, Iran is apparently operating a radar spy ship in the Red Sea that is providing targeting guidance for Houthi missiles and drones. Iran's ability to transmit targeting data must be neutralized. This means the only effective strategy is to strike the entire Houthi missile, drone, and piloted aircraft enterprise, including the Iranian ship and other offensive capabilities that are used by the Houthis to project power far from Yemeni shores. The Houthi radar and surface-to-air missile complexes that protect the offensive systems must also be disabled or destroyed. The law supports the destruction of the Houthis' ability to launch attacks on U.S. warships..

.... Houthi attacks are not going to end until the Houthis no longer have the capability to wage war on international shipping. This conclusion reflects the judgment of Riad Kahwaji, founder of the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, a Dubai-based security research group, who said, "Unless the [United States] bombs the Houthis' missile launch sites, radars, airfields and boats, its efforts to combat the threat to shipping won't be effective." [Attacks on U.S. Warships Justify Self-Defense Against Houthi Forces Ashore](#) James Kraska, *Lawfare*

You can see where this is going. For the neocon-dominated Biden administration, escalation is the only way forward. But, as we've said from the beginning, **the bombardment of Houthi missiles sites and military infrastructure will not stop the attacks on commercial traffic, it will merely trigger a call for 'boots on the ground'**. Once the bombing campaign fails, (as it will) US ground forces will be deployed to fight a bloody and protracted guerilla war on the Arabian peninsula. That is the disaster that is looming on the horizon for the US; a disaster that will further alienate (and infuriate) Washington's dwindling allies in the Middle East and lead to America's inevitable expulsion from the region.

A better strategy would be to open a channel for direct communication with the Houthis and begin the arduous process of negotiating a diplomatic settlement. That is the only way the crisis will be resolved. Take a look at this excerpt from an article at Foreign Affairs that underscores the importance of diplomacy:

Because the Houthi attacks could have serious consequences for global commerce, the United States is under substantial pressure to respond militarily. But **instead of retaliatory strikes, the U.S. should favor a diplomatic approach....**

Some politicians and analysts have argued that the best way to counter Houthi aggression is with military escalation designed to “restore deterrence.”...

But proponents of airstrikes against the Houthis cannot articulate what should happen afterward. **It is hard to see how airstrikes would deter Houthi attacks now when they have failed to do so over the past decade.** Airstrikes against Houthi targets might marginally erode the Houthis’ ability to launch missiles and drones, but it will be much harder to effectively target and eradicate the Houthis’ small, cheap manned and unmanned boats. ...

An approach that combines diplomacy with deterrence is the least bad way for the United States to deal with this intractable problem in the near term....

**To deal with the threat posed by the Houthis, ultimately the United States must push for an end to the war between Israel and Hamas—as well as to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general. Like it or not, the Houthis have linked their aggression to Israel’s operations in Gaza and have won domestic and regional support for doing so. Finding a sustainable, long-term approach to both conflicts will be critical to de-escalating tensions across the region and getting the Houthis to call off their attacks on commercial vessels. Such attacks would have limited utility in the absence of these conflicts.**

These measures cannot fully address the threat that the Houthis pose to U.S. interests and to stability in the region more broadly. But they remain the best among bad options—and the United States has only bad options because of its failed approaches to Yemen over the past 20 years. Washington must not repeat its mistakes. Decades of experience have shown, by now, that military efforts to dislodge the Houthis are unlikely to be effective. Instead, they may merely further devastate the lives of the already struggling people of Yemen. [Don’t Bomb the Houthis](#), Alexandra Stark, *Foreign Affairs*

It’s worth noting, that the Houthis do not need to defeat the US militarily to win the war in the Red Sea. They merely need disrupt traffic enough to negatively impact the global economy which they can do whether their cities have been razed to ground or not. This is not Afghanistan. Yemen represents a commercially vital shipping-lane that can be effectively shut down by well-armed guerillas who know how to exploit the vulnerabilities in the system. Brute force and superior firepower will not ‘carry the day’. Diplomacy and restraint are the way forward. Is anyone in Washington listening?

**NOTE:** As this article was going to press, the United States initiated airstrikes on Houthi positions in Yemen. President Joe Biden has started a war on the Arabian peninsula without consulting Congress and without a formal declaration of war. This is from Bloomberg News:

The US and UK launched airstrikes on Houthi rebel targets in Yemen, escalating a conflict with an Iranian proxy in response to a string of attacks that have disrupted commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

... Heavy explosions were reported in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and the port city of Al Hudaydah.....

In a televised speech earlier Thursday, Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi vowed a "big" response to the US and its allies if they proceeded with military action against his group.

"We'll confront the American aggression," he said. "Any American attack won't go unpunished."...

The US had been debating whether to attack the Houthis for weeks. A key challenge had been finding a way to diminish the group's ability to menace shipping, while avoiding further expansion of the conflict, according to a UK official familiar with the conversations. [US and UK Strike Houthis Over Attacks on Shipping](#), *Bloomberg*

Final note: We must assume that the attack on Yemen was timed to coincide with South Africa's genocide case against Israel which began earlier in the day.

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