

Houthis attack Commercial Shipping in Red Sea

January 15, 2024

EDITORIAL COMMENT: www.DiGiNews360.com hopes that the world will not move down the slippery path of expanding the Israel-Hamas war to a direct war between Iran and the west.

President **Joe Biden** and its allies have tried to calm tensions in the Middle East for weeks and prevent any wider conflict, the strikes in the Red Sea threaten to ignite one.

www.DiGiNews360.com calls on Houthis and Iran, the 'real leader' of the militia not to sleep-walk the world into a bigger war.

Protection of commercial shipping in Red Sea, which carries about 15% of the world's trade and about \$300 Bn of India's trade is essential. If this part of international waters is made unsafe by Houthis, inflation will rise further, creating difficulties for every poor person on the earth. In fact, Iran is not a rich country. If the leaders of Iran were worried about the welfare of their own poor and of the poor in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, they would be the first to ensure the security of shipping in international waters.

Iran probably thought that the west could be harassed 'cheaply' through the attacks by Houthis. Yesterday, after being punished by UK and USA, a Houthi spokesman threatened to intensify attacks on shipping. A militia may not worry if a few hundred Yemenites die as a collateral of its childish games, the Supreme Leader of Iran, who is said to be a religious scholar, is expected to be more responsible.

*Saudi Arabia, which supports the **Yemeni government-in-exile** that the Houthis are fighting, sought to distance itself from the attacks on Houthi sites as it tries to maintain a delicate détente with Iran and a cease-fire it has in Yemen. (The Saudi-led, U.S.-backed war in Yemen that began in 2015 had killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters.)*

*Even the leader of the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group, **Hassan Nasrallah**, obliquely referenced the widening Houthi attacks on ships in a speech Sunday, saying that "the sea has become a battlefield of missiles, drones and warships" and blaming the U.S. strikes for escalating maritime tensions. "The most*

*dangerous thing is what the Americans did in the Red Sea, (it) will harm the security of all maritime navigation,” **Nasrallah** said. www.DiGiNews360.com asks **Hassan Nasrallah** whether he thinks USA is responsible for the welfare of the world’s poor and whether he visualizes Hezbollah as a childish institution, playing games with missiles and bombs.*

www.DiGiNews360.com had reported a coalition of ten countries, called the “**Operation Prosperity Guardian**.” The fleet is led by U.S.S. **Eisenhower** and includes 8 European countries and Bahrain from Arabia as members. A few other Arabian countries also want to ensure the security of commercial shipping in the Red Sea, but they have not yet come out openly in support of Operation Prosperity Guardian, since Houthis are supposed to be working in support of Hamas, an Arabian group which has been ruling over Gaza since 2005 and which is considered to be a terrorist organization by most of the countries.

www.DiGiNews360.com calls on the leaders of Iran to desist from the path, which may lead Iran towards self-destruction. **Dr. S. Jaishankar**, the Foreign Minister of India is visiting Iran. www.DiGiNews360.com hopes Iran will use the opportunity and use the good offices of India’s Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** to stop the war in Gaza

- by releasing all the hostages, without any delay, and
- by asking Palestinian Authority to run the administration in Gaza.

January 15, 2024: Hudaydah (port), Yemen: Houthi rebels fired a missile, striking a U.S.-owned ship, **Gibraltar Eagle**, just off the coast of Yemen in the **Gulf of Aden**. Such attacks on commercial carriers have roiled global shipping, targeting a crucial corridor of **Red Sea**, linking Asian and Mideast energy and cargo shipments through the Suez Canal to and from the Mediterranean sea.

Eagle Gibraltar, a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier. It is owned by Eagle Bulk Shipping, a Stamford, Connecticut-based firm traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

The **United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations**, which oversees Mideast waters, said Monday's attack happened some 110 miles (177 kilometers) miles southeast of Aden. It said the ship’s captain reported that the “port side of the vessel was hit from above by a missile. The missile caused “**limited damage to a**

cargo hold but (the ship) is stable and is heading out of the area.” The vessel is carrying a cargo of steel products.

The US **Central Command** (CENTCOM) said it detected a separate anti-ship ballistic missile launch toward the southern Red Sea on Monday, though it “ failed in flight and impacted on land in Yemen.”

The **U.S. Maritime Administration**, under the **Transportation Department**, also issued a warning Monday saying there continues to be “a high degree of risk to commercial vessels” traveling near Yemen. “While the decision to transit remains at the discretion of individual vessels and companies, it is recommended that **U.S. flag and U.S.-owned commercial vessels” stay away from Yemen in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden** “until further notice,” the advisory said.



The ARAB Peninsula includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, as well as southern Iraq and Jordan



USS Laboon Navy destroyer

Sunday, January 14, 2024: Hudaydah, Yemen: The Houthis fired an anti-ship cruise missile in the direction of the **USS Laboon, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer** operating in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, **US Central Command (CENTCOM)** said.

"There were no injuries or damage reported." The American military did not specifically say the fire targeted the Laboon, following a pattern by the U.S. since the Houthi attacks began. However, **U.S. sailors have received combat ribbons for their actions in the Red Sea** — something handed out only to those who face active hostilities with an enemy force.

Sunday's missile attack on the American warship also marked the first U.S.-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes on Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping in the Red Sea.

Saturday, January 13, 2024: Yemen: U.S. forces followed up the Friday attacks on Yemen with a strike on Saturday **on a Houthi radar site.**

Friday, January 12, 2024: Yemen: On Friday, the first day of U.S.-led strikes on Yemen, USA and UK hit **28 locations and struck more than 60 targets** with cruise missiles and bombs **launched by fighter jets, warships and a submarine.** Sites hit included **weapon depots, radars and command centers**, including in remote mountain areas, the U.S. has said.

The Houthis have yet to acknowledge how severe the damage was from the strikes, which they said killed five of their troops and wounded six others.

Since November 2023, **the Houthis** have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea, saying they were avenging Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, **imperilling shipping in a key route for global trade.**

The **Houthi attacks are** also affecting shipping for the Middle East nation of **Qatar**, one of the world's **top natural gas suppliers.** Three liquid natural gas tankers that had recently loaded in Qatar and were bound for the Suez Canal remain idling off Oman, while another coming from Europe to Qatar remains off Saudi Arabia.

The loss of security for commercial shipping increases the insurance costs for the luggage being transported and for the ships' steeple. For traffic between Europe and India through Suez canal and Red Sea, it increases travel time by 12-14 days.

---BACKGROUND---

on the small, but oil/gas rich, countries of **Qatar** and **Bahrain**

Qatar is a small Peninsula in the Persian Gulf. In the South, it shares border with Saudi Arabia.

Even a SMALLER COUNTRY (invisible in the map, above; shown in an enlarged map on the next page) to the left of Qatar: **Bahrain** (from the Arabic term al-baḥrayn, meaning “two seas.”), situated in a bay on the southwestern coast of the Persian Gulf.

Bahrain is an **archipelago** of 33 islands. However due to prevalent land reclamation projects, the number of islands has increased to 84.

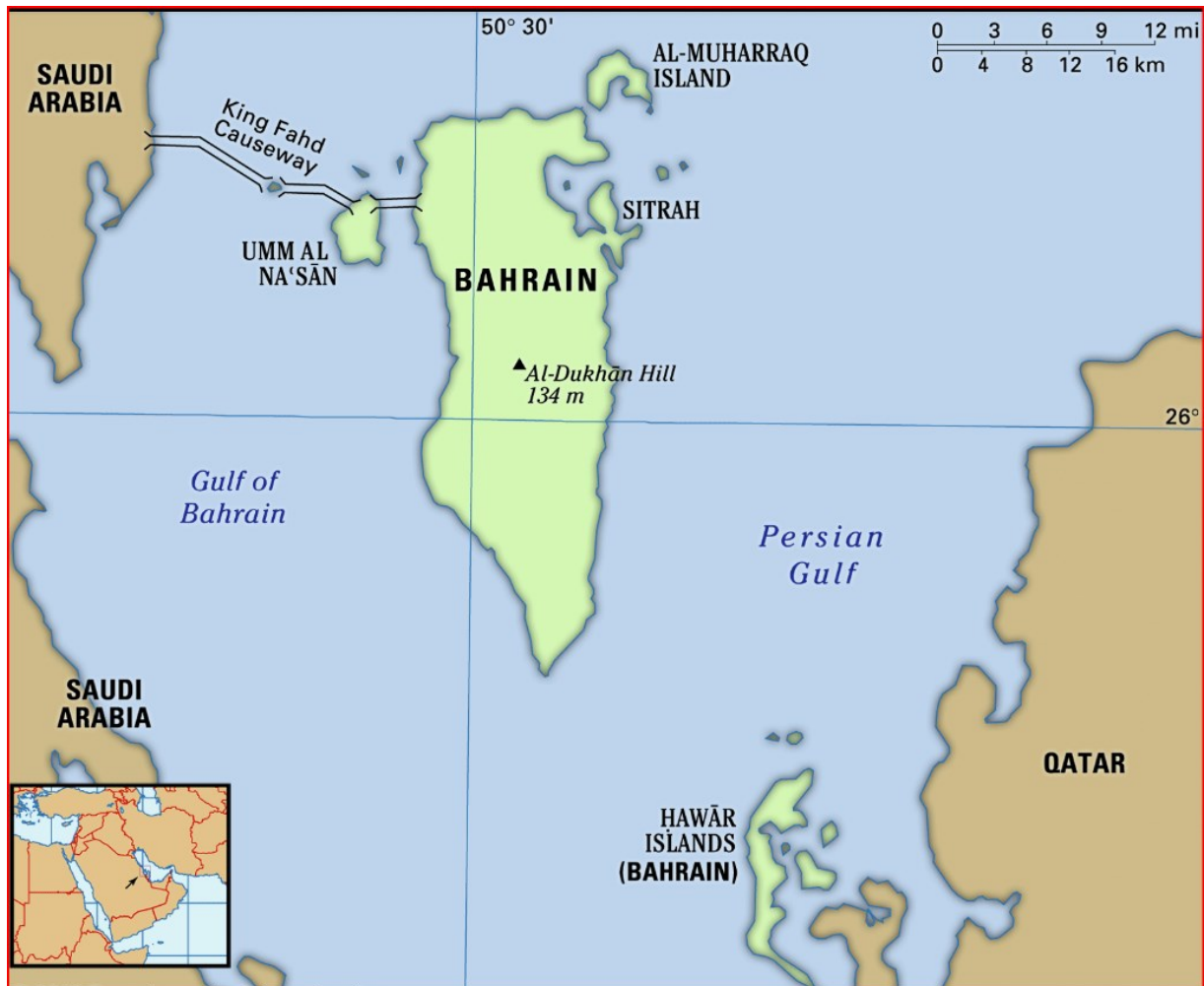


Qatar has a border with only one country- Saudi Arabia

The country of **BAHRAIN**: The largest islands is **Bahrain**, which covers a total area of 590.7 Km² with a population of 940,000. The **Hawar** Islands follow in second with an estimated area of 53.5 Km² and a population of 4,000.

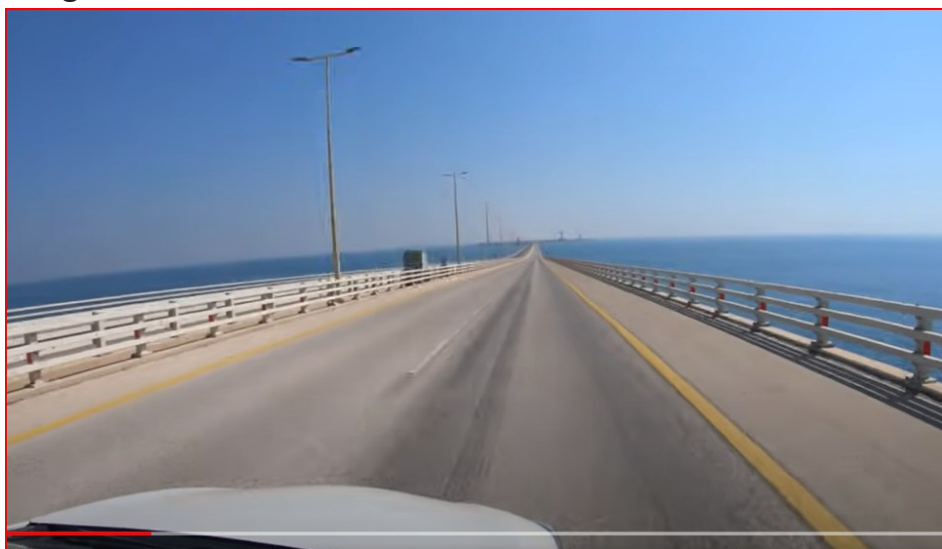
Muhharraq Island is the third largest island in Bahrain covering an approximated area of 49.3 Km² and a population of 200,000. **Um An Nasan** and **Durrat Al Bahrain** are the fourth largest islands in Bahrain with an estimated area of 20 Km² and a population of 10 and 870 respectively. **Sitra** is the fifth-

largest island by both population and size with an area of 14.6 Km² and a population of 81,000.



*BAHRAIN: Population: 1.46 Mn (149th), Density: 1,864/Km² (6th);
GDP: \$95.97 Bn (101st), GDP/capita: \$60,715 (23rd)*

Linking Saudi Arabia with Bahrain is the **King Fahd Causeway** (launched in 1986) is 25 Km long and 23.3 m wide.





Bahrain itself has **only small stores of petroleum**. Instead, its economy has relied on **processing crude oil from neighbouring countries**, on the **financial, commercial services, communications sectors** and on tourism.

The country's chief city, port, and **capital, Manama**, is located on the **northeastern tip of Bahrain Island**. On weekends, crowds of Saudis converge on the modern and cosmopolitan city of **Manama** to enjoy its restaurants and bars. Yet the people of Bahrain remain conservative in their lifeways. This sentiment is enshrined in the country's constitution, which affirms that **"the family is the cornerstone of society, the strength of which lies in religion, ethics, and patriotism."**
