

Houthi movement

Fuel tanker's crew struggle to contain fire after Houthi missile attack

Iran-backed group targets vessel carrying oil products for commodities company Trafigura



The Houthi attack on the Marlin Luanda was the first to hit a commercial vessel since the US and UK launched a second set of strikes against the militants © YAHYA ARHAB/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

Robert Wright in London 2 HOURS AGO

Crew members were battling to control a fire on the Marlin Luanda on Saturday, 18 hours after the tanker was struck by a Houthi missile in the Gulf of Aden.

The fire on the vessel has made it the most damaging of the more than 30 strikes by Houthis on commercial ships in the past three months. The ship was carrying a Russian-produced refined oil product on behalf of commodities trader Trafigura.

Trafigura said [on Saturday](#) that “no injuries or casualties” had been reported on the 250m-long ship.

But it added: “The crew is continuing efforts to control the fire in one of the ship’s cargo tanks with support from military vessels. The safety of the crew remains our utmost priority.”

Previous Houthi strikes, which have mostly hit container ships or ships for dry bulk commodities, have caused minimal damage and any fires have been quickly extinguished. This attack will probably prompt more shipowners to [avoid](#) the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Arsenio Dominguez, secretary-general of the United Nations’ International Maritime Organization, wrote on social media platform X: “I strongly condemn the attack on

regulation, more on social media platforms. A Houthi spokesman said the attack on Marlin Luanda tanker which has put seafarers' lives at risk and raises the spectre of environmental damage."

The missile that struck the tanker was the first to hit a commercial vessel since the US and UK launched a [second set](#) of strikes against the militants on Monday. The Houthis have played havoc with global trade by targeting the critical route to and from the Suez Canal.

Earlier on Friday, the Houthis fired an anti-ship ballistic missile at the USS Carney, a US navy vessel in the Gulf of Aden. US Central Command said the Carney had successfully shot the missile down.

On Saturday, American forces launched a strike against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was preparing to fire, according to US Central Command.

Yahya Saree, the [Houthis'](#) spokesman, said the group had targeted the Marlin Luanda, which it described as a "British oil ship". While the vessel was operating on behalf of Singapore-based Trafigura, its registered owner is Oceonix Services, a company based in the City of London.

Trafigura said the vessel was carrying "Russian origin" Naphtha, an oil product, which it said had been purchased below the price cap on the country's oil set by international sanctions.

The Houthis say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza after Israel declared war on Hamas, the militant group that attacked Israel on October 7.

The Yemeni rebels originally said they were only targeting vessels linked to Israel, although many of those affected had no apparent link to the Jewish state.

The Houthis have since extended their target list to include ships linked to the US and UK. Many shipping industry executives had assumed, based on a Houthi promise not to attack Russian and Chinese ships, that vessels carrying cargo heading to or from Russia or China would enjoy some degree of protection.

Arrivals of container ships in the area in recent weeks have been [90 per cent down](#) on levels in early November, according to Clarksons, a shipping services group.

Most are instead taking a longer route round the Cape of Good Hope, which has significantly increased journey times and costs.

On Wednesday, the Houthis fired at least three missiles towards two US-flagged

container ships, the Maersk Detroit and Maersk Chesapeake, as they were heading through the Bab-el-Mandeb, at the mouth of the Red Sea.

The ships, part of a fleet of 20 US-flagged vessels carrying almost exclusively US government cargo, were accompanied by the USS Gravely. The US naval ship shot down two of the missiles, while another fell into the sea.

Maersk, the world's second-largest container shipping line, said it would no longer send its US-flagged fleet through the area. The Copenhagen-based company's other vessels have been travelling via the Cape of Good Hope since December.

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