# US Navy and Defense Innovation Unit Collaborate on Counter-Drone System to Combat Houthi Attacks in Red Sea



Houthi rebel groups have intensified attacks against vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden using uncrewed surface vessels, UAVs, and missiles. Recently, the USS Philippine Sea rescued the crew of a commercial bulk cargo carrier attacked by Houthi missiles. The U.S. military announced the destruction of four Houthi radars, one uncrewed surface vessel, and one drone within the past 24 hours, targeting Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen and the Red Sea.

In response to these attacks, the U.S. Navy and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) are collaborating on a counter-uncrewed aircraft system (Counter NEXT) designed to disable or shoot down adversary drones. This new system is aimed at being easily integrated with various naval platforms for rapid deployment globally. The partnership seeks to create prototypes that can be tested and fielded within short timelines to protect maritime trading routes and naval operations from drone threats.

Since last fall, Iran-backed groups have conducted multiple attacks on U.S., allied, and commercial vessels, disrupting global trade and causing fatalities. A Defense Intelligence Agency report highlighted that these incidents have impacted 65 countries and 29 major energy and shipping companies, forcing them to alter their navigation routes.

Counter NEXT will include electronic warfare and kinetic systems, focusing on technology ready for testing within 90 days of a contract award. The initiative is part of a broader effort by DIU to use commercial and off-the-shelf technology for defense against unmanned aircraft systems, backed by a budget increase from Congress for fiscal 2024.