# Merchant Ship Damaged by Drone Attack in Red Sea Amid Houthi Conflict



In the early hours of Sunday, a merchant ship was struck by a drone in the Red Sea, approximately 65 nautical miles west of Hodeida, Yemen. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), under the British navy, confirmed the incident, stating the vessel was damaged but all crew members remained unharmed. The damaged ship, identified by private security firm Ambrey as a Liberia-flagged container ship bound for Qingdao, China, continues its journey to its next port of call.

The attack is part of an ongoing conflict in the region involving Yemen's Houthi rebels. The rebels have claimed responsibility for multiple assaults on shipping routes in the Red Sea, positioning their actions as support for Hamas amid the Israel-Hamas conflict. They began a blockade of the critical waterway in mid-November, impacting approximately 12% of global maritime trade.

In response, the US Central Command reported the destruction of three Houthi unmanned surface vessels within the same 24-hour period as the drone attack. Additionally, Houthi rebels fired three anti-ship missiles into the Gulf of Aden, causing no injuries or significant damage.

This incident is part of a series of attacks linked to the Houthi blockade, which has so far resulted in the sinking of two ships and the death of four sailors. The ongoing regional tensions have prompted international military responses, including the deployment of the US aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt to the Red Sea, replacing the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, to bolster air operations and security in the area.

The US-led operation, involving allies like the UK, Australia, and Bahrain, aims to protect civilian ships from missile and drone threats. Concurrently, the European Union has launched Operation Aspides focused on intercepting missiles and drones to ensure maritime safety.

Investigations into the latest drone attack near Hodeida are ongoing, with the UKMTO yet to attribute the assault to any specific group officially.